

Interview with Phillip Handy and Richard (Dick) Victor

Interviewed by Linda Mack

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Minneapolis Riverfront Redevelopment Oral History Project

Phil Handy - PH
Dick Victor - DV
Linda Mack - LM

LM: I am here at the Mill City Museum with Phil Handy and Dick Victor, both of whom started with the HRA [Housing and Redevelopment Authority] in 1968 as . . . ?

PH: I was a Planner 1.

LM: That is Phil.

DV: I was an engineering assistant.

LM: Oh, wow! And that is Dick. We haven't tried a joint one of these [interviews] before. [Chuckles] It will be fun. What was the riverfront like in 1968? You may not have been working on the riverfront at that time.

PH: We were not working directly on the riverfront, except to the extent that in 1968, as a planner, I was working in the Seward Neighborhood, part of which, of course, fronts the river to the south. That was more in the residential area of the riverfront. It was really the first time I had become aware of the riverfront as a recreational resource with West River Road along there. In terms of downtown, I had worked downtown before that as an intern in the Central Office, which was in the old waterworks building on Third Street. At that point, the riverfront was basically just an edge of Gateway Center. Other than being kind of a scenic amenity for some of the high-rises, that was about the extent of it.

The planning activities then had identified some of the renewal areas that abutted the river on the east bank side. That would have been the Saint Anthony Neighborhood to the northeast and the Holmes Neighborhood to the southeast. Also, at that time, planning work had initiated on the Nicollet Island east bank area. But I wasn't actively involved in those efforts at that time.

At that time, the railroad stations were still working. [Chuckles] So the west bank was still pretty much a rail and industrial area. I think Bolander had the gravel and salt piles on the river at that point, although I really don't know when they started that.

DV: I think it came a little later. They bought portions of it from an existing operation.

PH: What are your memories, Dick?

DV: I guess my memory of the riverfront, when I first came here, was the fact that I parked my car there. [Chuckles] Because it was the cheapest parking in town and there was a whole sea of it there.

LM: Yes, that's very true.

DV: When I started, I think I made \$621 a month, so there wasn't a lot of money. My first job assignments, again, weren't directly on the river. They were basically certifying costs to the Federal Government in our various urban renewal plans that we had underway, which is how we were able to gain the federal share, by having local contributions for streets and sewers and other costs that we would finance.

My actual first (and kind of scary) job was to take something from the riverfront and move it to the Saint Anthony Neighborhood, and that was the Pioneer Statue that was in Pioneer Park, which was directly in front of the post office.

LM: Oh! Yes.

DV: It was a whole block, and they had to make room for the development that was going to go there. So it was basically lifting this kind of priceless statuette that weighed tons and transporting it over to the Saint Anthony Neighborhood, because that was the only piece of land that we had where people would accept it. It was a little pie-shaped thing.

PH: Main Street and Marshall [Avenue] come together there.

LM: Yes. That was still when they thought the freeway would go through there?

PH: Yes.

DV: Then, as I expanded my knowledge, I was responsible for inspecting the demolition of the Janney, Semple, Hill and Company Building.

LM: Oh, I've seen pictures of that. That was some building.

DV: It was a big wood building that was directly on Third Avenue, when you came off the Third Avenue Bridge. So I had a wood building that Carl Bolander was tearing down and basically turning into rubble and hauling away. I had engineering responsibilities

more than other activities; things that they wanted done, inspections of demolition work all over the city and/or coordination with the Public Works Department of Minneapolis.

LM: So what was the sense of the river at that time?

DV: Well, you know, I think the sense was it was there, but there were so many industrial things going on. At that point, the elevators—I call them the General Mills' elevators; they've now been demolished—were in place and operational. The underground tunnel that connected that to the Washburn Crosby complex was in use. There was actually a conveyor belt in the tunnel, which, in later years, I went down and inspected and walked through to check and see if it was closed off. I was in hip boots that didn't do a very good job . . . it was the scariest tunnel I've ever been in.

LM: You didn't find any bodies?

DV: No. No.

PH: Did you have your steel tape to keep the rats away? [Chuckles]

DV: No, there was water about maybe, two, two and a half feet deep. We had to go down to the end to find it out, so we were in lights, and there were about four of us.

You know, I was aware of the Washburn Crosby Mills. General Mills was still there. The machine shop was there. Everything was intact. It was like they walked out of the milling building at the Washburn Crosby. I wasn't responsible at that point for kind of *getting* things. I was just trying to *protect* things.

PH: I was involved more with planning and the planners that were active in that area. At that time, the head of Planning for the MHRA [Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority] was Tal [Talbot] Jones, who had been involved in the very early planning with Gateway Center and others. Jerry Luesse, of course, also was very much involved. Although, again, in 1968 I wasn't directly involved with the riverfront planning. But just being around those people, as I recall, there was a real sense of the potential of the downtown riverfront, to turn it from an industrial area to a major attraction and public use area. But the sense was, as Dick was saying, that the industrial use was still so active. And because the industrial use was active, the railroads still were maintaining that they were going to be there forever. And because of the limited ability of government to impact the railroad operations, there was kind of a fatalism. Even though we could see the potential, the realization of that potential was probably quite a ways off.

LM: I have a specific question. I once saw plans to tear down the Milwaukee Railroad Depot to allow for an angled kind of ramp at Third Avenue. Was that a real threat or does that jog anything in your memory?

DV: I don't recall anything like that.

PH: From time to time, there were some kind of master concept plans that various people prepared that showed this west bank riverfront area as kind of a cultural center or museum, things like that. In those years, they really didn't anticipate, as I recall, a lot of private economic utilization of the riverfront in terms of office or residential or like that. It seems, at that point, people were mainly envisioning more institutional, public institutional, uses of the riverfront.

DV: Over the years, developers would come in. Bob Ready, who worked, at one point, for the City of Minneapolis in the Planning Department and was, I think, the senior planner, retired from the city and he went into private practice. There was a gentleman by the name of Harry Wirth. I think he was the heir to the Red Star Yeast fortune. He lived in Wisconsin, I think, at the time.

LM: Yes.

DV: I think Harry proposed some very dramatic . . . and not real rational plans. [Chuckles] He basically, at the time, had bid against the city for the rights from the railroad. They just kind of let him go ahead and do it. The railroad had originally put the property up for sale. This was long before the bankruptcies and some of the other stuff that happened. That particular property went into bankruptcy and it was, I believe, a West Coast, California bank. There were *lots* of plans, and architects would come in. Peter, the guy across the river . . .

LM: Peter Hall.

PH: Peter Hall had looked at some. Dewey [Duane] Thorbeck had looked some. There were classes at the University of Minnesota where they studied this and their classes would come up with all these *wild* and crazy kinds of things.

PH: I think another influence, still at that time, was that the regional transportation system was very much an open question. At that point, the I-335 Freeway was still, in the Transportation Department's eyes, going to cross the river, sweep down the east bank onto Boom Island and, in some iterations, even go on to Nicollet Island and then go over to hook up to 35W over by Como [Avenue]. The impact that would have had would have been such a detriment to the concept of recreational use and, especially, residential use of the central riverfront. Until that issue got resolved, it was hard to move forward with any particular long range plan for an alternative land use on the riverfront.

LM: I'm aware of where that corridor was as it went north along the east bank of the river, but where would it have crossed the river and where would it have gone on the west bank? Would it have connected to 35W?

PH: Pretty much where it comes in now, as I recall. It was kind of like an S curve on the east bank, onto the north tip of Nicollet Island and Boom Island, and then it would have crossed the river, I think, south of the Plymouth Avenue Bridge, and then made another

curve, so it would go into the trench going west pretty much where I-394 does come into Washington Avenue now. Does that sound right, Dick?

DV: Yes, it was going to come in, I think, over toward . . . not the Honeywell Building. What's the name of the building now?

LM: Are you thinking north or south?

DV: North. I thought it was going to come across there. There's a *big* building. I thought it was a Honeywell building at one point.

PH: On Washington?

DV: Between Washington and Seventh Street at about Eleventh or Twelfth.

LM: How about south of the Hennepin Avenue Bridge? Where did it go south?

PH: It didn't.

LM: It didn't?

PH: No, not all. It stayed north and it would go pretty much along the railroad trench that continues east. Then it swung by that and then slightly north until it went into an interchange with 35W, somewhere over by the Como Neighborhood. It all stayed to the north of East Hennepin, as I recall.

LM: Okay.

PH: That was a cause célèbre of the Saint Anthony Neighborhood groups.

LM: Oh, yes. Al Hofstede said he finally put the kibosh on that.

PH: Well, I think several people could claim credit.

DV: I don't think it was one person. I think it was a whole lot of people.

PH: One thing that I remember with that is that by 1972, I had taken a planning position in the northeast office, Urban Renewal office, specifically to start the planning for the East Hennepin commercial area. Trying to develop a concept plan for the future of that I-335 was a major point. The MHRA hired a traffic consultant, BRW (Bather, Ringrose, Wolsfeld, Inc.) to do a traffic analysis to kind of look at the Transportation Department's assumptions as to the utilization of that connection. The result of that clearly showed it really didn't make a lot of sense. As I recall, that provided some grist for the number of citizen groups and political interests to go to the state and the federal government and finally kill the idea of the river crossing. In addition to killing the freeway, that then put

back into play the re-use of Boom Island and the north tip of Nicollet Island and raised the issue of what should that area of the central riverfront become.

LM: Wow, we have so many pieces here.

PH: Also, that involved the B.F. Nelson Roofing Company, which was still in existence at that time, right on the riverfront, and a very . . .

DV: Big polluter. It's still got pollution underneath.

PH: When the freeway went away, then the issue became, well, what's going to happen with that plant. So all these things influenced each other.

LM: Yes. Let me go back a bit . . . We were back in this era where the river was still an industrial river. It wasn't yet historic [Chuckles], in the sense that things were still operating.

DV: It's always been historic.

LM: Right. [Laughter] People weren't *thinking* of it historically.

DV: That's right.

PH: We invented history in 1973. [Laughter]

LM: In 1973? Oh, good! [Chuckles] So my question was, when would you say that the rebirth of the Minneapolis riverfront began? What were the beginning steps?

DV: Oh, boy.

PH: There are *so* many interlocking, interdependent influences. I think one of the earliest things that happened that kind of got people's attention back on the riverfront was, actually, Pracna on Main.

LM: Yes. Yes.

PH: The decision by Peter Hall to buy that little building on Main Street and reuse it, not only for his architectural office but as the restaurant and tavern, brought people back to the river for the first time looking out over the falls and over the wild areas of the river bank. Boy, at that time, they were wild in more ways than one. [Chuckles]

LM: Yes.

PH: People started seeing that potential again. I also think that on the other side, the Fuji-Ya restaurant had the same kind of role of sort of a private/commercial use. Bringing the public right to the bank of the river had an influence.

DV: I think the riverfront kind of, I'm going to say, got *squeezed* into our psyche by a couple things happening. Number one: the remaining pieces in Gateway were developed, mostly residential, both elderly and otherwise, on the end up toward the post office. At the same time, we were working in Cedar Riverside with another big residential complex going up there, which led, again in time, to the Seven Corners development, which included the hotel and some more affordable housing. So what I saw is the river on one side and Peter Hall on the other side, and then the Riverplace development happened. Each of these had some element of history in them, at some point.

PH: A couple other things, again going back more to the 1970s, that occur to me that had an influence on all of this . . . and again, it's related to the removal of the Interstate 335 corridor, is when that was abandoned, it put into play future land use considerations on Boom Island and part of the east bank. At that time, the Saint Anthony urban renewal areas were well underway, Saint Anthony West and Saint Anthony East. The city processed a major modification to the Saint Anthony West Urban Renewal Plan that basically extended the boundaries over to the riverfront and included Boom Island and the old B.F. Nelson area. That area then became subject to debate again as to land use. Ultimately, it ended up sort of a debate between high-to mid-density residential or low-density. The neighborhood residents pretty much wanted single family housing and the urban planners wanted higher density, in part to take advantage of the riverfront views and amenities.

What came out of that whole process was low-density housing on the bluff and inland, but on Boom Island and the B.F. Nelson area, there evolved the concept of a land use category that we called the Riverfront Recreation. It became written into the Urban Renewal Plan. I'm not sure of this, but it may have been the first formally adopted plan—by formally, I mean by the City Council, which had to adopt urban renewal plans—that had the concept of riverfront recreation as a specific reuse category.

I think that the role of the Saint Anthony Neighborhood and the neighborhood groups in kind of focusing political attention on residential and recreational reuse of the riverfront was important and shouldn't be overlooked in terms of the evolving history of the riverfront. The second thing that I don't think we really talked about is the role of Louis Zelle and the Saint Anthony Main development on the east bank. Without his vision of doing that and persistence in doing that, I think things may have evolved differently, too. Certainly, putting together the Saint Anthony Main project, opening that up to commercial uses, bringing in, at least in the first glorious golden years, a large number of people down to the riverfront who could then walk on Dick's new main street. [Chuckles]

LM: Right. We loved it.

PH: And tying into the whole riverfront trail network that was laid out and developed as part of the 1976 Bicentennial observance, really, I think, opened people's eyes to how private/commercial use can work with public park area and active recreational uses to compliment each other. I think that is kind of an essential point to make in terms of urban

riverfront corridors; that public areas and the private areas don't necessarily conflict with each other. They can, in fact, make each other possible to succeed.

LM: Yes. The east bank, the Saint Anthony area, has been the best example of that, really.

PH: Right. As part of the planning activities in the East Hennepin commercial area in 1972-1973, we hired the planning architectural firm of Gruen Associates out of New York. They developed a master plan for the East Hennepin area. It overlapped with the Nicollet Island/East Bank urban renewal planning. They really pointed the attention to the potential, what they saw, being New Yorkers, for the riverfront—duh, you build residential high rises! They identified the blocks fronting on the river to the east of Main Street as excellent potential for mixed use, high-density development, residential and commercial. I remember meeting with Bill Surdyk and Leo Meltzer and Cashway Furniture, all those people, and the old merchants along East Hennepin. They were saying, “Who would want to live here?”

LM: [Chuckles]

PH: But they came around. As it turned out, we were about twenty, thirty years ahead of the market. But, again, it sort of demonstrated the potential for that type of reuse along the main street of the east bank riverfront. Eventually, it came to pass.

LM: Yes, absolutely.

DV: There are some—and Phil knows this—people that have worked their whole careers . . . you know, it's hard to specify all of these things and get everything exactly the way you remember it. A lot of times, the way we remember it isn't the way it chronologically happened.

PH: Right. Another person that probably should be mentioned is—I don't know if this has come up in your other interviews—an early role activist in the east bank area was Father Moss of Our Lady of Lourdes.

LM: Is he still around?

PH: I don't know. Not there, I know.

LM: His name has surfaced, definitely.

PH: He really galvanized, again, through the DeLaSalle mafia context, political support for the early renewal planning and activities in the Saint Anthony Neighborhood and on the east bank. He saw the future of that church being closely tied with it.

LM: Right.

PH: Of course the renovation of that church was made possible by the Boisclair development. He shamelessly wrung Bob Boisclair out saying, “Well, gee, your construction activity kind of loosened the mortar here, so I think you better tuck-point my church for us.” [Chuckles]

DV: I actually sat on the negotiation committee for that. I will tell you that it was most interesting because the people that weren’t there that were the driving force were Al and Louis and all the rest of the people from northeast that had graduated from DeLaSalle. Some went to church there, but they all knew Father Moss.

LM: Oh, yes.

DV: It wasn’t a question of what we were going to do or how much it was going to cost. It was when we were going to do it. [Laughter]

LM: Isn’t that marvelous? I love it.

DV: Which was an interesting way to negotiate things.

LM: Did you have other things that you . . . ?

PH: No.

LM: We’ve got Nicollet Island kind of up to a certain point. But still there was this raging debate between the HRA and the Park Board about how this was going to . . .

PH: Right. That got resolved kind of after I left there.

LM: Okay.

PH: But I know basically what happened. The grand compromise was—I believe this was after the Riverfront Coordinating Board had been formed, and it kind of funneled through that—that the Park Board would be the underlying land owner. Then the MCDA [Minneapolis Community Development Agency] would lease back certain areas, primarily the north tip, and then sublease individual lots and houses for an historic village, residential restoration of historic houses and use vacant lots as a location onto which threatened houses of similar time frames could be moved from other areas of the city. So that is still, as I understand it, the basic structure.

DV: I think they were long term leases.

PH: They’re very long term leases, yes.

DV: And they were able to mortgage.

LM: Right.

PH: Right. The initial problem was financing the restoration work. I think the MCDA had to step in and provide a lot of the initial financing for that work, too, before the private lenders got more comfortable with the concept.

LM: Do you know where that compromised was forged? I know kind of who had to agree to it. Al Wittman actually described the meeting where . . .

PH: No, I wasn't involved with that, so I don't know the bloody details.

LM: I'm trying to trace that. Somebody said it came out of Mayor Don Fraser's office, but it would have been staff work.

PH: Yes.

LM: I'm still trying to figure that one out.

PH: I'm not sure who had Nicollet Island at that point in time.

DV: Was it Dick Brustad?

PH: He may have been involved. I can't help you on that one.

LM: Okay. Any other major . . .?

PH: That kind of runs me . . . By the mid-1970s, late 1970s is when I went on to other things.

LM: Well, should we liberate you then?

PH: Okay.

[Interview interruption]

DV: In order to clean up the depot, clean up the exterior and kind of get it into a more marketable stage so people could see what they were really getting when they came to look at it, whether architects or other prospective developers, we invested money. I can't remember exactly how much; I could probably find out. I may have it in my other records. It was a substantial sum. To do the clock, we had to fly in a clockmaker from Arizona or California—he was right on the border—that specialized in these kinds of clocks. We had to get a historic restoration consultant that really knew mortar, because we were going to tuck-point and clean and we didn't want to do damage to the bricks that were there. The unusual shape of the depot with the tall tower made it harder to do because of just the logistics to get people up and down. It was done as a marketing tool. We actually had an award ceremony for the clock tower and a PR release that covered that. I would guess, maybe three hundred people showed up on the intersection.

LM: [Chuckles]

DV: We actually lit the lights that back up the clock tower. We tried to do a fun thing whenever we could, because it attracts people. It brings notoriety to it. Many of the people had seen the dingy, black color and, suddenly, the salmon granite came out. Most people were just shocked about how clean it was. I think that was, quite frankly, an image turner for a lot of people. We still had the rickety train house roof, that structure, with broken windows and the transition piece. Quite frankly, people could see promise with that. It was money well invested. The Highway Department helped us with that. It was some real turning, because we used some transportation funds for that.

LM: I see.

DV: They had some justification over it.

LM: Ah.

DV: After the fire at the Washburn [Mill], we did a similar exercise, in that we structurally braced the whole front wall of what is now the museum, and braced it into the structural frame that was still left there, so that the wall wouldn't collapse. There wasn't much in the way of structural support, because the floors were gone. You can see in this particular picture I'm showing here that this is rubble piled up at the bottom there . . . through the windows.

LM: Yes.

DV: This is a later picture, actually . . .

LM: Yes, because that's the Humboldt fire.

DV: That's the Humboldt fire. You can see the burned stuff. Obviously, it had just recently happened, because that's the icy water that froze, and there's the fire truck down on the bottom.

LM: Oh, yes, right.

DV: This is another picture of that. In the end, I guess the expenditures we did really brought forth kind of a flower in the midst of all of this nothingness that was down there. It has turned into, I think, a great addition for Minneapolis, just saving the building and bringing it back. It's been an educational facility. It's the home of a nationally-known architect, Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle. It's a home for some other businesses as well. It's educational for kids that visit and go through see the flour tower and the Betty Crocker kitchens. And folks see the Gold Medal Flour sign that we rebuilt. That was done in partnership with the General Mills Foundation. They provided some of the money and we provided some of the money. We actually had to take that sign in its entirety . . . We had a crane here with a three hundred thirty foot boom lift it, after it had

been cut, and put it on the ground, then took it on a big truck to the sign shop. They basically redid the sign and then we redid it again, lifting it up three hundred feet. The wind couldn't be more than one mile an hour when we did that. They actually lifted the sign up. They brought it over where we had cut it off and they welded it onto the existing base.

LM: Hmmm.

DV: They held it there three hundred feet up on the top of this, planted it and welded it in place. It took over a day to take it down, and it took a day to put it up. It was the largest truck crane in the Cities . . . probably in Minnesota, for that matter.

LM: Oh, my gosh.

DV: These were kind of exciting things. And then to see it blink, solid, and blink on and off and do some of those other things that it did, it just warmed people's hearts. They could see it from the Stone Arch Bridge. They could see it from Main Street. They could see it from downtown.

LM: And now, they can see it from the Guthrie Theatre. I think it's one of the great views from the Guthrie.

DV: Yes. Well, it's an iconic structure, you know. I was really pleased to see the General Mills Foundation share in the cost of that. I'm trying to remember what it cost. I think it was less than \$100,000. So it was not that great a sum for a landmark. I would hope that they could do that to the Grain Belt sign. Again, that needs it.

LM: I know, badly.

DV: As development proceeded, it kind of started on the river side of . . . Well, the buildings that faced the riverfront, for the most part, basically started first, and the depot. Those two then allowed things to start proceeding down. Brighton Development came on board and built three condo buildings along there—three mostly in rehab buildings, I guess. There's some new construction that was part of it as well. They then contracted to move across the street and started on several of the buildings across the street. They finished two of them. Their buildings were supported with a public grant, which basically allowed for joint use of some of the lower sections. It also provided some of the parking for the museum, which it needed, and some of the first floor commercial that was anticipated.

LM: Yes.

DV: We then put a plaza at the end of the milling complex that was intended to tie to the Guthrie after it came along.

LM: Did that surprise you?

DV: Uh . . . yes.

LM: [Chuckles]

DV: It surprised me in that when we first talked about the Guthrie with their architects who were local here . . . We got a chance to sit down with them and talk in depth about how it related and what went on. Again, Ann Calvert was in charge of the negotiations, but any of the related construction improvements, the ramp across the street and stuff, was done by Public Works and myself and others . . . and how it would relate to the other pieces.

Putting the plaza on the end of the museum was a critical thing for allowing the Humboldt to go ahead, because we needed access to the museum for fire and emergency vehicles, and we needed access to the Humboldt for their parking, and we wanted a public plaza. That had really never been done, that I'm aware of, in Minneapolis. We had to negotiate with the Guthrie as well, because they didn't want just kind of an ugly plaza. Now, they did some remodeling after they built it, and that's fine. It was all done to, again, provide a tie down to the river, allowing the pedestrians to get to the park and to see the river, to not just cut it off from the rest of Minneapolis.

In all of the things that we have done, in most cases, we've had to do the accompanying public works stuff, which would be water and sewer and other improvements. We worked with the private utility companies, NSP and Minnegasco, to make sure that they could serve everything. In some cases, we built roads where there weren't any roads connecting it to Washington Avenue. Again, trying to tie it together. We had plans for some additional pedestrian ties in up to the rail station, but they haven't come to fruition *yet*, but I'm sure in the long term, they'll come to the light rail.

LM: To the light rail?

DV: Yes. The light rail was another item that I took on. We built the station, the one at the stadium, and did some artwork with it.

LM: [Chuckles]

DV: We tried to make it pedestrian friendly and, at the same time, a place where the stadium folks could celebrate and have fun things on it and give a transportation tie. Many thought, at least the critical people, that light rail was going to be a big flop. If anything, that's the busiest station because of the events.

LM: Oh, yes.

DV: It's turned out to be, basically, a marquee place now. It provided the restrooms that they didn't have before. [Chuckles] It provided parking underneath, which was done in

conjunction with the Minneapolis Public Works Department, and it provided parking for events as well.

It's all these little steps. You have to have a master plan. And the UDA [Urban Design Associates] master plan thought about a lot those, so we had pedestrian corridors leading to the river. When the Downtown East/North Loop Plan came, that was just another plan that fit into the kind of nest of plans that we had that allowed us continue. That is still developing, and depending on what the financing world decides, will go ahead at some point. It's the long term view we've always taken, and the short term details, we don't lose. If you have a plan and implementers that are ready to implement . . . In most cases the city has had to help. That's getting more and more difficult as the economy kind of worsens. I think that our role as a development agency, where I used to work, will probably change to be more of a cheerleader now, because it's going to be harder to get financing, I would assume, both privately and to get it through the public sector with the declining values and other economic concerns.

LM: Is there anything that went terribly wrong? Can you see any missteps? I look at this possible design for the West River Parkway and at least this version shows the Great River Road diverting out to Washington Avenue and back. It seems like that would have been a big mistake, because it wouldn't have brought as many people down to the riverfront as the current alignment does. Were there things that were big missteps, do you think? This *didn't* happen, but . . .

DV: No. I think that having the River Road as, I'll call it a pastoral view, along with looking at the remnants of what's there, what's been exposed, and having the benefit of examples, a museum that celebrates that and amplifies that, seeing the buildings that have been restored and put to not public use but private use along there and, in some cases, buildings that could be done in the future, is the right way to go. I think the big thing was the pedestrian connectors. Quite frankly, Washington Avenue is a bearer. It's always been a bearer. It's a big street. It carries a *lot* of traffic, and not just industrial traffic but commuter traffic. So I think we have to kind of pick and choose where we do these things. Downtown is a more urban environment. This leads to a more pastoral environment. I think not putting huge densities down here but moderate, intermediate densities. Like what's happened on the riverfront is very good. The idea of the live/work walk-to-work then exists. If we have people down here, a lot of them don't like to get on the freeway and go other places, so it helps the whole downtown environment.

The economics now make the realization of some of the plans very hard, much harder than it was even five, six years ago. That's going to be a really big challenge. Cities are faced with fire protection and police and the infrastructure and all of the other things that cities do. Our industry here of development basically has its ups and downs, and I think we're going to be a little bit down for a while. But the land is there. It's not going to be a gas station or a mini-mart.

LM: Right, right.

DV: It's going to be something special. I think we've laid the investment for that. At some point, the economy, particularly the housing economy, is going to turn around. When that happens, we should be in the mix. I think that's what's important. When I came, I thought I'd be at the Housing and Redevelopment Authority for a year or two and I'd be gone.

LM: [Chuckles]

DV: After I retired, from 1968 to 2000, whatever it was, thirty-some years later, I kind of can say, "Well, I've touched Minneapolis. It didn't always go fast, but we always were pointed in the right direction." And I think that's where Minneapolis is going. We've won awards for design. The Mill City Museum won a National Preservation award. I was lucky enough to go down to receive the award at the Historical Society. It was probably one of the highlights of my career just to step on the stage there in front of all these *historians* and take on a little piece of history.

There are hundreds of people that have worked on all these plans and different design deals. The attorneys that helped us buy the land, the relocation people that moved people out so we could develop, the negotiators with the private developers to sell us things and numerous cooperative efforts on the part of the city and all of its departments. A development agency is treated much like a business. We operated parking lots. We were a landlord. We got the same code enforcement things that everybody else did. It's just really gratifying to see, after all these years, that we've gotten not only neighborhoods rebuilt, we've had commercial districts rebuilt. And we've had, basically, stadiums and other public facilities, libraries . . . you know, this is a first class town, and it's always going to be.

When I retired, my wife said, "Let's move to our lake home at the lake." And I said, "No, I like the city." I can't move away from the city. I like going down to Fuji-Ya and having my sushi and to the different entertainment venues. Minneapolis is in my heart, and it's going to stay there. I was born here and I'll probably die here . . . hopefully, in about one hundred years. [Laughter]

LM: Thank you for the interview today.