HERITAGE SQUARE MARKETPLACE
BACKGROUND INFORMATION -- HISTORY

History of the Columbus Empowerment Zone and the Columbus Compact Corporation

In December 1994, President Bill Clinton designated 104 distressed urban and rural areas as Empowerment Zones (EZ) and Enterprise Communities (EC). These designations were created to recognize, encourage, and provide additional resources for communities that had developed comprehensive strategies to improve areas that met federal criteria for "pervasive poverty, unemployment, and social distress."

The Columbus Enterprise Community application for designation and strategic plan recognized that prior to 1995 there was no single entity capable of coordinating the various sectors of the Greater Columbus community and focusing their efforts on central city redevelopment. Recognizing this fact, a partnership of government, business, and neighborhoods joined together to form the Columbus Compact Corporation ("the Compact").

The Compact's first efforts in Columbus' central city revitalization initiative were defined through a comprehensive, community-based planning process that coordinated strategies and engaged stakeholders in an effort to achieve lasting change.

In 1999, the City of Columbus and the Compact partnered to develop an even broader strategic plan for the redevelopment of central city Columbus. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reviewed the 10-year, $1.5 billion redevelopment plan, and awarded the larger *Empowerment Zone* designation to Columbus (the "EZ"). This 10-year federal designation is designed to focus community redevelopment strategies and resources, in such a manner as to rebuild our city's most distressed urban neighborhoods, and make them places that people want to come to live, work, and play. The EZ program carried the promise of federal grants totaling $100 million over ten years; however, the program has been subject to severe budget cuts and just $26M has been awarded. The Compact governs and administers the EZ on behalf of the City of Columbus.