

Sports Facilities as Urban Redevelopment Catalysts

Baltimore's Camden Yards and Cleveland's Gateway

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Proponents of sports facilities have justified public expenditures on these projects with the claim that they catalyze redevelopment in downtown areas. To date, little research has assessed this rationale. This article investigates the impacts from two well known sports projects, draws conclusions from the experiences of these cities, and assesses the ability of sports facilities to catalyze redevelopment at the district level. Evidence indicates that sports facilities offer *opportunities* to catalyze redevelopment, defined as the development of vacant land, the reuse of underutilized buildings, and the establishment of a new district image, but that district redevelopment is by no means guaranteed by these investments.

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Sports facilities have long been a staple of the economic recovery toolkit in North American city centers. Cities as diverse as Chicago and Durham have invested in sports facilities that are intended to jump-start the recovery of dilapidated or vacated urban districts. Despite widespread perceptions that these projects can revitalize downtown districts (Chema, 1996; Goodman, 2001; Heath, 2000; Jossi, 1998; Knack, 1986; Quigley & Trewyn, 2000), very little systematic research has been undertaken to assess this belief. One purpose of this article is to begin to assess this very concept: Are sports facilities indeed catalysts of urban development?

A second purpose of this article is to begin to translate the literature on sports facilities into the language of planning professionals. Almost all of the existing literature concludes that these projects are poor investments, unworthy of public sector efforts and dollars (see, e.g., Noll & Zimbalist, 1997). While these findings are important, they yield few insights to planners faced with programming and implementing a facility that has been passed by a public referendum or approved by a governing body. Despite massive evidence that sports facilities are not the metropolitan economic development engines that they are purported to be, cities continue to build them. Rather than emphasizing that these facilities are poor investments, this article instead investigates the physical impacts from two well known sports projects and draws conclusions from the experiences of these cities.

The article begins with a brief review of the literature linking sports facilities and economic development. The following section presents the framework for assessing whether or not urban redevelopment has been catalyzed in the two case cities. An overview of the case studies comes next, with discussions of the original intent of each project and the physical changes to the surrounding area since the project broke ground. I conclude by assessing the ability of sports facilities to catalyze redevelopment at the district level.

The Shifting Sports Facility Rationale

Almost every systematic study of the economic impacts of sports facilities has concluded that at face value these facilities promise a great deal for a city but

deliver very little in economic returns (Baade, 1996b; Baade & Dye, 1990; Coates & Humphries, 1999; Hudson, 1999; Johnson, 1995; Noll & Zimbalist, 1997; Rosentraub, 1997a; Rosentraub & Swindell, 1991; Rosentraub, Swindell, et al., 1994). Economists argue that these projects simply redirect spending from one activity to another, producing only a very small increase in economic activity, and that any jobs they create are low paying, service sector jobs (Baade, 1996). Others argue that there is no evidence that sports facilities and sports teams contribute to economic growth at the metropolitan level, and in fact, they may actually generate a negative impact on real income per capita (Coates & Humphries, 1999).

Despite this evidence, North American cities continue to build new sports facilities at significant cost to the public. In the 1990s alone, 60 major league¹ facilities were constructed, with the number of minor league and collegiate sports facilities numbering in the hundreds. In dollar terms, the 1990s saw \$18 billion spent on major league facilities, with approximately 55% of these funds coming from public coffers (FitchRatings, 2003). The total spent on major league sports facilities in the century has been pegged at well over \$20 billion, with approximately \$15 billion having come from public sources (Keating, 1999). These figures do not include ancillary costs, such as infrastructure improvements and firm relocation costs, which regularly total in the tens of millions for each project. To the consternation of most critics, the construction boom of the 1990s has continued despite the clear finding that, in terms of jobs created and taxes generated, these facilities represent very poor investments.

Many of these studies largely miss the mark in assessing the rationale for public investments in sports facilities. A major shift in the focus of the economic development rationale used to justify these investments has occurred in the past decade. While previous decades saw stadium proponents emphasize the indirect economic benefits of a new facility, using terms such as *spinoffs*, *multipliers*, and *job creation*, the current economic development rationale for almost all of these projects rests upon the idea of district redevelopment (Chapin, 2000; Rosentraub, 1997b). Since 1980, 34 cities in North America have invested in new sports facilities in downtown or near-downtown areas, in part to drive (re)development of urban districts. Proponents for new sports facilities in Detroit, Seattle, San Diego, and Phoenix have centered their pro-facility argument not on the concept that a new facility is a metropolitan economic development tool (in terms of jobs and taxes), but that the facility is a catalyst

for the *physical redevelopment* of portions of the city's core.

For example, a referendum for a new ballpark in San Diego, Proposition C, passed in 1998 largely because it centered the debate on a district redevelopment plan that involved redeveloping 26 blocks of downtown (Chapin, 2002). This project won because it explicitly linked the new ballpark to the surrounding district. In endorsing the plan, the *San Diego Tribune* editorialized that "the ballpark district is the only chance we'll have for decades to upgrade this area. . . There is no other way to revitalize this area without a major project to anchor it and induce development" ("More than a Ballpark," 1998). Even a well known critic of stadium subsidies supported Proposition C because it "involve[d] much more than a ballpark" (Rosentraub, 1998). As epitomized in San Diego, the rationale underlying public investment in sports facilities has shifted from metropolitan economic development to physical redevelopment.

Indicators of Redevelopment

If district redevelopment has emerged as the central goal of sports projects, then measures must be developed to determine whether or not this has occurred. Robertson (1995) provided a useful framework for assessing the catalytic abilities of these projects. He outlined the "special activity generator" (SAG) strategy of downtown redevelopment (pp. 433–434). This strategy is centered on the idea that large facilities that generate special activity within a district (such as stadiums, arenas, convention centers, and aquariums) can anchor redevelopment within that district by drawing visitors and suburbanites to downtown for events. This influx of people can provide the critical mass necessary to support restaurants and other retail establishments in the district (Sternberg, 2002). In addition, these projects often galvanize other investments in the district by the public sector, perhaps in the form of new infrastructure or urban design improvements, all of which help to establish and sustain a revitalized district.

Robertson (1995) outlined three central objectives underlying the SAG strategy:

1. Generate spillover spending benefits for the surrounding district;
2. Generate new construction in the district; and
3. Rejuvenate a blighted area (p. 433).

From this set of broad objectives for SAGs, three indicators of urban redevelopment can be derived.

- *Reuse of existing buildings or spaces.* Activity generated by SAG projects is supposed to catalyze spillover development within the surrounding district in the form of new businesses. A likely location for these new businesses is in the vacant or largely vacant buildings that litter many downtowns. If buildings that were previously underutilized are converted into retail and restaurant spaces because of a new sports facility, then some urban redevelopment has occurred.
- *New construction within the surrounding district.* New construction on nearby blocks often takes the form of hotels, restaurants, or even residential spaces. Construction that can be linked to original investments in a SAG is another indicator of urban redevelopment.
- *Emergence of a new entertainment or sports district.* In this scenario, a district becomes known primarily for the activities resulting from the primary anchor in the district. Visitors to the district experience a safe, interesting (if somewhat sanitized) urban setting owing to the up-front investments in the SAG.

In the context of my study, then, the reuse of vacant buildings, new construction, and a remade district image provide initial evidence for concluding that urban redevelopment has been catalyzed by an investment in a sports facility.

Despite their coarseness and limited indication of longer-term district revitalization, these physical indicators are useful for two reasons. First, public officials and planners often rely upon these tangible signs of redevelopment as indicators of policy and project success (Pagano & Bowman, 1995). These indicators are therefore an integral part of how planners and politicians understand and measure the success (or failure) of many SAG projects. Second, as discussed above, public investments in sports projects are now justified in large part on the project's ability to catalyze redevelopment on surrounding blocks. Consequently, these physical indicators are the proper measures for determining whether or not a project achieved its redevelopment-related goals.

Methodology

The data at the heart of this study came from the identification of physical changes to the district surround-

ing each sports project between the late 1980s and 2000. These physical changes were identified through a three-step process. The first step was to establish the district setting in the 1980s, the baseline conditions, prior to any investments in these sports projects. This step required reviews of aerial photographs, planning documents, and parcel records to build a geographic information system (GIS) database that mapped the built form in the districts prior to the construction of the sports facilities. Data for baseline conditions in Baltimore came primarily from the Maryland Department of Planning's *Property View* data set, which included GIS data layers for roads and properties, as well as aerial photographs. GIS data layers for Cleveland were garnered from the Cleveland State University's Northern Ohio Data and Information Services center. Additionally, aerial photographs were purchased from the Cleveland Planning Department. These resources allowed for the creation of GIS data layers including building footprints, parcel boundaries, and street layouts.

The second step established physical conditions in the districts as of 2000. This step required updates to the GIS dataset for each city. Updates were completed by reviewing more recent aerial photographs, parcel-level data, planning documents, newspaper and business journal articles, and interviews with local development officials. This provided information on new buildings and renovated buildings that allowed for the identification of changes to the district. This established a baseline of changes that provided initial indications of the abilities of these projects to serve as development catalysts.

Once physical changes to the districts were identified, analysis was undertaken to determine the role of the sports complexes in these changes. At this point, a "but for" analysis was used to determine the role of the sports facilities in the changes. The "but for" analysis investigated whether a given change to a district would have occurred without the expenditure of public funds on the sports complexes. For example, if a new hotel is now located in the district, was the sports complex a necessary precursor to the hotel's construction? To determine the role of the sports complexes in such changes, I relied upon several sources: insights from local planners and academics familiar with these districts, local newspaper and business newspaper accounts of development projects, and historic and recent planning documents for the site, the district, and the city as a whole (Chapin, 1999).

Baltimore's Camden Yards and Cleveland's Gateway

Introduction

These two projects were chosen for this study because both are widely considered to be among the most successful of the recent wave of downtown-sited sports facilities (Hamilton & Kahn, 1997). An analysis of Camden Yards and Gateway provides some indication as to the abilities of sports facilities to serve as urban redevelopment catalysts in what are perceived to be the most successful cases. The Camden Yards sports complex in Baltimore includes the baseball-only Oriole Park (opened in 1992) and the football-only Ravens Stadium (opened in 1998). Financed almost entirely by public dollars, the two stadiums cost the citizens of Maryland over \$500 million. Cleveland's Gateway project is a \$467 million sports stadium, arena, and office development that was completed in 1994. Originally intended as a mostly privately funded project, Gateway required substantial public funding after private sources dried up and project costs ballooned well over budget (Rosentraub, 1997a).

These projects were also chosen because they represent the modern form of sports facilities due to their downtown locations, their urban design features, and their mixtures of uses. Each is located in a downtown or downtown edge, which is the current trend in sports facility sites (Chapin, 2000; Newsome & Comer, 2000). Each is connected visually and physically with its surroundings, unlike the concrete bowls and domed stadia of the previous era of sports facilities. Lastly, these projects include a mix of uses on site, including restaurants, retail shops, and offices.

Almost every new sports facility project looks to Camden Yards or Gateway as a model for how such a project should proceed. Recently opened stadiums in Detroit and Seattle and new arenas in Washington, DC, and Indianapolis utilized Camden Yards and Gateway as models, influencing their design, site choice, and the inclusion of a variety of uses within the facility. The following analysis, then, also speaks to the current state-of-the-art in sports facility location, design, and function. Table 1 provides a summary of Camden Yards' and Gateway's characteristics.

Beyond similarities in their downtown locations and common design features, these projects also share many

Characteristic	Baltimore's Camden Yards	Cleveland's Gateway
Year construction began	1989 baseball; 1996 football	1991
Year construction finished	1992 baseball; 1998 football	1994
Size	115 acres	28 acres
Total cost	~\$502 million	~\$467 million
Percent public funding	~95%	~75%
Primary public funding source	Sports-themed state lottery game	Tax on cigarettes/liquor
Buildings on site (seating capacity)		
Ballpark	48,876	43,368
Football stadium	68,915	—
Basketball arena	—	20,500
Uses on site		
Restaurants	Yes	Yes
Office space	Yes	Yes
Team retail shops	Yes	Yes
Surface parking	~2,000 spaces	No
Deck parking	No	3,300 spaces

Table 1. Summary of the Camden Yards and Gateway projects characteristics.

common district-level attributes. Each site is adjacent to a major interstate highway exit, with excellent access contributing to the site's accessibility for the region. Each is in close proximity to a formerly vibrant but now stagnant retail corridor that officials in each city have been attempting to resuscitate for years (Howard Street in Baltimore and Euclid-Prospect in Cleveland). In addition, both sites are close to large downtown retail/entertainment projects (Baltimore's Inner Harbor and Cleveland's Tower City Center), large urban universities (University of Maryland-Baltimore and Cleveland State University), and underutilized industrial areas (Camden Industrial District in Baltimore and Flats Oxbow South in Cleveland). Lastly, the mix of land uses, including new high-rise office towers, older mid-size buildings, hotels, and some street-level retail shops and restaurants, is comparable for the two cases.

While the two settings are similar across many attributes, they do differ in some ways. In Baltimore, successful in-town residential neighborhoods surround what is now Camden Yards. Additionally, other major activity generators are located nearby, including the Baltimore Convention Center and the old Baltimore Arena. The district in Cleveland differs in that it is functionally cut off from areas to its west and south by the Cuyahoga River and the interstate, respectively. While special activity generators are also in close proximity to Gateway, these take the form of numerous theaters in Cleveland's Playhouse Square district.

Baltimore's Camden Yards: Expanding the Bubble

Perhaps no city has garnered more attention for its successful downtown revitalization efforts than Baltimore (Kelly & Lewis, 1992; Levine, 1987). Included in Baltimore's list of successful projects is the Harborplace festival marketplace along the Inner Harbor waterfront, widely considered a model project of downtown revitalization. The Inner Harbor also includes a science center, a world famous aquarium, and other retail and entertainment projects that have all helped to create what Judd (1999) terms a "tourist bubble" where "a well-defined perimeter separates the tourist space from the rest of the city" (p. 36). Across North America, city after city has tried to replicate Baltimore's success by investing in similar projects and assuming that what worked in Baltimore will work in their city. Neal Peirce (1986) writes that Baltimore "is the town cities unabashedly seek to copy to revive their own decaying downtowns" (p. 69).

The project that has most recently furthered the perception that Baltimore has survived and thrived in the

postmodern economy is the Camden Yards sports complex. The twin stadiums at Camden Yards were initially intended to address two primary goals: (1) to keep baseball's Orioles in Baltimore and (2) to attract a National Football League franchise to the city (Richmond, 1993). The project can be considered a success on these two fronts, as the Orioles are now one of baseball's more financially successful clubs, and the NFL's Ravens now call Baltimore home after their relocation from Cleveland. As Camden Yards developed, an additional goal was attached to the project: the revitalization of the western edges of downtown. While projects along the Inner Harbor have revitalized the waterfront and nearby areas have seen hotels and a large new convention center open, areas to the west and southwest of the harbor have experienced few changes as a result of these redevelopment efforts.

The Project Setting. As recently as 15 years ago "Camden Yards" was a dilapidated railyards and warehouse district, littered with vacant buildings and an eclectic mix of businesses. The city had long been interested in seeing this area of the city reused and integrated into the emerging tourism and entertainment economy (Richmond, 1993). The sports complex appeared to be an ideal solution. The two stadiums would bring large numbers of people into areas of the city largely devoid of activity and business after dark and on weekends. It was hoped that new business activity would flow into the city's old retail district, north along Howard and Eutaw Streets. These corridors have continued to decline despite the success of the city's Inner Harbor and the massive tourist and visitor spending along the waterfront.

It was also hoped that the nearby neighborhoods of Pigtown and Sharp-Leadenhall would see new businesses created and new construction projects undertaken, providing employment opportunities for neighborhood residents. These neighborhoods are poor, largely minority areas that have not participated in the success of Baltimore's downtown revival, unlike the gentrified Otterbein and Ridgely's Delight neighborhoods. Planners and city leaders hoped that Camden Yards might arrest the physical decline of these areas. Figure 1 shows the location of Camden Yards, other activity generators, and nearby neighborhoods.

As Oriole Park neared completion, the *Baltimore Sun* suggested that the Camden Yards project might "spark a dramatic transformation in the immediate vicinity of Camden Station" and that "these changes could be every bit as sweeping as the face lift in the Inner Harbor that heralded Baltimore City's impressive downtown renewal" ("Tomorrow's Downtown Renewal," 1992). It was hoped

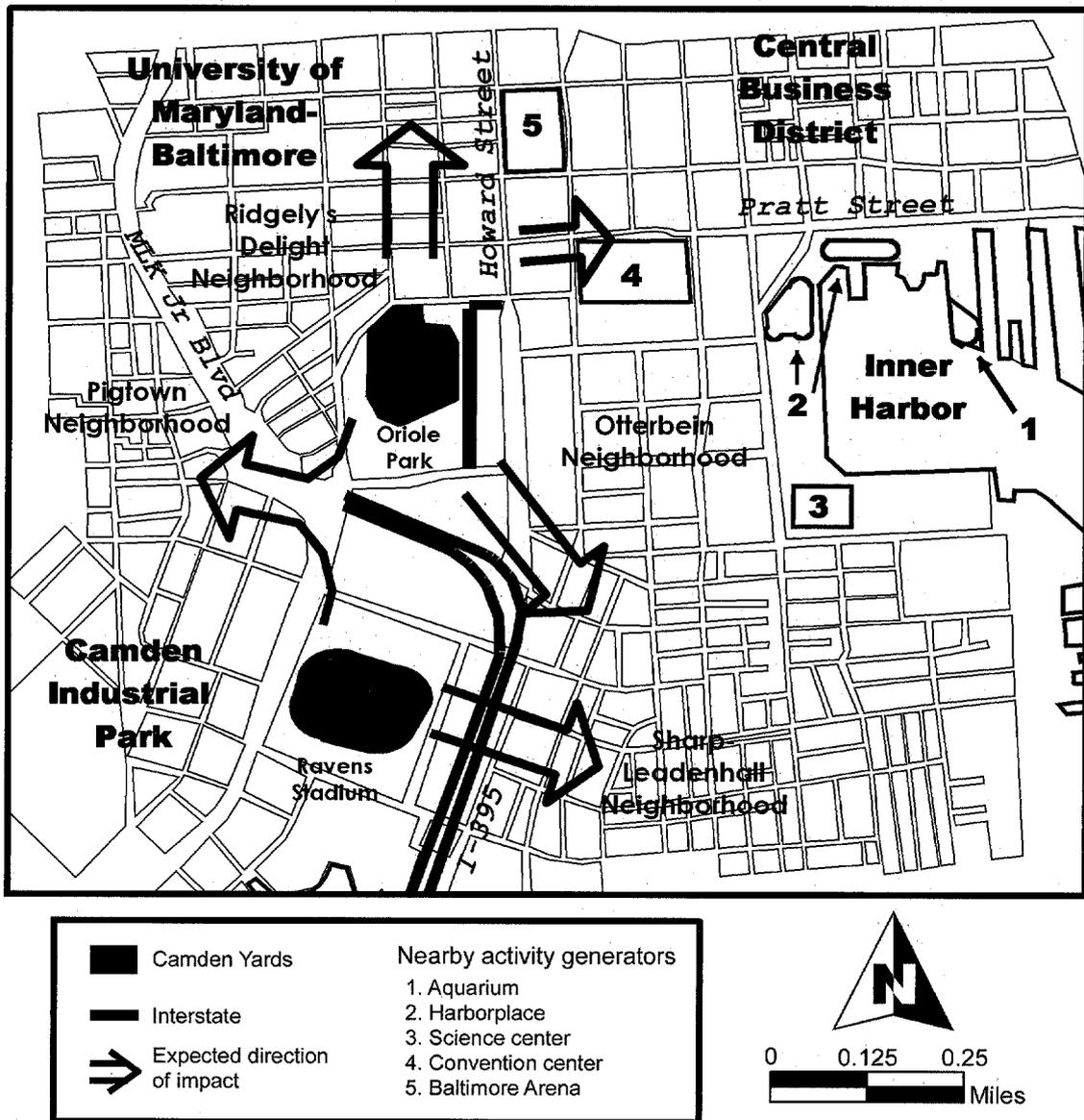


Figure 1. Camden Yards project setting and expected directions of impact.
 Source: Maryland Department of Planning (2003)

that Camden Yards would echo Inner Harbor in acting as a magnet to attract people and dollars to this portion of the city, driving the physical redevelopment of areas around the two stadia. There was an expectation that Camden Yards was going to be the catalyst for the redevelopment of Pigtown and Sharp-Leadenhall and the Howard and Eutaw Street corridors.

Project Impact. What has happened in the surrounding areas since Camden Yards opened? Table 2 lists the major renovation and new construction projects in the

period 1992–2001, and Figure 2 illustrates the location of these major projects in downtown Baltimore.

In terms of the first indicator of urban redevelopment—the reuse of existing buildings—the sports facilities have catalyzed the reuse of a few buildings in the immediate area, most notably the old B&O Warehouse (Figure 2, item 1), at 1,116 feet the longest structure on the eastern seaboard. The Warehouse is home to team offices, a team gift shop, restaurants, the Maryland Stadium Authority, and several other private firms. The railyard's old train

Project name	Year opened	Primary funding type ^a	Estimated cost
Convention Center expansion	1997	Public	\$151 million
B&O Warehouse renovation	1992	Public	Part of CY
Camden Station renovation	1992	Public	Part of CY
UM-Baltimore construction projects	1995–2003	Public	\$160 million
Power Plant renovation	1998	PPP	\$25 million
Power Plant Live!	2001–2003	PPP	\$30 million

Sources: Numerous newspaper and business journal articles

a. Public = predominately public financing; Private = predominately private financing; PPP = public/private partnership, with both contributing substantially.

Table 2. Major development projects in the Camden Yards area, 1992–2001.

station, Camden Station (item 2), has been renovated and prepared for this new economic use, although as of 2003 the building still sat empty. In addition a few storefronts have also been renovated for new businesses along the western portions of Pratt Street. Lastly, the Power Plant property (item 5) at the other end of Pratt Street from Camden Yards was also renovated in the 1990s. Despite the successful reuse of these structures and the millions of people attending events at the complex each year, numerous other vacant or underutilized properties remain untouched. In particular, the old retail district to the north of Camden Yards has not experienced an influx of new businesses; buildings along these corridors remain vacant and dilapidated.

As for criteria number two—new construction in the district—downtown Baltimore's western edge has been strikingly unaffected by the new stadiums. New facilities for the University of Maryland at Baltimore (Figure 2, item 3) and a convention center expansion (item 4) represent the only major new construction in the immediate area. While plans for new hotels in the district have existed for years, Camden Yards has not sparked new hotel construction. On the residential front, the area did not experience an influx of housing in new or renovated spaces in the area, despite the trend towards downtown housing in the United States throughout the 1990s (Birch, 2002). Only very recently has downtown seen any new residential development, along the Howard Street corridor far to the north of Camden Yards (Harlan, 2001).

While the western edge of downtown has not seen much new development, the eastern edge did experience some redevelopment in the late 1990s. A public/private

partnership built the \$30 million Power Plant Live! Development (item 6), a two-block entertainment complex that was completed in 2002. In addition, work has begun on new office buildings along this edge of downtown.

Somewhat perversely, instead of new development being catalyzed in the immediate district, areas surrounding Camden Yards have seen the opposite: clearing of land for surface parking lots (E. Cline, personal communication, May, 1998). These lots have spread into the Camden Industrial District to serve the massive influx of automobiles and buses on event days. The Maryland Stadium Authority has purchased or leased a number of parcels in the Camden Industrial District and paved them over for event parking (see Figure 2), much to the chagrin of local planners. Attendees also park on other undeveloped parcels, as well as along the streets of this district on event days. City planning staff expressed concern with the infiltration of parking because the city has promoted industrial and manufacturing development in this district, an area that remains best suited for industrial uses (J. French and J. Leviton, personal communication, August, 1998).

While Table 2 and Figure 2 might suggest that new development and reused urban spaces can be associated with Camden Yards, most of this development is unrelated to the two stadiums. Three of the six projects shown in Figure 2 fail the "but for" test; these projects would have been constructed without the establishment of Camden Yards as the epicenter for professional sports in the city. The expanded Convention Center resulted not from Camden Yards but from the belief that Baltimore could capture an even greater number of conventioners with a larger convention facility. Similarly, the University's con-

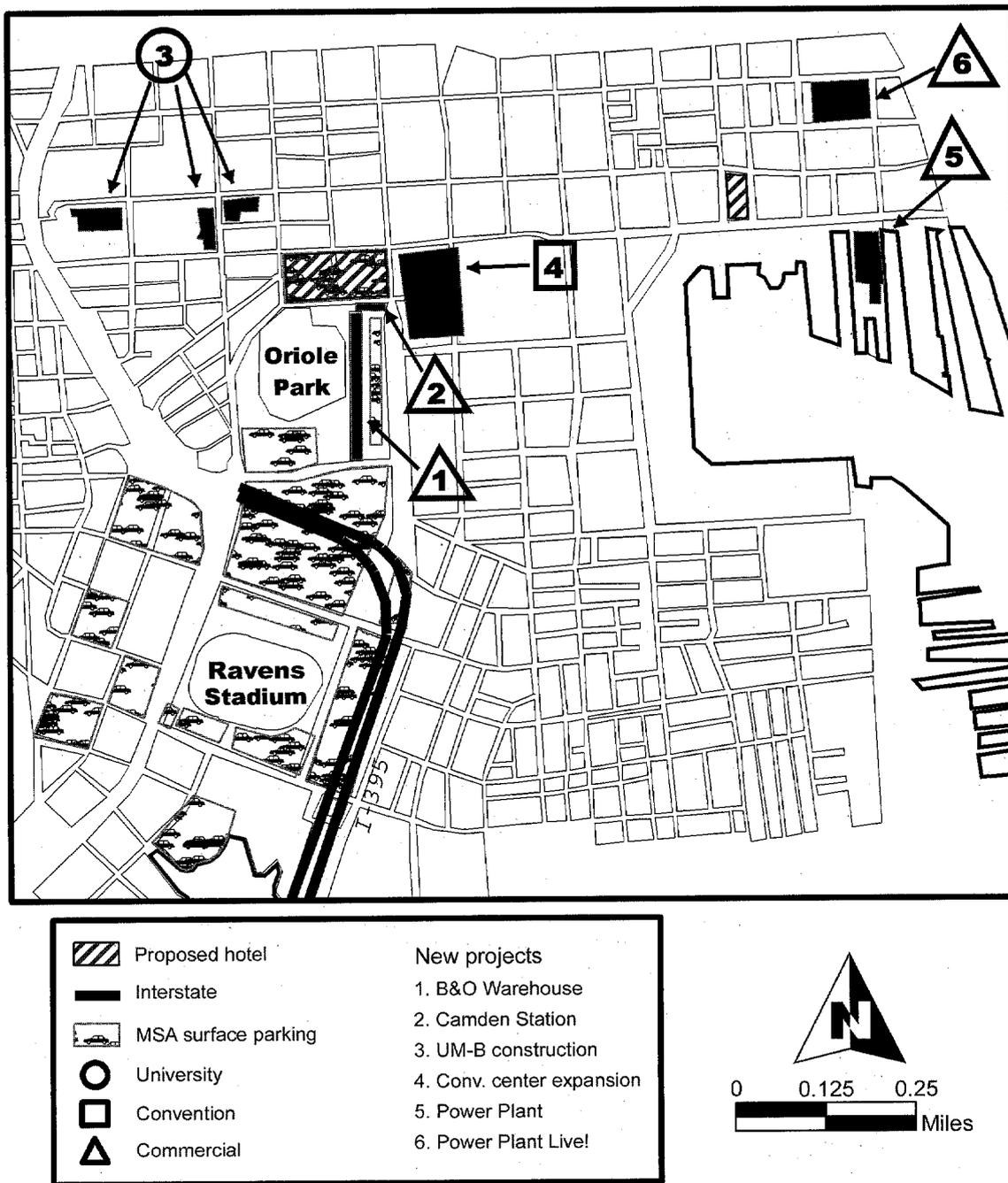


Figure 2. New construction and adaptive reuse projects in the Camden Yards area, 1992–2000. Sources: Baltimore Orioles (2003), Maryland Department of Planning (2003)

struction stems from its fast growth, not the nearby sports complex. The renovated Power Plant complex, the third attempt to renovate the city's old power generation facility, is also not directly attributable to Camden Yards, although the project's first tenant, cable sports network ESPN's first sports-themed restaurant and bar (ESPNZone), would not have located in Baltimore if not for the success of Camden Yards. The latest incarnation of the Power Plant also houses a well known international chain restaurant, a gym, and a large chain bookstore.

By contrast, the renovation and reuse of the Warehouse and Camden Station are attributable to the public sector's investment in the sports complex. These formerly dilapidated structures have been renovated and drawn into the downtown's entertainment economy, although not to the extent originally envisioned by project planners. These structures were originally expected to house restaurants and shops that would be open throughout the year, but the Warehouse currently serves the entertainment economy only when events are being held at the sports complex. While not a success as an entertainment anchor for the area, the Warehouse has established itself as a viable office and light manufacturing building. The Power Plant Live! complex also owes its genesis in part to the success of Camden Yards. This entertainment project was developed to keep visitors in downtown after sports and other events (P. Drake, personal communication, November 2002).

While new development has generally not occurred in areas around Camden Yards, this is partly attributable to ongoing conflict over the use of land immediately adjacent to the two stadiums. In 1997, the stadium authority and the city made a request for proposals for an entertainment-oriented project to be sited on the parking lots between the two stadia. However, the Orioles fought the city's plan to redevelop these parking lots because they felt the project would hurt their in-ballpark sales (Harrison, 1997). Sports teams often actively fight entertainment-oriented projects near their facilities because they think these projects compete with sales inside their stadiums, a fact often overlooked by facility planners. Additionally, the Orioles' owner has held an option on prime land immediately north of the Camden Yards ballpark, land identified as the ideal site for an upscale convention hotel. This project has not moved forward, despite perceived demand for it, because the landowner has demanded substantial public assistance for the project (J. French and J. Leviton, personal communication, August 1998).

As for the final indicator of urban redevelopment—the establishment of an entertainment district—Camden

Yards has experienced only modest and very localized success. On the positive side, the two stadiums are now clearly connected to and are an integral part of the "tourist bubble" that is downtown Baltimore's entertainment space. These facilities have made the list of must-see attractions for many visitors to the city, even on non-event days. Business activity has been pulled a few blocks west towards the complex, primarily along Pratt Street, which connects the Power Plant/Aquarium complex, the Harborplace pavilions, the Convention Center, and Camden Yards from east to west.

From the above it might be suggested that Camden Yards has experienced some success as an urban redevelopment catalyst. However, such a conclusion overlooks the fact that Baltimore's Inner Harbor flourished long before Camden Yards was built. Camden Yards did not create the success that is Inner Harbor; it simply incorporated roughly 20 formerly industrial blocks into the postmodern tourist economy. Camden Yards offers yet another destination in downtown Baltimore, but one that remains disconnected from many of the neighborhoods surrounding it. The old retail district to the north remains disengaged from the downtown entertainment economy; revitalization of this area will likely result from the expansion of the UM-B campus and not Camden Yards. Similarly, Sharp-Leadenhall and Pigtown remain largely untouched by the crowds and dollars spent at Camden Yards, except for local entrepreneurs charging event attendees \$20–40 to park in these neighborhoods during events.

Assessing Baltimore's Camden Yards. Camden Yards cannot be considered a successful urban redevelopment catalyst. Despite hopes to the contrary, public investment in the Camden Yards sports complex did not catalyze a "dramatic transformation" of the western edge of downtown. While it expanded the tourist bubble to the west, little development spilled into nearby areas desperate for an influx of investment and consumer spending. While crowds attending events at Camden Yards have further fueled the existing entertainment economy, strengthening the 100 ton gorilla that is Inner Harbor, they have done little in terms of catalyzing development in those areas most in need of it; the Howard Street corridor still sags, Pigtown and other western edge neighborhoods remain economically and socially separated from the thriving downtown, and Sharp-Leadenhall still teeters at the precipice of gentrification and decline. At present, Downtown Baltimore's westside remains an ongoing focus area for city planners and development officials, with the sports complex now cited as just one of numerous projects that con-

tribute to the area's redevelopment potential (Design Collective Inc., 2000).

Cleveland's Gateway Project: Energizing the City

Over the past several years, the city of Cleveland has been touting itself as "The New American City." This moniker proclaims that Cleveland is no longer the city whose river caught fire in 1969, or that went bankrupt in the late 1970s, or whose schools had to be placed into receivership because of fiscal problems. Rather, this Cleveland is lauded as a "Comeback City," with a revitalized downtown and a stronger foothold in the postmodern economy (Brown & Laumer, 1995; Keating, 1997; Knack, 1999; Krumholz, 1995). Despite the revitalization of Playhouse Square (Cleveland's theater district), the construction of several office towers and hotels, and two new downtown malls, the project that has brought the most national attention to Cleveland has been the Gateway project. Built on the site of an old inner-city market, Gateway was completed after more than 10 years of planning and only after hundreds of millions of public dollars were poured into what was originally intended to be a largely private venture.

The Gateway area, so called because it is situated just north of a confluence of interstates and it provides one of the major entrances (or gateways) into the downtown, was identified by planners and city leaders as a focus for redevelopment efforts in the early 1980s (Cleveland City Planning Commission, 1988). From very early on, the proposed Gateway project was identified as *the* catalyst for redevelopment of this portion of the downtown. Originally conceived of as a domed stadium that would host both baseball and football teams, the project evolved over the years to include a ballpark for the Indians and an arena for the NBA's Cavaliers and other local teams (Chapin, 1999).

Project Setting. Gateway was originally known as the Central Market area, home to a popular city marketplace from 1857 until the 1970s. Most of the district was made up of mid-sized structures, housing firms that served the successful produce and meat market. As Cleveland began its slow, painful decline after World War II, the Central Market area began to deteriorate. In time, buildings were demolished and huge surface parking lots took the place of many of the warehouses that were the hallmark of the area. As of 1980, despite its excellent location and its symbolic importance for downtown Cleveland, the future site of Gateway was predominately a surface parking reserve, with only a few remaining buildings. The district typified a blighted area, and the high visibility of the district pro-

vided a poor image of the city to residents and visitors alike.

The push for redevelopment came from Cleveland Tomorrow, a downtown development group staffed and funded by major corporations with ties to Cleveland's downtown (Shatten, 1995). In the early 1980s, a sports stadium was identified as the means to revitalize this portion of the city (Walsh, 1994). The area offered excellent vehicular access to a stadium via the freeway interchange, good rail access via Tower City Center, and joint parking arrangements with nearby decks. City leaders and project planners envisioned that a sports complex on this site would catalyze the redevelopment of the district through the construction of hotels, structured parking, and other uses related to the new sports facilities. It was also hoped that Gateway would fill the gap between the city's successful theater district (Playhouse Square) and the Tower City shopping and office complex. In addition, city leaders hoped that Gateway would contribute to the once thriving but still declining Euclid and Prospect shopping corridors. Figure 3 situates Gateway within downtown Cleveland and illustrates the directions of impact that were projected to result from the project.

The intention to utilize the Gateway Complex as an urban redevelopment catalyst is detailed in both the *Cleveland Civic Vision 2000 Downtown Plan* (Cleveland City Planning Commission, 1988) and the *Gateway Project Notebook* (Sasaki Associates, Inc., 1991). The city's downtown plan envisaged this district as dominated by a sports complex, but one that is "well integrated into the existing fabric of downtown" (p. 123). Both of these planning documents emphasized links to the surrounding district as a means to situate the project within the district and to push district development. The project master plan called for pedestrian connections from Gateway to the mall at Tower City Center, to the old Arcades, and in the direction of the Playhouse Square theater district. Unlike Camden Yards, the Gateway project emphasized not just visual connections with the city but physical connections to the surrounding district in the form of planned, funded, and constructed pedestrian pathways to other nearby activity centers.

Additionally, a development corporation was formed with the goal of promoting redevelopment in the district. The Historic Gateway Neighborhood (HGN) association (originally the Gateway Economic Development Corporation) was created by combining local business groups to help oversee the project and push local redevelopment efforts. The HGN was financed with millions of dollars

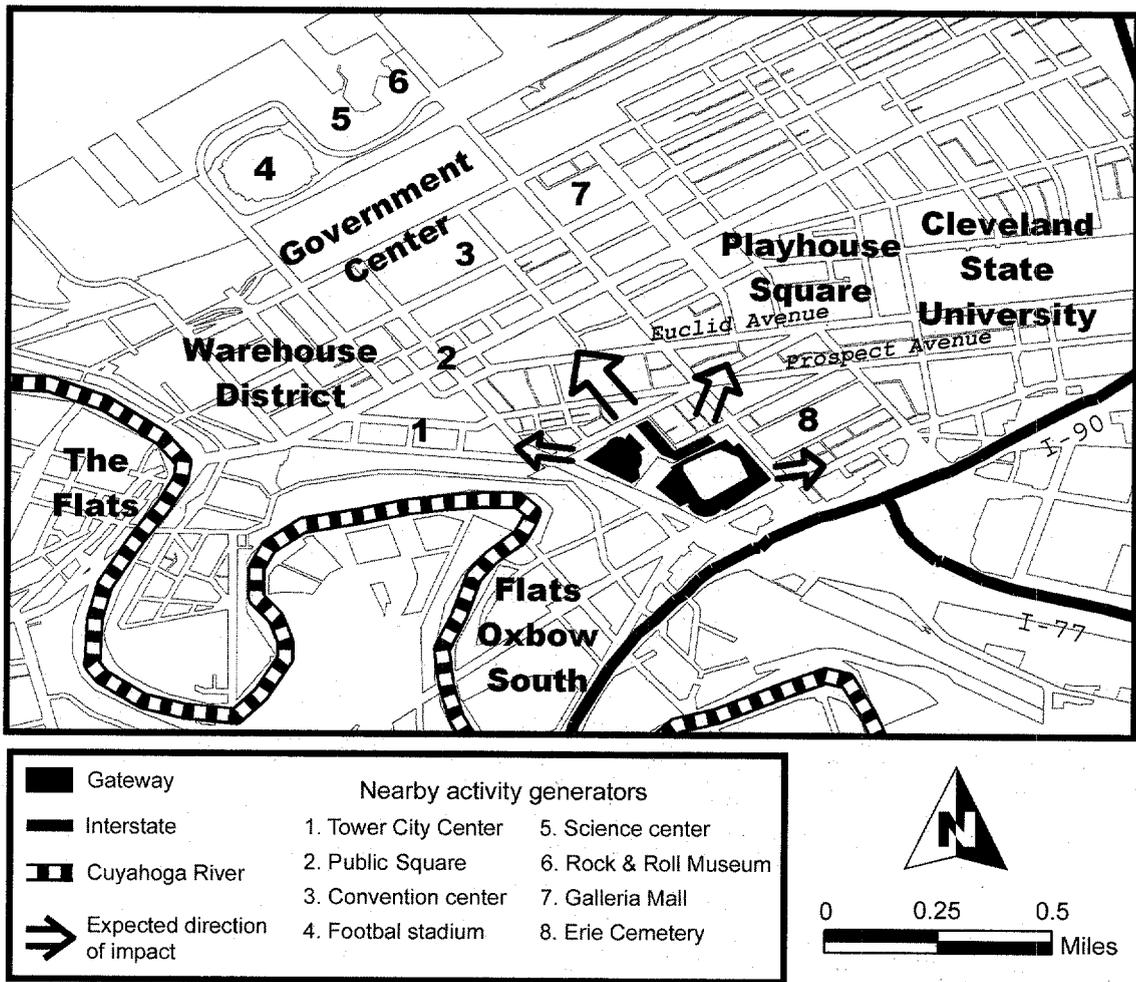


Figure 3. Gateway project setting and expected directions of impact. Source: Northern Ohio Data and Information Service (2003)

from local corporations interested in seeing downtown Cleveland successfully revitalized (Bullard, 2000). The HGN has proven to be an important actor in generating interest in the district, having prepared project feasibility studies, funded urban design improvements, and marketed sites to developers.

Project Impact. Has the Gateway Complex played a role in the redevelopment of the surrounding district? A comparison of the Gateway district in 2000 with the same area in the mid 1980s would support the conclusion that sports facilities do offer opportunities to catalyze redevelopment in urban districts. Since Gateway’s opening, the district has seen a significant number of projects open in this portion of downtown. Table 3 lists the major commercial, hotel, and residential projects in the district, and

Figure 4 shows the locations of these projects within the district.

For the first indicator of urban redevelopment—the reuse of existing underutilized buildings—the Gateway district has experienced remarkable success. Formerly vacant buildings have been renovated as market rate housing, bringing upper-middle-class residents to this portion of the city for the first time in decades (Figure 4, items 7–14). A total of seven residential projects, with a combined total of over 800 units, have opened in the district since 1994, with almost an equal number of units currently in the planning stages (Historic Gateway Neighborhood, 2002). Included in these renovations are a number of historic and architecturally significant structures (including the old Statler Hotel and the Osborn Building). Buildings

Project name	Year opened	Primary funding type ^a	Estimated cost
Hotel			
Colonial Marketplace/Marriott Hotel	2000	Private	\$30 million
Holiday Inn Express/Suites (hotel/offices)	1999	Private	\$11 million
Radisson Hotel at Gateway	1998	Private	\$13 million
Hilton Garden Inn	2000	Private	\$16 million
Wyndham Park Hotel	1995	Private	Not available
Hyatt Regency at The Arcade	2001	Private	Not available
Commercial			
Pointe at Gateway	2000	Private	\$12 million
737 Bolivar	1998	Private	Not available
Storefront renovations (176 total)	1994–2001	Public	\$14 million
Residential^b			
Gateway at Playhouse Square	1997	Private	\$14 million
Windsor Block	1996	Private	\$5.5 million
Apartments at the Pointe at Gateway	2000	Private	Part of Pointe at Gateway
Buckeye Building	1996	Private	\$3.5 million
Osborn Building	2001	Private	\$8 million
Huron Square Apartments	2000	Private	\$7 million
Commercial Building	2002	Private	\$4 million
Statler Arms	2001	Private	\$58 million

Sources: Numerous newspaper and business journal articles

- a. Public = predominately public financing; Private = predominately private financing; PPP = public/private partnership, with both contributing substantially.
- b. Although privately funded, the downtown housing projects listed here were spurred in part by tax abatements and other public subsidies.

Table 3. Major development projects in the Gateway area, 1994–2001.

have been reused for retail spaces as well (items 15 and 16). Although not illustrated on the map, new restaurants have been carved out of other formerly vacant properties (Bullard, 1998; Hirzel, 1996).

Additionally, several large new hotels have found homes in the district in historic, underutilized buildings. A new upscale hotel in The Arcade has helped to catalyze the redevelopment of downtown's earliest indoor shopping space (item 1). Another major hotel chain anchors the ongoing redevelopment of the Colonial and Euclid arcades, two historic shopping arcades that connect Prospect and Euclid Avenues (item 2). The Colonial Marketplace project includes not only the hotel but also retail and office space across seven buildings. Additionally, new hotels have gone into an old warehouse building immediately adjacent to Gateway and into the historic National City Bank Building (items 3 and 4).

While new development in the district has generally gone into existing spaces, some new construction has also occurred. This construction has taken the form of a new hotel to the southeast of Gateway (Item 6) and two new parking decks and an office building as part of Gateway itself. Plans exist for another hotel immediately next to Jacobs Field, with the Major League Baseball Indians owner having long held the rights to develop this property.

Gateway fares equally well on the final indicator of urban redevelopment—the establishment of an entertainment district. Prior to Gateway's opening, this district was best described as a large parking area for downtown office workers. Since the project opened, the district has been given a new name, "The Gateway District," and it has emerged as a very healthy and successful "place for play" (Fainstein & Stokes, 1998). The district has experienced a revival through the combined investments of the public

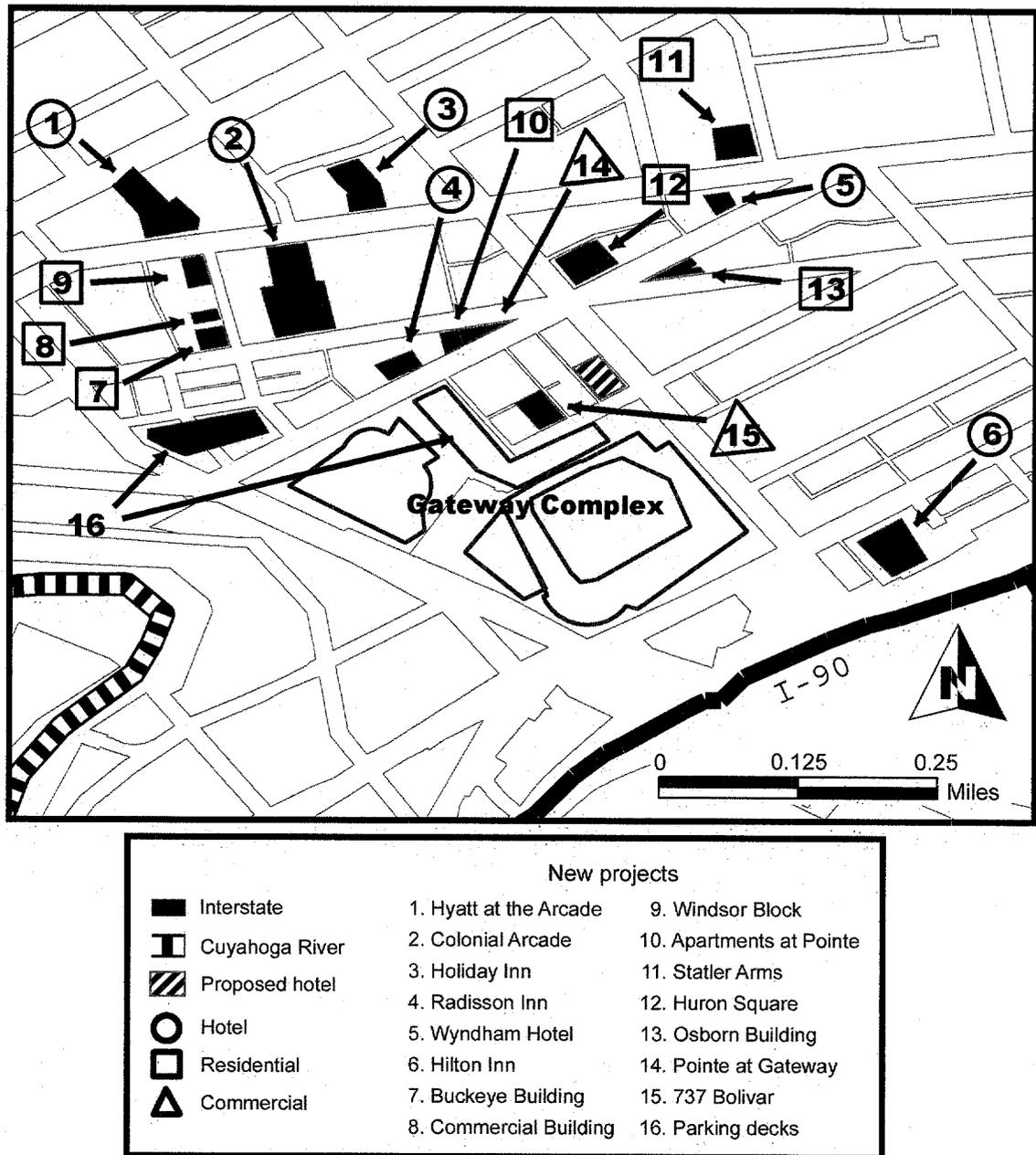


Figure 4. New construction and adaptive reuse projects in the Gateway area, 1994–2001.
 Source: Northern Ohio Data and Information Service (2003)

and private sectors in hotel, commercial, and residential projects (Bullard, 1998; Hirzel, 1996; "Sports Complex," 2000). To date, the value of redevelopment projects in the district comes in at well over \$250 million since Gateway's opening in 1994, excluding the \$467 million invested in the complex itself.

While the number of redevelopment projects and the total value of these projects is impressive, Gateway's actual role in the genesis of these projects requires some attention. Does Gateway satisfy the "but for" criterion to qualify as a successful urban redevelopment catalyst? As for the residential and hotel projects, the Gateway project cannot be said to have catalyzed the initial demand for new housing and for new hotel space; the original demand existed separate from any investments in Gateway. Much of the housing in the district can be attributed to substantial subsidies for residential projects in downtown Cleveland, as the city provides tax abatements to downtown housing projects (N. Krumholz and D. Keating, personal communication, April, 1998; see also Fannie Mae Foundation, 1999). As for hotel space, the city had long recognized a need for new hotels to serve their expanded Convention Center; new hotels were an eventuality in Cleveland's downtown.

Gateway did, however, play a role in *where* this demand was met, ultimately leading to the genesis of a vibrant urban district where one did not previously exist. Investments in the project, coupled with massive infrastructure upgrades and urban design improvements in the district, made the area attractive to residential and hotel development. In turn, these projects helped to provide a critical mass necessary to support retail establishments and restaurants. Gateway provided an opportunity for development to be focused in this section of downtown, achieving the city's vision of an entertainment-oriented district that could connect Playhouse Square and Tower City Center.

What Gateway has done and continues to do, even admitted by the sternest of critics (N. Krumholz and D. Keating, personal communication, April, 1998), is to help remake the image of this portion of downtown, returning suburbanites and tourists to the city's old market district for the first time in years (Austrian & Rosentraub, 1997; "Rating Gateway," 2000). The benefits of this revitalized district are not limited to new development and some new downtown residents; property values in the district have increased 13% since 1993 (Achkar & Lubinger, 2000). The physical renewal of the district is why Gateway, despite its tremendous cost overruns and its tepid employment impact, has been considered such a success for the

city of Cleveland (Austrian & Rosentraub, 1997). Due in part to Gateway, a once vacant, dingy, and unsafe section of downtown has been transformed into a hustling, bustling entertainment district.

While all of these new hotels, restaurants, and residences represent successful spinoff development from Gateway, the news is not all good. The rush of new restaurants for the first few years after Gateway opened has slowed considerably, and a number of seemingly successful restaurants have closed their doors (Long, 2000). The influx of upscale new businesses has also negatively impacted existing retail businesses (Lubinger, 2000). Lastly, the once vibrant and proud Euclid-Prospect shopping district still shows only limited signs of returning to life, even given Cleveland's emerging image as a "Comeback City." Project planners and city leaders had hoped that Gateway and other megaproject investments, such as the Tower City Center and Galleria malls, would provide the critical mass necessary for the revival of Euclid Avenue, Cleveland's historic and symbolic retail core. This has not occurred.

It is also important to recognize that the Gateway district has thrived at the expense of other areas in downtown Cleveland. Critics of sports facility economic impact studies have noted that a substitution effect negates many of the projected benefits of any project (Baade, 1996a; Sanderson, 2000). In effect, if a person doesn't have a baseball game to attend, their entertainment dollars will still almost certainly be spent in the local economy, at the movies for example. What Gateway helps to illustrate is that this substitution effect is experienced spatially as well. While Gateway has been the primary catalyst for an emergent entertainment district, many businesses (particularly the restaurants) have relocated from other downtown districts. The Flats, the first of Cleveland's downtown districts to re-emerge as an entertainment district, has fallen upon hard times since Gateway opened, and city leaders are now discussing options for revitalizing this part of the city (Lubinger & Thomas, 2000).

Assessing Cleveland's Gateway. From a purely physical redevelopment perspective, Cleveland's Gateway complex can be termed a successful development catalyst. As envisioned by the city's *Downtown Plan*, Gateway has been the anchor and catalyst to an emerging downtown entertainment district. Although demand for new housing and hotels existed separate from Gateway, this project provided a focal point for new development, leading to the establishment of a coherent and vibrant urban district where one did not exist. However, while district redevelopment has

occurred, downtown Cleveland's fundamental problems remain. The Euclid-Prospect shopping area still shows few signs of emerging from its decades-long economic slump. In addition, downtown Cleveland appears capable of successfully supporting only a limited number of entertainment districts; Gateway's success has come at the expense of The Flats.

Conclusion: Sports Facilities and Urban Redevelopment

Sports facilities will likely continue to serve as major urban redevelopment tools, despite the fact that the majority of major league sports teams now play in new or recently opened stadiums or arenas. While the number of major league franchises desiring new facilities has fallen, the "have-nots" of the professional sports leagues continue to vigorously pursue public sector dollars for new sports complexes. Additionally, this trend towards downtown facilities has trickled into the minor leagues, leading places such as Louisville, Toledo, and Durham to invest in sports facilities intended to spur the redevelopment of downtown districts (Jossi, 1998).

Given that sports facilities will continue to serve as staples of the urban redevelopment toolkit, it is essential that planners recognize that these projects provide some limited opportunities for catalyzing urban redevelopment. The experience of Baltimore, however, indicates that district redevelopment is not guaranteed by massive investments in a sports project. While Baltimore's Camden Yards is successful on many fronts, it has not been the urban redevelopment catalyst that it has been perceived to be. Other cities have built sports stadiums and arenas with hopes for urban redevelopment with little to show for it (Barta, 1999; Connelly, 2000).

In contrast, Cleveland's experience indicates that sports facilities can play a role in urban revitalization efforts, catalyzing district redevelopment in the form of hotels, residences, and retail businesses as theorized by Robertson (1995). Cleveland is not alone in this experience. In San Diego, the public sector and the city's MLB team entered into a unique public/private partnership to create a downtown "Ballpark District," and early evidence indicates that the area surrounding the ballpark will be remade into a hotel, entertainment, and residential district (Chapin, 2002). In Columbus, Ohio, a district redevelopment initiative centered on a new sports arena is underway, funded

primarily by the city's flagship downtown corporation (Wright, 2001).

The mixed success of these projects indicates that further research is required to identify those project attributes and/or those planning processes and programs that yield development benefits. Research indicates that district-level planning with an expressed goal of catalyzing district development is important to realizing this outcome (Baade & Dye, 1988; Chapin, 1999; Johnson, 1991, 1995). The Cleveland case reported here suggests that a development organization that markets the district and provides development assistance may also prove useful in the pursuit of district development.

It is important to note in closing that this study is not meant to imply that sports facilities are efficient uses of public dollars. Even given the successful redevelopment of a district, the tremendous costs associated with new sports facilities usually minimizes any chance for a positive economic return from these projects. Instead, this study is intended to illustrate that if public dollars continue to be poured into these edifices, then district development is one positive outcome that *can* result.

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Notes

1. By *major league* I mean professional sports franchises in the "big four" sports leagues: the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Hockey League (NHL).

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