

## HERITAGE SQUARE MARKETPLACE

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### The Empowerment Zone's Main Street Development Strategy and Selected EZ Activities

In 1999, the Compact completed renovation of old Engine House No. 11, at 1000 E. Main Street, and made that building its corporate headquarters. Prior to the Compact engaging in that project, the building had been a deteriorating shell. Rainwater poured through the roof, the building had many missing and broken windows, and the wood interior was severely rotted.



The Board of Trustees determined that the Compact needed to make a statement by taking the largest deteriorated building, and returning it to vibrancy. "Who else will invest if we do not?", was the question the Board asked.

The state of Engine House No. 11 mirrored the condition of many of our commercial corridors. So in 2001, the Compact worked with the City of Columbus and pulled together 220 community stakeholders over a 7-month

period to refine the Empowerment Zone strategic plan initiatives. Out of this work came a series of strategies to improve the major commercial corridors of the EZ. Primary among these were our "Catalytic Site" strategies – where specific development strategies for 11 key sites were identified. One corridor that offered significant promise was the E. Main Street corridor: the corridor was characterized by littered and vacant lots, abandoned and deteriorating buildings, and a dearth of significant neighborhood-serving commercial activity. However, our assessment was that there was considerable promise for new development and vitality.

The EZ Catalytic Site strategy for Main Street was developed to support existing businesses, assemble scattered parcels of land for new development, and focus Compact work on a retail/commercial node between Ohio Avenue and Wilson Avenue.



In 2002, the Compact approached the Central Ohio Transit Authority, seeking to help the proposed Main Street Transit Center move forward. We were surprised to hear that COTA was on the verge of moving the project to the west side, as it had been unable to assemble sufficient real estate on Main Street to move forward.

The Compact had been assembling land at the southeast corner of Main Street and Champion Avenue. In a short series of negotiations, the Compact was able to assemble remaining lots and vacant buildings, and demolish blighted structures including the one pictured above, clear the land, and deliver the 7-parcel site for the Transit Center to COTA.



The COTA Transit Center held its Ribbon Cutting in October 2005, with Children’s Hospital *Close To Home Center* as its tenant. *Revol Communications* followed shortly – a new retail presence on Main Street.

In 2003, the Compact approached the Salvation Army, which owned 1179-1181 E. Main Street, and asked to purchase the building to drive a retail center. Major Guy Klemanski responded, “if it will help the community and bring new goods and services, we can move. All you have to do is help us find a new space that meets our

needs, and help hold us harmless on any increased costs.” Working in partnership, we set out to accomplish this goal.



With that as guidelines, the Compact eventually assembled the 8 parcel site at 966 E. Main Street. The Salvation Army then sold 1179-1181 E. Main Street to the Compact, the Compact sold 966 E. Main Street to the Salvation Army, and in 2007 the Salvation Army constructed its \$2.8M new regional headquarters on that site.

During this period, Central Community House had been working on a capital campaign for its new corporate headquarters, child day care, and settlement house functions. With EZ dollars, the Compact and

Central Community House collaborated to fill the remaining funding gap, and Central Community House began construction of its new building, with a 2005 completion date.



Additional real estate purchases were made at Main Street and Wilson Avenue, Main Street and Ohio Avenue, and Main Street and Champion Avenue, as the Compact continues to grow the Heritage Square concept – a neighborhood-serving retail and commercial node for the Near East Side.

In fact, the Compact has begun marketing of Phase II of the Heritage Square Marketplace – a proposed 12,000 square foot new

building to be located immediately adjacent – at the southwest corner of Main Street and Wilson Avenue. This new building will replace the vacant eight-unit apartment building that the Compact demolished in January 2008. The building, designed by Pontia Architects, is designed to blend into the historic fabric of its surroundings, while still providing the modern amenities demanded by customers and retailers.



Just as critical as the physical development, the Compact has been instrumental in a process of rebranding East Main Street. Important in that effort has been the recognition that East Main Street is a part of the old National Road – the first federally-funded highway in the nation. The National Road was envisioned by President Washington as an all weather road crossing the Allegheny Mountains, and signed into law by President Thomas Jefferson. In 1833, the road came west from Cumberland Maryland, and crossed through Columbus on its way to the Mississippi River.



Through the Compact’s advocacy and our partnership with Franklin County Engineer Dean Ringle, E. Main Street received the Historic National Road designation on the 2008 Franklin County map, and signage has been installed to recognize this great history.

The history of East Main Street continues to evolve. We were a thought in the earliest days of this nation’s history. The street has experienced good times and bad. We are clearly on the upswing again, as new national retailers make their presence felt on the street, and as the Compact and its many partners continue to work to improve the street as we bring on-line the remaining pieces of Heritage Square Marketplace.