

# The stimulus of city success stories

## Chester Smolski

CLEVELAND — When George Voinovich, mayor of this city, spoke to the 300 persons gathered from all parts of this country to discuss successes in cities, he had the undivided attention of the audience. After all, this was the man who brought the city back from the brink of bankruptcy and has now given it clear direction and a solid financial base.

Voinovich had no magic formula to explain his success but he did express several ideas that any community leadership ought to consider. Cities, he said, must learn to rely more on their own resources because of cuts in federal programs. In Cleveland, for example, the mayor was able to get talented young people from the business sector to work for the city for one year to apply their abilities to city administration. This type of public-private partnership is absolutely necessary for city stability. Further, he spoke of the significance of the media as a powerful force in bringing groups together, and of the necessary attributes of pride and commitment that city residents must have if the city is to move ahead.

In this Cities' Congress on Roads to Recovery meeting sponsored by a partnership of business, university and city interests, some of the 16 cities that gave presentations on their successes mentioned their mistakes. In St. Louis, for example, they razed too many buildings and now, too late, realize that preservation is critical to a good housing stock and to buildings that serve as a link to the past.

Success was the theme of the meeting, and in New Haven a new partnership was forged between Yale University and the city 10 years ago as a result of a city decision against the university building some dormitories. This action caused Yale to view the city differently. As the spokesman from Yale said, "We were not about to pick up and move to the Sunbelt." The result has been a stronger link between town and gown, with new programs at Yale ranging from local residents participating in their activities to the active involvement of the university with the city in a science park where both cooperate to provide resources to manufacturing plants in that development.

Cincinnati has an "Adopt a School" program where businesses can provide their expertise to city schools. Springfield, Mass., has garnered nine Urban Development Action Grants totalling \$37 million to

generate \$200 million of private investment, all of this in the downtown. And most important, none of the 5,500 housing units added to the downtown are subsidized. This is quite different from the recent additions to downtown Providence's housing stock, all of which are Section 8 subsidized units for the elderly.

In Indianapolis and St. Louis hospital expansion has required imaginative schemes based on partnership with surrounding neighborhoods. In Tampa, a downtown development authority has been formed to plan and market the city center as a growth point.

As informative as were the ideas and successes presented, it was the keynote address of James Rouse, planner and developer of suburban and center city developments, which proved to be most useful in the sense of making city believers out of those who may have lost some enthusiasm because of failed efforts in city revitalization.

"Cities are fun," says Rouse, and this is just the credo he has used to develop center city developments in Santa Monica, Boston, Milwaukee, Baltimore and Philadelphia. *Time* Magazine, in a cover story on Rouse, referred to him as an urban visionary, one whose philosophy is not so much directed toward real

estate as it is to meet the needs and desires of people. And Rouse believes in the potential of old cities.

Rouse's company, from which he has retired, also feels the same, with 50 percent of their proposed new retail development to be in downtowns because of new opportunities there. The suburbs, by contrast, provide less potential because of an overabundance of malls and because many suburbs have become no-growth oriented.

Of interest, Rouse felt that in addition to old city revival, the new growth area in this country over the next 20 years will be New England rather than the Southwest — the reason being amenities. People will be looking for and coming to New England to find a better quality of life.

James Rouse caught the imagination of the many city representatives from throughout this nation with his reaffirmation of the city and its potential. Although some of his predictions may be questioned, his message highlighted and gave meaning to a meeting discussing city successes. With a belief such as Rouse's and the necessary partnership of the public and private sectors, many more cities will be listed among the successes.

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