



Devco Shouldering Increasingly Big Load

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NEW BRUNSWICK: The scaffolding and construction cranes that have dotted the cityscape for the past 25 years are about to move to Monument Square as a unique public/private development partnership builds on its success.

The New Brunswick Development Corporation, or Devco, will not only oversee the building of the 16-story Heldrich Plaza at Monument Square and the transformation of the nearby Neilson Street parking lots into a \$125-million mixed-use development, it will take over management of the Cultural Center across Livingston Avenue and City Market on adjacent George Street.

Leaders of the city's revitalization say Devco's growing momentum and successes have led to an expanding role and prominence in the city. The nonprofit has matured to where it is now evaluating what it needs to do to move itself, and New Brunswick, to the next level.

"We actually think now is the time. We have had some really good successes. Now is the time to build on those," said Devco's chairman, George R. Zoffinger.

Devco was created in 1976 to turn New Brunswick's blighted city blocks into a commercial and cultural hub by drawing businesses and development to the downtown.

A vision of revitalization that started with the construction of Johnson & Johnson's worldwide headquarters and the Hyatt Regency Hotel in 1978 awoke into the bricks-and-mortar reality of Liberty Plaza, Kilmer Square, Riverwatch, Civic Square Public Safety Building, Middlesex County Family Courthouse and other projects.

"Nobody has accomplished anything equivalent to what Devco has done," said James W. Hughes, dean of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy at Rutgers. He called Devco unique in the state compared with development agencies in other cities.

"In a lot of places, it doesn't work because the politicians basically move the process. The reason we're successful here is because the politicians have delegated that to professionals and they work with us," Zoffinger said.

New Brunswick Mayor James M. Cahill explained the relationship: "We have a tool. The tool is New Brunswick Development Corporation. It's up to the New Brunswick leadership to decide how the tool is best utilized," Cahill said.