

**The Mall That Almost Ate Asheville**

The Fight between City Hall and *Save Downtown Asheville Inc.*  
Over the Strouse, Greenberg & Company Downtown Commercial Complex

A Senior Thesis Submitted to  
The Faculty of the Department of History  
In Candidacy for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Arts in History

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The downtown area of Asheville, North Carolina was, like many other cities across the United States, in need of renovation by the spring of 1980. The urban center of the city, once the energetic focus of retail activity, had become an accumulation of empty buildings, discount stores, seedy watering holes and boarded up storefronts. The Asheville City Council and the Downtown Revitalization Commission were desperate to turn things around quickly, making the heart of the city a destination for locals and tourists alike. Asheville's city leaders' quick-fix plan aligned them with a Philadelphia-based developer, Strouse, Greenberg & Company, and a proposed 700,000 square foot mall, office tower and hotel complex to be built in Downtown Asheville. Superficially, the endeavor seemed appropriate for a dilapidated city, offering a much-needed face-lift, jobs and increased tax revenue. The project however, would come with a large financial burden to a city that had only recently paid off its debts from the 1920s. While the proposed mall offered the possibility of increased revenue, the city of Asheville would need to raise \$40 million for their portion of the project. This amount had the potential to bankrupt an already cash-strapped city costing taxpayers millions more to repay the additional debt. Opposed to the plan were a handful of individuals organized as *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* and led by a tenacious businessman, Wayne Caldwell. This grassroots organization fought City Hall for nearly two years saving their establishments and safeguarding Downtown Asheville's historic architecture. Their efforts stopped the proposed downtown complex and protected the city from potential bankruptcy, paving the way for an urban renaissance that would, a decade later, propel downtown Asheville into a vibrant center of commerce.

The idea for an urban shopping mall was not unique to Asheville, nor was it a new concept. By 1980, nationwide Main Street America had seen a major transformation. The shift began shortly after World War II as Americans emerged from the darkness of the Great Depression, and a world

war that reenergized manufacturing, putting money back into their pockets. Soldiers returning from war married and started families. These families needed places to live and the rush to the suburbs was on. Also disappearing from urban centers were the large downtown department stores which Historian Lizabeth Cohen argues were the “lifeblood of downtown development—a destination for mass transit, an anchor for other commerce, a provider of jobs, an icon for the city.”<sup>1</sup>

As Lizabeth Cohen points out in “Buying into Downtown Revival: The Centrality of Retail to Postwar Urban Renewal in American Cities,” the years between 1947 and 1953 saw the population of suburbia increase an astonishing 43%. In contrast, the overall population during this period increased only 11%. Shopping in suburbia had not kept pace with its population boom. Cohen argues that suburbanites had few local choices while shopping. Consumers continued to go downtown for their major purchases, making only small purchases from their neighborhood establishments.<sup>2</sup>

The 1950’s saw a dramatic shift in retail activity. Economist G. E. Berger points to automobile use which “substantially altered street use” and contributed to the escape to the suburbs by white America.<sup>3</sup> Historian Thomas Hanchett in “U.S. Tax Policy and the Shopping-Center Boom of the 1950s and 1960s” from the *American Historical Review*, agrees with Berger and cites two other trends that combined to pull stores off Main Street and into newly established suburban shopping centers.<sup>4</sup> Hanchett points to the rise in racial tensions in America’s inner cities, which sent white citizens fleeing to the suburbs, and a change in U.S. tax policy allowing for “accelerated depreciation” of commercial property.

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<sup>1</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, "Buying into Downtown Revival: The Centrality of Retail to Postwar Urban Renewal in American Cities," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611, no. 1 (2007): 84, doi: 10.1177/0002716206298744.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996), 1051, doi:10.2307/2169634

<sup>3</sup> G.E. Berger, "The Concept and Causes of Urban Blight," *Land Economics* 43, no. 4 (November 1967): 375.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, "U.S. Tax Policy and the Shopping-Center Boom of the 1950s and 1960s," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 1083, doi: 10.2307/2169635.

Hanchett argues that the proliferation of shopping centers in suburbia was aided by a change in U.S. tax policy in 1954. This shift created by a tax law allowing for “accelerated depreciation” designed to stimulate the economy and encourage building. The new tax law allowed investors in commercial ventures essentially to shift tax deduction to the “first years of a project’s life.” The tax shelter allowed investors to claim, “losses for several years while enjoying tax free income, then sell the project for more than they had originally invested.” Developers and investors could thus turn a profit in a short timeframe. The tax law, only available for newly constructed, commercial enterprises, brought about a boom in suburban retail centers. Hanchett points out that there were an estimated seven new regional shopping centers built in 1954 across the United States. Just two years later, in 1956, the number had jumped to twenty-five. The boom in regional shopping center development, and the money spent in them by predominantly white Americans, sent large department stores out of downtown areas following their customers to the suburbs. The urban center as the hub of retail activity was disappearing nationwide.<sup>5</sup>

Rapid suburban growth and the automobile cannot fully explain the booming regional shopping centers. Focusing on Charlotte, North Carolina as an example of “white flight” and the rise of suburban shopping centers, Hanchett states that as the white population moved out of town to areas such as the Eastover neighborhood, stores followed. “Retail nodes” soon developed in early suburban areas outside Charlotte and other cities across America.<sup>6</sup> However, as Cohen stated, major purchases were still being made in the urban sector. Wealthy suburbanites continued to travel into the heart of the city for everything except minor purchases. It was not until 1956 that major retail activity began to move outside downtown Charlotte.<sup>7</sup> In 1959, the Charlottetown Mall became the

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<sup>5</sup> Hanchett, 1094-1095.

<sup>6</sup> Hanchett, 1083-1084, Charlotte’s population doubled in the years between 1920 and 1940. It doubled again from 101,000 in 1940 to 202,000 by 1960. By 1960, Charlotte’s African American population, about 20% of the total population, lived predominantly in the inner city and the Northwest side.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center,” 1052.

South's first fully enclosed mall. Suburbanites no longer needed to travel downtown for major purchases. Everything they needed was within a short distance and offered free and abundant parking. Main Street Charlotte, along with many other downtowns across America, was losing market share to the suburban mall.<sup>8</sup>

Downtown Asheville, North Carolina experienced a similar trend. In 1974, the Asheville Mall opened outside the urban core on Tunnel Road. The mall slowly devastated the downtown economy, taking first the major department stores such as Bon Marche and JC Penney's, followed by many local businesses. Without an influx of new companies to replace these businesses, buildings became vacant in downtown Asheville.<sup>9</sup> Two other mall projects proposed for the 1980s, one in West Asheville and another for just outside the city limits had the potential to ransack the downtown business sector further.<sup>10</sup>

The loss of large department stores in the urban core had a domino effect on other businesses that relied on them to bring consumers downtown. Boarded up storefronts replaced formerly bustling downtown streets. By the late 1970s, city leaders across America struggled with declining tax revenues, rising unemployment and decaying and abandoned buildings. They looked for new ways to revitalize their city centers. Copying the model of the suburban mall offered a way to bring money back to Main Street.<sup>11</sup>

Mayors and city leaders had a lot at stake. The loss of jobs and deteriorating downtowns were, as noted by Bernard Friedan and Lynne Sagalyn in *Downtown, Inc.*, a political concern. Friedan and Sagalyn argue that city administrators needed "brick-and-mortar symbols" to garner political favor. Convention centers, office towers, malls and hotels provided political clout. Large sections of

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<sup>8</sup> Hanchett, 1084.

<sup>9</sup> Wayne Caldwell, "Rattlesnakes," in *27 Views of Asheville: A Southern Mountain Town in Prose & Poetry*, comp. Rob Neufeld (Hillsborough, NC: Eno Publishers, 2012). This story is a fictitious rendering of the true story of *Save Downtown Asheville's* fight against the Strouse-Greenberg mall.

<sup>10</sup> "Downtown's Potential Remains Despite Mall," *The Asheville Times*, July 21, 1980.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard J. Frieden and Lynne B. Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 281.

historic buildings were demolished across the United States in the name of progress and urban renewal. Frieden and Sagalyn point out that in the years between 1960 and 1980 the success of the suburban mall became the model for the inner-city mall as city planners struggled with the problems of urban revitalization.<sup>12</sup> Urban retail centers not only provided the “brick-and-mortar” political clout, they brought people back to the center of town and attracted tourists.<sup>13</sup> While cause and effect may never be fully explained, as suburban malls increased, older central business districts failed. This was the case in Asheville as well. The 1974 opening of the Asheville Mall on Tunnel Road brought the departure of several downtown anchor stores leaving behind boarded up storefronts. With the department stores gone, the smaller Mom and Pop establishments, who depended on the large businesses to draw consumers downtown, slowly found their profits dwindling. Before long, they too closed or moved elsewhere.

Proposed improvements to the urban center often involved separating pedestrians from traffic much like the suburban mall. As Urban Historian Howard Gillette points out in “The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Centre in Suburb and City”, the downtown, indoor shopping center was the most “prolific among attempts at producing downtown pedestrian space.”<sup>14</sup> The attempt to build a downtown mall using the same model as the suburban mall offered a sterilized vision of downtown. Gone were sights and sounds of a city replaced with a controlled and sanitized version of the retail experience.

By the 1970s, city administrators in Asheville North Carolina struggled with the same issues facing big city leaders: a devastated urban core with suburban retail centers pulling consumer spending to the hinterlands. It had not always been this way. According to historian Nan Chase, Asheville grew steadily after 1880 when the railroad opened Western North Carolina to travel. The

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<sup>12</sup> Frieden and Sagalyn, 69-72.

<sup>13</sup> Frieden and Sagalyn, 284.

<sup>14</sup> H. Gillette, "The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Centre in Suburb and City," *Journal of American Planning Association* 51 (1985), 449-460.

years between 1885 and 1925 were an era of substantial growth for Asheville. Famed Asheville residents George Pack, Franklin Coxe, E.W. Grove and George Vanderbilt all contributed to the prestige of the area. Iconic buildings flourished in the urban center. Railroad tycoon Franklin Coxe opened the Battery Park hotel in 1885, expanded it in 1887 and again in 1895. The elegant hotel stood on Asheville's highest point and served as luxurious accommodations for visitors. The Flat Iron building opened in 1926, the art deco Kress building in 1927 and the Grove Arcade in 1929. The year 1924 brought Pack Square's first skyscraper, the Jackson building whose height soared to between 12-19 stories depending on whom you ask. Yet despite the prolific building in the early part of the century, the zeal would not last. As Nan Chase points out, public spending also skyrocketed during this time. Asheville's bonded debt in 1925 reached \$8,680,000 due to projects such as the Pack Library, the City Market building, a public swimming pool, two recreational parks and a zoo.<sup>15</sup> The borrowing continued as public spending tried to keep pace with commercial development in an effort to attract tourists to the area, but no one could predict what was to come next. The Stock Market Crash of 1929 had a devastating impact on Asheville. A little over a year after the crash, on November 21, 1930, the *Asheville Times* announced the closing of eleven Western North Carolina Banks. Chase argues that the "long nightmare had begun."<sup>16</sup>

Historian Suzanne Morse writes that the "real estate speculation, physical expansion, heavy borrowing and a growing population in the twenties," in addition to the Stock Market Crash, fueled the crisis that would come to Asheville.<sup>17</sup> The Great Depression brought suffering to most of America but it was especially brutal to Asheville. Morse points out that Asheville's debt in 1930 exceeded that of Raleigh, Durham, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro combined. The city was on the verge of bankruptcy, unable to fulfill its debt. The city agreed to a restructuring plan in 1939 but it

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<sup>15</sup> Nan K. Chase, *Asheville: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland &, 2007), 91-95.

<sup>16</sup> Chase, 110-111.

<sup>17</sup> Suzanne W. Morse, "Preserving the Past," in *Smart Communities: How Citizens and Local Leaders Can Use Strategic Thinking to Build a Brighter Future* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 164.

would not be until 1976, a full 46 years later, that the debt would be retired.<sup>18</sup> With Asheville mired in debt, municipal spending was non-existent. While the lack of public spending contributed to the decline of the downtown business district, even in disrepair, the city's historical architecture remained.

When Asheville finally repaid the debt in 1976, it did so with much fanfare. As Chase notes, the city made the final payment of \$17,189,520.92 in principle and interest on June 30, 1976. City leaders ceremoniously burned the note at the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium and Asheville began to take steps toward a new future. This future would not be easy, Chase argues, there would be many "missteps" along the way. One of those missteps came in the form of an urban redevelopment plan known as the Downtown Commercial Complex. Chase contends that the proposed mall project was a necessary struggle for Asheville. This struggle would refocus spending, both private and public, towards a revitalized downtown.<sup>19</sup>

With the debt from the 1920s paid off, Asheville began to look toward the future. In 1977, the City Council established the Asheville Revitalization and Economic Redevelopment Commission (also known as the Asheville Revitalization Commission or ARC). With boarded up buildings consuming space on every street downtown, the ARC had a tough road ahead. In 1978, they issued their plan for a redeveloped urban core. This plan recommended, "preserving and building a uniquely livable city" with a focus on historical preservation.<sup>20</sup> Downtown Asheville boasted a large number of Art Deco buildings, second only to Miami's South Beach, and Asheville had a plan. This plan would preserve what was good about Asheville and clean up the bad. In fact, improvements were underway; private money and small business owners were already investing and making a difference in downtown.

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<sup>18</sup> Morse, 164.

<sup>19</sup> Chase, 178-179.

<sup>20</sup> Asheville Revitalization Commission, 1978, 11-12.

In 1977, a former Asheville landscape architect John L. Lantzius began purchasing a number of buildings in the Lexington Park area of downtown. This area was of particular concern to the city. *The Asheville Citizen* called it a “Jekyll and Hyde area” known for its commerce by day and bars, prostitution and crime by night.<sup>21</sup> Lantzius’ buildings, all in a state of disrepair, were painted, refurbished and leased to tenants. In the beginning, Lantzius did not have a clear vision of the project; he just bought the buildings, some for as little as \$10,000, and began working on them. In 1977 he stated, “We’re getting the buildings ready for occupancy with no fixed direction to go other than making a safe, clean environment for shopping.”<sup>22</sup> By 1980, his vision for Lexington Park had taken shape and it aligned well with the ARC’s plan of historic preservation and a livable city. Lantzius envisioned Lexington Park as a vibrant, bustling space complete with shops, restaurants and apartments. His street plans included “people spaces, fountains, brick sidewalks, trees, benches and things that are inside and outside.”<sup>23</sup> Lantzius’ idea called for small businesses, open-air markets and live music. In other words, downtown Asheville would be a place to shop, to eat, to be entertained and to live.

Over the next three years, John Lantzius worked his plan and the revitalization was underway. By 1980, he was one of the largest property owners in the urban center. His designs called for an eventual project covering 500,000 square feet of space filled with shops, restaurants and apartments.<sup>24</sup> Others were investing in downtown as well. The Lexington Park area contained about 17 small shops by the winter of 1980 and more were in the works. It was a small improvement over boarded up buildings but it was improvement nonetheless.<sup>25</sup> Asheville’s historic brick buildings were slowly being renovated and new local businesses were taking a chance in the urban core.

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<sup>21</sup> Bob Terrell, "Lexington's Changing Face," *The Asheville Citizen*, September 30, 1977.

<sup>22</sup> John Lantzius, In "Lexington's Changing Face," By Bob Terrell, *The Asheville Citizen*, September 30, 1977.

<sup>23</sup> Barbara Blake, “Lantzius’ View of Downtown” *The Asheville Citizen*, October 25, 1980.

<sup>24</sup> Save Downtown Asheville, Inc. *The Downtown News*, Vol. 1, No. 1, August 1980.

<sup>25</sup> David Brown, “Lantzius Explains Lexington Plan” *The Asheville Citizen*, May 28, 1980.

However, the morning of March 13, 1980 would make what was going on in Lexington Park even more important than just one man's vision. The city was about to drop a bombshell.

On March 13, 1980, the local newspaper the *Asheville Citizen* alerted the residents of Buncombe County to Asheville's grand plan for the redevelopment of the urban core, by establishing a new downtown commercial complex. The article also stated the seemingly unanimous support for the project from city officials and civic leaders. Asheville Revitalization Commission Chairman James W. Daniels Jr. announced the plan and the creation of a "Committee of 36," to study the project. Former Asheville mayor Gene Ochsenreiter and local business leader, Akzona president Claude Ramsey, would head the committee that would also include the presidents of the five largest banks in town.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the President of the Mid-City Merchants Association, the medical community, the legal community, Buncombe County Commissioner Gary Owen and a mixture of downtown merchants and civic leaders all endorsed the project. By March 18, a mere 5 days after the proposal's announcement, the Asheville Civic Center Commission and its secretary Richard D. Trammell, stated that the proposed mall "would undoubtedly make us (Asheville) the number one convention city in the state."<sup>27</sup> It was a show of force by a city determined to push forth its newest urban redevelopment agenda. The problem with Asheville's newest downtown revitalization efforts was the lack of money due to decades of debt. This problem would continue to be an issue throughout the ordeal.

The Downtown Commercial Complex would be a joint venture between the City of Asheville and a private developer, Strouse, Greenberg & Company out of Philadelphia. The plan called for the purchase and demolition of 11 city blocks. To be replaced by a 700,000 square foot shopping mall, a parking facility, office tower and hotel.<sup>28</sup> The developer would be responsible for

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<sup>26</sup> Blake, "Giant Downtown Complex Proposed" *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980, 1.

<sup>27</sup> *The Asheville Citizen*, "Downtown Complex Gets Endorsement." March 18, 1980.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 1.

approximately \$100 million of the estimated \$135 million total project cost. The balance of the money, roughly \$35 million, needed to buy the land, demolish the existing buildings and construct multilevel parking decks providing parking for approximately 3,000-3500 automobiles, would come from the City of Asheville and its taxpayers, the same taxpayers who had only recently paid off the City's debt from the 1920s.<sup>29</sup> According to supporters, the complex had the potential to make Asheville a premier center for tourism and conventions. It would bolster the tax base and add much-needed jobs. Asheville's civic leaders, executives and elected officials all agreed it was a winning plan for a city badly in need of what Bernard Frieden and Lynne Sagalyn refer to as "brick and mortar" redevelopment.<sup>30</sup> On the morning of March 13, 1980, it appeared that all of Asheville supported the Strouse-Greenberg mall, but that was not the case.

The problem with the Downtown Commercial Complex was not what Asheville would gain from the project, but what it would lose. The venture would tear down about 11 city blocks containing 85 buildings, including John Lantzius' Lexington Park. Even Asheville Revitalization Commission Chairman Jim Daniels conceded that tearing down this part of downtown would "have a psychological impact." Daniels added, "Here's a guy (John Lantzius) who bought buildings one by one and developed them. He put his money where his mouth is, in one of the worst parts of town, and with some degree of success."<sup>31</sup> While Jim Daniels may have recognized the efforts of John Lantzius, he still felt the immediate value of an increased tax base and the promise of new jobs far out-weighed the benefits of fixing up a few old buildings with little historical value. City leaders felt they knew what was best for Asheville and despite the Asheville Revitalization Commission's 1978 plan calling for historical preservation; leaders would move forward with plans to destroy a large

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<sup>29</sup> Blake, "Giant Downtown Complex Proposed" *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Frieden and Sagalyn, 284.

<sup>31</sup> Brown, "Paying the Price for Overall Good," *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980, 13.

portion of the city center in hopes of additional ad valorem tax revenue and newly created jobs. *The Asheville Citizen* and Jim Daniels called it “paying the price for the overall good.”<sup>32</sup>

Local business owner Wayne Caldwell did not see it that way. Caldwell’s family owned and operated Sluder Furniture in downtown Asheville. It was a small operation, with very little inventory, in a rundown section of town, but it was growing. The business began with one building but eventually expanded into the abandoned restaurant next door. With the increased space came the ability to carry more inventories. The sales volume at Sluder Furniture had increased by 128% between 1974 and 1978. Caldwell and his family put in long hours at Sluder Furniture and had watched others do the same with their own businesses. In 1980, there were still a decent number of small “mom and pop” stores struggling to survive in the city center while competing with the Asheville Mall just a few miles away on Tunnel Road.<sup>33</sup>

On the morning of March 13 as Caldwell read the Asheville Citizen from his office near Lexington Park, he felt confused. It was difficult to believe the city really wanted to tear down 11-city blocks along with 85 buildings, including 25 Broadway Street, which contained his business. He decided to find out what was going on at City Hall. That morning Caldwell called Asheville Revitalization Commission chair Jim Daniels to discuss the proposal. Daniels invited him to his office to view the map. Caldwell came away from that meeting terrified. The city was serious. They planned to bulldoze the entire Lexington Park area and build a mall. Wayne Caldwell knew things needed to improve downtown but he hoped the city would continue with the Asheville Revitalization Commission’s plan, which called for historic preservation<sup>34</sup>

Wayne Caldwell was born in Asheville and he knew many people including downtown business owners and city leaders. He knew that three City Commissioners, as well as Asheville Revitalization

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<sup>32</sup> Brown, “Paying the Price for Overall Good,” *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Caldwell, letter draft, Box MS 216, The North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina.

<sup>34</sup> Caldwell, “Rattlesnakes,” 133.

Commission members Leon Rocamora, George Tisdale and Chairman Jim Daniels owned property in the Lexington Park area. Caldwell believed they all stood to gain financially if the Strouse-Greenberg project proceeded. Asheville's latest urban renewal project not only had the potential to bankrupt the city, it could also line the pockets of the very people who had the power to see it put into place. Caldwell felt it was no coincidence that the mall was proposed for this same area.<sup>35</sup> Others took notice of the potential conflict of interest too. The *Asheville Citizen* reported the potential conflict on March 23, 1980. In the article, Jim Daniels claimed there was no conflict, that the Asheville Revitalization Commission had not taken a stand on the mall even though they sponsored the meeting to announce the plan. Daniels explained that the city attorney would decide if a conflict of interest existed. Daniels also explained that if the project were to proceed, the Asheville Housing Authority would handle the project. Rocamora and Tisdale said they would resign if needed but Daniels claimed they "just wouldn't vote on it."<sup>36</sup> It was only a few days past the announcement and already the project was engulfed in discussion of political and personal conflict and self-interests.

Wayne Caldwell was not waiting around for the project to implode under a conflict of interest scandal; he contacted other small business owners downtown and invited them to join him at Sluder Furniture on the evening of March 13. This group of citizens, united under the name "*Save Downtown Asheville*," decided to fight city hall with whatever means they could. The fight would not be easy but this resolute group of business owners, artists, and downtown tenants were willing to try.<sup>37</sup> This fight would consume their lives for the better part of two years and while they may have begun the fight trying to save their own establishments, the fight became more than that, it became an effort to save the city they treasured.

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<sup>35</sup> Caldwell, Interview with author, August 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Blake, "Ex-Mayor Heads Study of Downtown Complex," *Asheville Citizen*, March 23, 1980, 1 and 4.

<sup>37</sup> Caldwell, "Rattlesnakes," in *27 Views of Asheville: A Southern Mountain Town in Prose & Poetry*, comp. Rob Neufeld (Hillsborough, NC: Eno Publishers, 2012), 134.

*Save Downtown Asheville* went to work immediately. Within a week of the Strouse-Greenberg announcement, the group had held several meetings, hired local attorney Bob Long, and outlined their complaints in the local newspaper. Their early protest centered on a few key points. First, the proposed multi-million dollar downtown commercial complex would displace local businesses.<sup>38</sup> Many complained that they would not be able to afford rent in the new mall and would be forced to go out of business altogether. In addition, merchants felt the city had changed the rules in the middle of the game. Bob Carr, who owned *Tops for Shoes* on Lexington Ave, cited the Revitalization Commission's 1978 plan, "The merchant coming into the area knew what to expect from the city and many of them acted accordingly. Now all of a sudden they're considering throwing it all out the window." Commission chairman Jim Daniels had to admit to the about-face, but claimed it was for the "economic good of the region."<sup>39</sup> Other areas of concern for the downtown merchants and *Save Downtown Asheville*, was the destruction of historic architecture and the fact that downtown was not lacking in office space or in need of another hotel. The final argument centered on the conflict of interest in three Asheville Revitalization Commission members who stood to gain financially from the project.<sup>40</sup> The mall project had larger problems than a few local civic leaders with buildings in the proposed area. The biggest problem was money, or the lack of it. The Philadelphia based Strouse-Greenberg, no stranger to mall construction, was not the only entity with a financial stake in the project. The city would need to find \$35 million for their share of the project. Going into debt was a hard sell for a city only recently operating in the black. Where this money would come from would be the lingering question throughout the ordeal and finding that money was the first order of business for city leaders.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Blake, "Opposition to Downtown Complex Grows," *The Asheville Citizen*, March 20, 1980.

<sup>39</sup> Bob Carr, In "Protest Of Complex Is Organized," by David Brown, *The Asheville Citizen*, March 19, 1980.

<sup>40</sup> Blake, "Opposition to Downtown Complex Grows," *The Asheville Citizen*, March 20, 1980.

<sup>41</sup> Blake, "It's Dollar Signs, Question Marks," *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980.

Asheville Planning director Verl R. Emrick, Jr. explained the city planned to seek state and federal urban renewal funds to help finance their share of the proposal. These funds required a complicated series of steps. Under the state statute, 50% of the proposed area would have to meet a standard known as “blight.” The blight ruling was also necessary for the city to receive federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants. The grant money, a feasibility study necessary to apply for the grants, along with the blight ruling, would constitute the first major battles between the city and the now incorporated *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.*<sup>42</sup>

It was clear from the day the Downtown Commercial Complex was announced that the project would hinge on money. Asheville’s city leaders planned to seek federal and state urban renewal money in the form of an Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG), but that was not going to cover all of the estimated \$35 million needed for their portion. For the rest of the money, Asheville would need to issue bonds and it only had two choices in the matter, general obligation bonds or revenue bonds. Yet even with the money in place to purchase the properties, demolish the buildings and to construct a parking garage, the City would have to convince property owners to sell their land. If the owners were unwilling to sell, the city would have to acquire the land through eminent domain. Financing the project was a complicated process that would play itself out in the local newspaper and on the nightly news over the next 20 months.<sup>43</sup>

Money for the feasibility study amounted to \$9,500, approved by the Asheville City Council in late March 1980. It was the council’s first official endorsement of the project. The council claimed the money came from “community development money.” Wayne Caldwell attended the meeting and told the City Council that he felt a professional firm should conduct the study rather than the city planning department. He also suggested that Strouse-Greenberg pay for the study.<sup>44</sup> Despite

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<sup>42</sup> Blake, "It's Dollar Signs, Question Marks," *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980.

<sup>43</sup> Blake, "It's Dollar Signs and Question Marks," *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980.

<sup>44</sup> Blake, "Complex Study Funds Approved," *The Asheville Citizen*, March 21, 1980, 1.

the potential conflict of interest of the city conducting the survey of lands they planned to take under eminent domain, the feasibility study with its \$9500 price tag won approval on March 20, 1980 under protest from *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.*

The City's Feasibility Study found the proposed mall project would be a major financial benefit to the city. Committee of 36 chairmen Gene Ochsenreiter explained the project would bolster the city's tourism and convention business, the "largest single business in the city of Asheville."

Ochsenreiter also felt it would bring regional and national corporate headquarters to Asheville making the city an "interesting city to live in."<sup>45</sup> Professional, and supposedly independent, firms would later conduct additional feasibility studies. The Asheville Housing Authority awarded three contracts in January of 1981 to survey the properties in Lexington Park. Regional Appraisal Services and W.T. Duckworth Company were chosen to appraise the "real property" consisting of the land and buildings, while O. Germany and Associates studied the personal property. W.T. Duckworth and Company owned three buildings in Lexington Park, creating yet another concern over conflict of interest. The City Council would approve \$225,000 for additional feasibility studies to determine if the proposed area met the standards required for the UDAG grants. It was a large sum for a city supposedly strapped for cash.<sup>46</sup>

The issue of 'blight' would add another dimension to the list of complex issues surrounding the Strouse-Greenberg mall. City building inspectors began surveying the buildings in the Lexington Park area in May of 1980. The inspectors were looking at the structures to see if they met current (1980) building codes. It was clear none of the 85 buildings would be up to code. Even the Northwestern Bank Building (now BB&T), a much more modern structure, did not meet current codes.<sup>47</sup> City planning director Verl Emrick explained the blight ruling would come from a

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<sup>45</sup> Blake, "Ex-Mayor Heads Study of Downtown Complex" *The Asheville Citizen*, March 23, 1980.

<sup>46</sup> Blake, "Housing Authority Awards Contracts for Complex Study," *The Asheville Citizen*, January 9, 1981.

<sup>47</sup> Caldwell, "Downtown Mall," e-mail message to author, September 27, 2012.

combination of factors, “structural conditions, water and sewer line conditions and sidewalk conditions. Other considerations...involve vacancy rates and obsolescence of buildings and various other conditions relating to the area as a whole.”<sup>48</sup> The city’s chief building inspector J.E. “Buzz” Johnson and a team of four inspectors scrutinized the area for the city and found “high degree blight.” The private firm of Butler Associates, hired by the city, found an “insignificant” amount of blight.<sup>49</sup> The discrepancy in the two rulings, blamed on the use of different standards, did not deter the Asheville Planning and Zoning Commission from ruling the area blighted under state statutes on November 11, 1980.

The ruling opened the door for the UDAG grant application to proceed. It also allowed the city to begin the process of purchasing the land through cooperation from owners or at last resort, eminent domain. However before any of that could happen, the Asheville City Council would have to ask the Asheville Housing Authority to create a redevelopment plan. The plan would include another series of complicated steps including a proposal for the relocation of existing businesses in Lexington Park. Public hearings would have to be held, with notices for the hearings appearing in the paper two weeks ahead of the meeting. The plan would have to garner the approval of both the City Council and the Planning and Zoning commission, making additional public hearings necessary. The complicated process would more than likely take years.<sup>50</sup> That did not alleviate the fears of Wayne Caldwell or the members of *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* They planned to fight the blight ruling.<sup>51</sup>

Even with the ‘blight’ ruling over, and the path cleared to apply for UDAG grants, the city was only asking for \$20 million from the federal government and could not expect to receive all of the money. Grants were a highly competitive business. Of the \$4.5 billion in grant applications, the

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<sup>48</sup> Blake, “Acquisition For Complex Long, Complicated,” *The Asheville Citizen*, July 31, 1980.

<sup>49</sup> Blake, “Board Decision Expected Monday On Blight Status,” *The Asheville Citizen*, November 8, 1980, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Blake, “‘Blight Ruling’ Only First Step” *The Asheville Citizen*, November 12, 1980.

<sup>51</sup> “Lawsuit Planned As Challenge To ‘Blight’ Finding,” *The Asheville Citizen*, November 12, 1980.

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) received in 1979, only \$150 million was paid out.<sup>52</sup> Asheville could hardly expect to receive the entire \$20 million if anything. The city explored other areas of financing the project such as Economic Development Assistance money and money from the Appalachian Regional Commission, but the early 1980's were a time of economic hardship across the country. Federal money to build a mall in a mid-sized city was difficult to acquire.<sup>53</sup> Even if the city received some government funding, the rest of the money would have to come from the sale of bonds. If the UDAG money failed to materialize, the amount of the bonds required to finance the project would rise to an astonishing \$40 million.<sup>54</sup>

The two bond choices available to Asheville, general obligation bonds or revenue bonds, each held their own set of complications. General obligation bonds would require the city to hold a public referendum and a vote for approval. Asheville taxpayers would have to make the decision to send the city back into debt. It was risky for city leaders. Revenue bonds did not require this step but they had another problem. Using revenue bonds would require the city to pay back the bonds with money raised from the project itself. The difference between the two types of bonds would ultimately determine the outcome of the entire project.<sup>55</sup>

While the city claimed the revenue generated from the parking facility and land lease to Strouse, Greenberg & Co. would cover the debt from the bonds, financial records told a different tale.<sup>56</sup> The city-owned parking facility already in place Downtown was a losing proposition. The debt from the facility for 1980 showed a negative cash flow of over \$118,000 with projected negative cash flow for the next two years. This parking garage, also built with bonds, carried a debt service of over \$115,000 for 1980 and the interest from those bonds, issued at 5.5%-7%, cost far less than the

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<sup>52</sup> Blake, "Downtown Projects Hearing Held," *The Asheville Citizen*, November 25, 1980.

<sup>53</sup> Caldwell, untitled letter draft, Box MS216, The North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, NC.

<sup>54</sup> John Campbell, Jr., "City Begins Legal Steps for Downtown Mall," *The Asheville Citizen*, September 11, 1981.

<sup>55</sup> Caldwell, "Rattlesnakes," in *27 Views of Asheville: A Southern Mountain Town in Prose & Poetry*, comp. Rob Neufeld (Hillsborough, NC: Eno Publishers, 2012), 131-138.

<sup>56</sup> The Housing Authority, *Downtown Asheville Redevelopment Plan* (Asheville, North Carolina: City of Asheville, 1980), 20.

projected 12% for the Strouse-Greenberg revenue bonds.<sup>57</sup> The new parking facility associated with the Strouse-Greenberg mall would be four times the size of the current facility. The decision to use revenue bonds would make the city liable for \$5,000,000 a year in interest alone in addition to the \$40 million of principle to be repaid in the future. The debt would be enormous, approximately \$763.00 for every man, woman and child in Buncombe County each year.<sup>58</sup> Revenue bonds were clearly not an option and had the potential to bankrupt the city if the project did not generate the anticipated revenue.

Financing the project had always been the issue with the Downtown Commercial Complex and the city faced some difficult choices in this regard. In the end, city leaders chose to use the general obligation bonds, which required a referendum vote by the citizens of Asheville. This vote, set for the next election, would finally end months of wrangling between the City of Asheville and *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* It would now be up to the taxpayers. The City of Asheville and *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* set out to win their vote. This fight between the adversaries also played out in the local newspaper on a daily basis.

*The Asheville Citizen* and the evening paper, *The Asheville Times*, published daily articles concerning the mall project. The majority of these articles heavily favored the city's point of view. The local television station, *WLOS* also supported the city's standpoint. Wayne Caldwell went so far as to complain in a letter to *The Asheville Citizen* staff writer Barbara Blake, who covered the story on a daily basis throughout the ordeal, that the paper and local television stations were only giving one side of the story.<sup>59</sup> He was not the only one to complain. In a letter to the editor of *The Asheville Citizen*, local resident Marguerite Magruder complained that the newspaper headlines were "not only misleading, it appeared to be another attempt to project the news media's viewpoint on the

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<sup>57</sup> Caldwell, untitled letter draft, Box MS216, The North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, NC

<sup>58</sup> "The Downtown Complex" Rolf H. Wild to Backtalk, *The Asheville Citizen-Times*, March 30, 1980.

<sup>59</sup> Caldwell, letter to Barbara Blake, 1980.

reader.”<sup>60</sup> The city clearly had the support of the local media thus *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* would find other means to reach the people. In August of 1980, the grassroots organization took its fight to people through a newspaper of their own. *The Downtown News* helped get the word out about the mall and declared *Save Downtown Asheville's* stance on the issues. The group also distributed flyers and plastered posters around town seeking support, not only for the referendum vote, but also for financial assistance in fighting City Hall. Posters with titles such as “The City is Asking for Your Vote For \$40,000,000.00 in Bonds on November 3, Here Are Some Facts You Should Know Before Voting”<sup>61</sup> and “We Want to Save Downtown Asheville—And We Want Your Money. We Need Your Help,”<sup>62</sup> helped spread the word about the bond issue. In one of the more unique episodes surrounding the Strouse-Greenberg mall venture, Asheville resident Peggy Gardner organized a “downtown wrap.” This event, meant to show city residents the scope of the proposal, literally wrapped the entire project area in yellow fabric. Gardner said the wrap was not a protest but that the “intended effect is to visually focus the public’s attention on the area.” She called it an “educational event.”<sup>63</sup> The city may have had the newspapers, the television station and local radio stations, but *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* had a supportive fan base as well. The citizens of Asheville well remembered the debt from 1920s and those against the mall were weary of returning to an era of austerity.

On October 23, 1981, eleven days before the referendum went to the voters, the local media including the newspaper, radio and television stations, sponsored a debate styled town meeting to provide information on the Strouse-Greenberg proposal. The event, carried live on *WLOS* was hosted by a local television personality. *The Asheville Citizen* reported that a “large crowd” attending

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<sup>60</sup> Marguerite H. Magruder, "Fairness From Media Is Sought," editorial, *The Asheville Citizen*, April 16, 1980.

<sup>61</sup> Taxpayers Against \$40,000,000.00 In Bonds. *The City Is Asking For Your Vote For \$40,000,000.00 in Bonds On November 3*. 1981.

<sup>62</sup> Save Downtown Asheville, Inc. *We Want To Save Downtown Asheville--And We Want Your Money. We Need Your Help*. 1981

<sup>63</sup> Peggy Gardner, In "Downtown To Be Wrapped" *The Asheville Citizen*, April 16, 1980.

the event held at the First Baptist Church and that city and county officials were “scattered throughout the audience as well as several candidates in the upcoming City Council election.”<sup>64</sup> Sister Veronica Schumacher, Walter Gladding, a senior vice president with North Carolina National Bank in Asheville, and City Planner Jim Daniels, represented the pro-mall advocates. Wayne Caldwell and attorneys Bob Long and John Powell represented the Anti-mall crowd. Sister Schumacher argued for the mall based on shrinking tax revenue. She felt the mall would revive downtown and make shopping more convenient for city residents who depended on public transportation. Walter Gladding, who also spoke for the pro-mall forces, stated that the “project won’t cost a dime if we do it, but if we don’t; we will have to make up the loss of revenue at a later time.” Attorney John Powell explained that the mall’s cost was too much for the city’s taxpayers to bear. He said the bonds would be “exactly like a \$40 million mortgage on our homes and business.”<sup>65</sup> Finances once again ruled the debate with mall supporters touting the increased revenue and mall detractors citing the bonds and repayment issues including the interest that would accrue over the life of the loan. The meeting would be the final showdown of the opposing sides just days before the citizens of Asheville would vote on the bond referendum and it was all broadcast on live television.

The bond issue proved to be the redeeming factor for Wayne Caldwell and *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* After over 20 months of fighting City Hall, the bond issue went before the citizens of Asheville on November 3, 1981. The voters opted by a margin of 2 to 1 not to allow the issuing of bonds to purchase the 11-city block area in downtown Asheville for the parking facility and mall complex. Asheville City Council members did not have a contingency plan should the referendum fail and Joe Lowrance, a representative from Strouse-Greenberg’s Charlotte office, explained that a

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<sup>64</sup> Campbell, Jr., "Town Meeting Draws a Crowd," *The Asheville Citizen*, October 23, 1981.

<sup>65</sup> Campbell, Jr., "Town Meeting Draws a Crowd," *The Asheville Citizen*, October 23, 1981.

“no vote” would leave the project “nigh on to death.”<sup>66</sup> With two additional mall projects awaiting approval from City leaders, the assumption was that one or the other would win approval. With the defeat of the bond issue, the Strouse-Greenberg mall lost all its supporters. As Wayne Caldwell said when asked about the project in 2012, “It was like letting all the air out of a balloon. It just went away.”

Support for the Downtown Commercial Complex vanished and the original 1978 plan by the Downtown Revitalization Commission was re-implemented. This plan largely followed John Lantzius’ Lexington Park ideal for the area, preserving what was good and fixing that in need of restoration.<sup>67</sup> The citizens of Asheville chose a different path for their city, one that would not include out of town developers, large mall complexes, or chain stores. Committee of 36 chairman Gene Ochsenreiter summed it up well, “At least the town is now aware of the fact that we have a definite problem downtown. Now perhaps City Council will get together with city planners and devise a plan for the redevelopment of Asheville’s downtown area.”<sup>68</sup> It would take nearly a decade, but Ochsenreiter’s wish would come true.

The new vision for downtown allowed Asheville to grow into a vibrant center of commerce complete with its historic architectural treasures. City officials lost their bid to redevelop downtown with a quick fix, brick and mortar testimony of their power and influence. A move that had the potential to bankrupt a city only recently out of debt. The small grassroots organization, *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.*, and its determined leader Wayne Caldwell, had indeed fought city hall and won, proving that the citizens of Asheville would chose their own destiny. The defeat of the mall and the efforts of Caldwell and his supporters paved the way for a renaissance of sorts that began in the 1990s. Thirty years later when asked what historical perspective he had on the fight, Caldwell

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<sup>66</sup> Campbell, Jr., "Defeat of the Bonds Leaves Unanswered Questions," *The Asheville Citizen*, November 5, 1981.

<sup>67</sup> Caldwell, Interview by author, August 7, 2012

<sup>68</sup> "Bonds for Mall Soundly Beaten," *The Asheville Citizen*, November 5, 1981.

laughed and said, “I wouldn’t have worried so much. It was never really going to happen. They just couldn’t come up with the money.”<sup>69</sup> Caldwell is understandably proud of his efforts in 1980. When he goes downtown now he admits, “I’m just kind of smiling.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Caldwell, Interview by Author. Asheville, NC, August 7, 2012

<sup>70</sup> Caldwell, In "Drawbacks to Evolving Downtown," by David Neal and Jason Stafford, *The Asheville Citizen-Times*, September 16, 2012.



"The Asheville Downtown Commercial Complex." Map. In *The Native Stone*. Vol. 11, Series 43. Asheville, North Carolina: Housing Authority of the City of Asheville, 1981.

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*The Asheville Citizen*. "Bonds for Mall Soundly Beaten." November 5, 1981.

Newspaper article from *The Asheville Citizen* two days after the November referendum vote. "Committee of 36" chairman Gene Ochsenreiter discussed the defeat of the bonds by voters and the future of the mall project.

*The Asheville Citizen*. "Downtown Complex Gets Endorsement." March 18, 1980.

The article from the *Asheville Citizen* discusses the endorsement of the Asheville Civic Center Commission for the project. The Commission called the mall and hotel complex a project that would "undoubtedly make us the number one convention city in the state." The Commission stated that Asheville lacked the nightlife and hotel facilities to attract large conventions to the area. The article is located in the North Carolina Collection of the Pack Library in Asheville, North Carolina on microfilm dated March 1980.

*The Asheville Citizen*. "Downtown To Be Wrapped" April 16, 1980.

An article from the *Asheville Citizen* describing Peggy Gardner's Downtown Wrap. This event placed yellow fabric around the proposed mall project area in an effort to show the citizens of Asheville what would be lost if the mall came to Asheville.

*The Asheville Citizen*. "Mall Arguments Heard At Meeting." October 23, 1981.

The views of the mall opposition including Wayne Caldwell, chairman of the *Save Downtown Asheville* group. The group voiced opposition to the mall project at a meeting held at the First Baptist Church in Asheville in 1981. This article is located in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina on a microfilm roll dated October 1981

*The Asheville Times*. "Downtown's Potential Remains Despite Mall." July 21, 1980.

The article, from *The Asheville Times*, an evening newspaper, gives information regarding the Strouse-Greenberg mall and two other proposals for malls in the Asheville area. The Westland mall was a proposal for a complex in the West Asheville neighborhood. The DeBartolo mall was suggested for property along I-26 and Brevard road south of the city. This mall became the Biltmore Square Mall.

*The Asheville Times*. "Lawsuit Planned As Challenge to 'Blight' Finding." November 12, 1980.

An article from the *Asheville Times* newspaper discussing the Save Downtown Asheville group's plans to sue the city over the designation of an 11-block area as blighted. The ruling would allow the city to claim the land under eminent domain. The Article is located in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina on microfilm dated November 1980.

Blake, Barbara. "Acquisition For Complex Long, Complicated." *The Asheville Citizen*, July 31, 1980.

An article from the Asheville Citizen newspaper outlining the steps the city would take to acquire the 85 buildings on 11 blocks of downtown Asheville. The land would be the site of the Strouse-Greenberg mall. The acquisition would occur either by negotiations with property owners or through eminent domain. The article is located in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, NC on microfilm dated July 1980.

Blake, Barbara. "'Blight' Ruling Only First Step." *The Asheville Citizen*, November 12, 1980.

Asheville Citizen article discussing the Planning and Zoning Commissions ruling that the 11-block area of Asheville, upon which the Strouse Greenberg mall would be located, met the criteria of urban renewal statutes to be considered 'blighted'. This designation allowed the area to be used as 'nonresidential redevelopment area and for the city to use eminent domain to acquire the land for eventual lease to the Strouse Greenberg Company. The article is located in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C. on microfilm dated November 1980.

Blake, Barbara. "Board Decision Expected Monday On Blight Status." *The Asheville Citizen*, November 8, 1980.

A newspaper article discussing the 'blight ruling' from City of Asheville inspectors. The Asheville Planning and Zoning Commission used two reports, one from city inspectors showing a high degree of blight in the Lexington Park area of downtown. The other report, from Butler Associates, an independent firm showed less blight in the area. This article is located on microfilm dated November 1980 in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina.

Blake, Barbara. "Complex Study Funds Approved." *The Asheville Citizen*, March 21, 1980.

Newspaper article stating that the Asheville City council had unanimously approved \$9,500 for a feasibility study of the Lexington Park area of downtown. Wayne Caldwell spoke at the council meeting to express opposition to the project and stated that the Strouse, Greenberg Co. should pay for such studies. This article is located in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C. on microfilm dated March 1980.

Blake, Barbara. "Downtown Projects Hearing Held." *The Asheville Citizen*, November 25, 1980.

The article outlines the Strouse-Greenberg mall concept as well as other competing plans for downtown Asheville. The Lantzus Plan and the Taylor Plan would result renovation of existing buildings within the sector. The article also discusses the responsibilities of the city for submitting applications for federal Urban Development Action Grant funds should the city agree to move forward with the Strouse-Greenberg project. Nine conditions had to be met for the projects approval by the city. The article outlines these nine criteria, which include finding the funds for the city's financial commitment to the project. The article is located in the North

Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, NC. on microfilm dated November 1980.

Blake, Barbara. "Ex-Mayor Heads Study of Downtown Complex." *The Asheville Citizen*, March 23, 1980.

The article from *The Asheville Citizen* discusses the appointing of Gene Ochsenreiter as the chairman of the Committee of 36. This group, organized in support of the Strouse-Greenberg mall, included representative from local businesses. Ochsenreiter discusses the mall proposal and its benefits to the City of Asheville. This article is located on microfilm dated March 1980 in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina.

Blake, Barbara. "Giant Downtown Complex Proposed: Plan Includes Hotel, Mall." *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980.

The article brought the Strouse, Greenberg and Co project to the attention of the citizens of Buncombe County. The hotel and mall project was proposed as a revitalization center point for Asheville. The article is located in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, NC. on microfilm dated March 1980.

Blake, Barbara. "Housing Authority Awards Contracts For Complex Study." *The Asheville Citizen*, January 9, 1981.

The article from the *Asheville Citizen* discusses the Asheville Housing Authority's awarding of contracts for a feasibility study of the 84 parcels in the 11-block area of Asheville to be destroyed for the Strouse-Greenberg project. Regional Appraisal Services and W.T. Duckworth were chosen to appraise the real property and O. Germany and Associates Inc. studied the personal property. The article states that the housing authority staff was working on a relocation plan for businesses affected by the mall. The article is located in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, NC. on microfilm dated January 1981.

Blake, Barbara. "It's Dollar Signs, Question Marks." *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980.

A newspaper article from the *Asheville Citizen* describing the cost to the city for the downtown mall project. The article raised questions about the buildings to be destroyed, the city's commitment to raising \$35 million for the project and how that money would be obtained. The article also discusses the area in question, the "blighted" status of the buildings and the use of eminent domain to obtain the property. This article is located on microfilm dated March 1980, in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

Blake, Barbara. "Lantzus' View of Downtown." *The Asheville Citizen*, October 25, 1980.

The article from the *Asheville Citizen* newspaper discusses the alternative plan for downtown Asheville. John Lantzus, developer of Lexington Park, fought to maintain the integrity of downtown Asheville as a walkable shopping venue that would encourage residential growth. This article is located on microfilm dated October 1980, in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

Blake, Barbara. "Opposition to Downtown Complex Grows" *The Asheville Citizen*, March 20, 1980.

An article from the *Asheville Citizen* describing *Save Downtown Asheville's* effort to stop the proposed Strouse-Greenberg mall. The group challenged the city's plans to use eminent domain to demolish 11 blocks of Downtown Asheville. The article is located on microfilm dated March 1980, in the North Carolina Collection at Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

Brown, David. "Lantzius Explains Lexington Plan." *The Asheville Citizen*, May 28, 1980.

An *Asheville Citizen* article describing the plan of developer John Lantzius. Those opposed to the Strouse-Greenberg mall complex supported the plan. This article is located on microfilm dated May 1980, in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

Brown, David. "Paying the Price for Overall Good." *The Asheville Citizen*, March 13, 1980.

The article discussed John Lantzius and his Lexington Park revitalization project. The buildings were to be demolished as part of the downtown mall project. This article is located on microfilm dated March 1980, in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

Brown, David. "Protest Of Complex Is Organized." *The Asheville Citizen*, March 19, 1980.

Article by staff writer David Brown states that the group *Save Downtown Asheville* had formed in opposition to the Strouse-Greenberg mall project only days after its announcement. The group of small Asheville business owners felt the city had done an "about face" concerning the 1978 Revitalization Plan. The small business owners felt that Lexington Park area had potential to be a vital business area with tree-lined streets and eclectic shops.

Caldwell, Wayne. "Downtown Mall." E-mail message to author. September 27, 2012.

An email between author Molly Sager and Wayne Caldwell on September 27, 2012. I contacted Mr. Caldwell, whom I previously interviewed, for clarification of issues concerning the Downtown Commercial Complex. A copy of this email is in the possession of the author.

Caldwell, Wayne, Interview by Author. Asheville, NC, August 7, 2012.

Personal interview with Wayne Caldwell, chairman of *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* Mr. Caldwell discussed the Strouse-Greenberg mall project and his participation in the grassroots organization, *Save Downtown Asheville*, which opposed the project. Topics of discussion during the interview included Mr. Caldwell's recollection of the mall project, the proponents for and opposition against the project, and his personal reflections.

Caldwell, Wayne, Letter to Barbara Blake. Asheville, North Carolina.

A draft of this letter is in Box MS 216 in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library,

Asheville, North Carolina. The author does not know if the letter was ever sent to Ms. Blake, but it outlines the frustration felt by members of Save Downtown Asheville, Inc. towards the local media.

Caldwell, Wayne. "Rattlesnakes." In *27 Views of Asheville: A Southern Mountain Town in Prose & Poetry*, compiled by Rob Neufeld, 131-38. Hillsborough, NC: Eno Publishers, 2012.

Author Wayne Caldwell discusses the Strouse-Greenberg mall proposal and his role as chairman of *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc.* The section offers an overall view of the fight between City Hall and small Asheville business owners determined to save their livelihood and the historic buildings of Asheville.

Campbell, John C. "Defeat of the Bonds Leaves Unanswered Questions." *The Asheville Citizen*, November 5, 1981.

A newspaper article from the Asheville Citizen two days after the November referendum on the bond issue. Joe Lowrance, a representative of the Strouse, Greenberg & Company comments on the future of the mall project after the voters rejected the bonds.

Campbell, John C., Jr. "Town Meeting Draws a Crowd." *The Asheville Citizen*, October 23, 1981.

The Asheville Citizen newspaper article discussing a town meeting held at the First Baptist Church in Asheville North Carolina on October 23, 1981. The meeting, hosted by the local newspapers, TV station, and two radio stations was a debate between pro-mall forces and anti-mall forces. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the public on the pros and cons of the proposed Strouse-Greenberg mall. Sister Veronica Schumacher and Jim Daniels led the pro-mall supporters. Wayne Caldwell and attorneys John Powell and Robert Long led the anti-mall group. The article is located on microfilm dated October 1981 in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina.

Campbell, Jr., John. "City Begins Legal Steps for Downtown Mall." *The Asheville Citizen*, September 11, 1981.

Staff writer John Campbell, Jr. writes about the Downtown Mall project and the legal steps the city needs to take in order for the \$40 million bond referendum on Nov. 3, 1981, to move forward. These steps include an ordinance authorizing \$22 million for parking facility bonds, an ordinance authorizing \$18 million in redevelopment bonds for site preparation, a resolution designating Larry Fisher, the city finance director, to file a statement of debt in connection to the project, and a resolution calling for a public hearing on the bond orders. This article is located on microfilm dated September 1981, in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

City of Asheville Inspections Division. *Procedures Used by Division of Inspections for Inspections in Proposed Downtown Redevelopment Project*. Report. City of Asheville, 1980.

City of Asheville's Inspection Division report on the Downtown Commercial Complex. The report defines the standards used in determining blight in the MS216, The North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, NC

"The Downtown Complex." Rolf H. Wild to Backtalk, Asheville Citizen-Times. March 30, 1980.

A copy of a letter sent to the editor of The Asheville Citizen and The Asheville Times. The letter written by Rolf H. Wild of Wild, Calder & Associates, Asheville business consultants specializing in foreign developments, outlines Mr. Wild's belief that the Downtown Complex was not a sound investment for Asheville. A copy of this letter is located in box MS 216, The North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina.

The Housing Authority. *Downtown Asheville Redevelopment Plan*. Asheville, North Carolina: City of Asheville, 1980.

The Housing Authority's Downtown Asheville Redevelopment Plan outlining the Strouse, Greenberg & Co. mall complex plan for Lexington Park. This document is held in D.H. Ramsey Library, University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville, N.C.

Letter from Wayne Caldwell. Box MS 216, The North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina.

An unpublished, unsigned, undated letter draft by Wayne Caldwell. This appears to be a letter or perhaps a speech to be given to the Asheville City Council. The draft is helpful for information concerning Sluder Furniture in 1980. The draft also outlines Mr. Caldwell's desires for a Historic District in downtown Asheville along with an Architectural Review Board. The drafted letter is found in Box MS 216 in the North Carolina Collection at Pack Library, Asheville, NC.

Magruder, Marguerite H. "Fairness From Media Is Sought." Editorial. *The Asheville Citizen*, April 16, 1980.

A letter to the editor from Asheville resident Margarite Magruder complaining about bias in the local media. This letter to the editor is contained on microfilm dated April 1980 in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, North Carolina.

Neal, David, and Jason Stafford. "Drawbacks to Evolving Downtown." *The Asheville Citizen-Times*, September 16, 2012.

Recent article from the Asheville Citizen Times newspaper on downtown Asheville. The writers interviewed Wayne Caldwell and discussed the Strouse-Greenberg mall proposal from 1980. Author is in possession of a copy of this article.

Save Downtown Asheville, Inc. *The Downtown News* 1 (August 1980).

Newsletter published by the *Save Downtown Asheville* group in 1980. The publication, written in the form of a newspaper, discusses the arguments against the Strouse-Greenberg mall project. The newsletter is located in box MS 216, in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, NC.

Taxpayers Against \$40,000,000.00 In Bonds. *The City Is Asking For Your Vote For \$40,000,000.00 in Bonds On November 3*. 1981. Flyer, Asheville, North Carolina.

Flyer put out by the mall opposition. The flyer directly targets the bond referendum on November 3, 1981 and explains the "General Obligation" bond. This article is located in box MS 216 in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

Terrell, Bob. "Lexington's Changing Face." *The Asheville Citizen*, September 30, 1977.

Editorial by Bob Terrell discussing a building on Lexington Ave in downtown Asheville. Terrell states that the area, formerly rundown and a "nocturnal blight." One building in the area no longer fit that description after a revitalization project by former Asheville resident John Lantzius. This article is located on microfilm dated September 1977, in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

*We Want To Save Downtown Asheville--And We Want Your Money. We Need Your Help*. 1981. Flyer, Asheville, North Carolina.

A flyer published by *Save Downtown Asheville, Inc*. The flyer states the group's beliefs in regards to the Strouse-Greenberg mall project and its objectives in fighting the mall. It also asks for donations to fund the cause. This flyer is located in box MS 216 in the North Carolina Collection, Pack Library, Asheville, N.C.

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Berger, G.E. "The Concept and Causes of Urban Blight." *Land Economics* 43, no. 4 (November 1967): 369-76.

Journal article discussing urban blight and renewal in the United States. The academic journal article was used for background information on urban redevelopment and to understand the "blight" designation. Berger explains that the birth of urban renewal and redevelopment can be traced to the Housing Act of 1954 which not only provided for the rehabilitation of urban housing but of commercial buildings as well. Berger also discusses the effects of "urban blight" on cities with loss of productivity and an increase in crime, disease and fear.

Chase, Nan K. *Asheville: A History*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland &, 2007.

Nan Chase discusses Asheville from the beginning through boom years of the late 1800's until the Stock Market Crash of 1929, and years since. She writes about the decline of downtown and the rebuilding of the urban center in the 1990's and 2000's. This book will be used for specific information on Asheville's urban decline and renewal and it includes information concerning the Strouse-Greenberg project.

Cohen, L. "Buying into Downtown Revival: The Centrality of Retail to Postwar Urban Renewal in American Cities." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611, no. 1 (2007): 82-95. doi:10.1177/0002716206298744.

Lizabeth Cohen argues the important link between consumption and civic involvement in post-World War II America especially in New Haven, CN and Boston, MA. Had the Strouse-Greenberg project continued, Asheville would have followed the path of New Haven's redevelopment. New Haven's "Church Street Project" was the first federally funded urban renewal project to focus on a commercial district. New Haven also had a grassroots organization of 120 small business owners united in opposition to the project. Cohen discusses the role of men such as Development Chief Edward Logue in Boston and famed commercial architect and urban planner Victor Gruen played in the destruction of city centers and historical areas in the name of urban redevelopment.

Cohen, Lizabeth. "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America." *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 1050-081. doi:10.2307/2169634.

Lizabeth Cohen describes the effects of the 1954 National Housing Act and the 1956 Federal Highway Act that made it possible for cities to use federal urban renewal grants for rehabilitation of commercial areas. The urban renewal grants could pay from two-thirds to three-fourths of the cost of land acquisition and the demolition of structures. The city of Asheville applied for these grants. The planned use of the grant money was for acquisition of the Lexington Park land and demolition of existing buildings.

Frieden, Bernard J., and Lynne B. Sagalyn. *Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.

The book discusses urban renewal projects and policies in cities across America during the 1980's. It focuses on what causes cities to decline and how malls were used to rebuild and reinvigorate downtown America. The book explains the urban mall's appeal to city mayors and managers in the 1960s thru the 1980s. The success of the suburban mall became the model for the urban mall as city leaders grappled with the problems of downtown revitalization.

Gillette, Howard, Jr. "The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Centre in Suburb and City." *Journal of American Planning Association* 51, no. 4 (1985): 449-60.

The history of shopping centers illustrates one of the ways planners have tried to link physical design to social reform. The leading theorists of the shopping center movement, Victor Gruen and James Rouse, encouraged the creation of controlled environments as exciting as the city but without its usual problems. The adaptation of malls they pioneered in the suburbs has helped revitalize urban retailing downtown, but has raised new questions about the compatibility of urban malls with the needs of the surrounding city.

Hanchett, Thomas W. "U.S. Tax Policy and the Shopping-Center Boom of the 1950s and 1960s." *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 1082-110. doi:10.2307/2169635.

Thomas Hanchett discusses the combination of forces that contributed to the rise of the suburban mall and the decline of downtown America. Some of these forces include: people moving to the suburbs to avoid racial tensions, the rise of automobile use, changes in the United States Tax Policy allowing companies to use a policy of "accelerated depreciation" after 1954. This policy gave developers the right to claim losses against unrelated income. The result was commercial construction as a tax shelter for investors. Hanchett uses Charlotte, NC and New Haven, Conn as examples of urban flight to the suburbs and the decline and redevelopment attempts in the urban center.

Morse, Suzanne W. "Preserving the Past." In *Smart Communities: How Citizens and Local Leaders Can Use Strategic Thinking to Build a Brighter Future*, 147-79. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

In chapter 6, author Suzanne Morse details the evolution of Asheville from boom town in the early 1900s complete with rapid land speculations, heaving borrowing and a growing population to nearly bankrupt after the 1929 Stock Market Crash. Morse explains that in 1930, Asheville's debt was larger than that of Raleigh, Durham, Winston-Salem and Greensboro combined. With a restructuring plan in 1930, Asheville avoided bankruptcy, but it took forty-six

years to repay the debt incurred in the 1920s. This debt repayment compelled the city to restrain municipal spending. The lack of public financial input into downtown, along with the construction of the Asheville Mall and subsequent departure of large department stores such as Bon Marche from downtown, created a virtual ghost town in the urban center. Morse also details the restoration of downtown after the Strouse-Greenberg mall was defeated