

I. M. Pei Proposes a Rebirth for New Brunswick

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NEW BRUNSWICK, May 27 — If I. M. Pei has his say, downtown New Brunswick will be transformed from a decaying business area into an urban showplace.

The architect, who came to the United States from China in 1935 and is known for such designs as the Kennedy Library, the East Building of the National Gallery of Art in Washington and Philadelphia's Society Hall, unveiled today a \$150 million plan to rebuild New Brunswick's center city into a model commercial and residential community.

"New Brunswick's business district is kind of sick," Mr. Pei said, "but compared with other center cities, its neighborhoods are stable and the city is manageable."

Mr. Pei would restore the city to health by adding four office buildings, a hotel, town houses and shopping malls. He would also have trees planted along Albany Street and Railroad Plaza.

He said he would not have undertaken the project if he did not think it would be financed and carried out.

Leadership Cited

"We believe that New Brunswick has the civic and political leadership to take action on this plan," Mr. Pei said. "We have no time to draw up plans that will sit on the shelf."

Particularly powerful forces in the community, he said, are Rutgers, the state university, and Johnson & Johnson, the pharmaceutical company that has its corporate headquarters here. J & J has already purchased land adjacent to the proposed revitalization area.

The downtown reconstruction is being led by a private group of business and civic interests known as New Brunswick Tomorrow, under the chairmanship of John J. Heldrich,

corporate vice president of Johnson & Johnson. A full-time staff has been hired.

However, the key to completion of construction will rest on attracting financing in today's private market. Toward that end, a separate Development Corporation has been established under Richard B. Sellars, chairman of Johnson & Johnson. It will depend almost entirely on pri-



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I. M. Pei

vate financing rather than on government subsidies, according to David Nesbitt, president of the corporation.

"We intend to create a synergistic process much as they did in Atlanta," Mr. Nesbitt said. "New Brunswick must be competitive to create a climate for investors."

A major stumbling block to completion of the downtown reconstruction would be the failure to build

Route 18 along its proposed alignment, including a new bridge across the Raritan River. Approval has been delayed by the Federal Department of Transportation pending studies of alternate routes.

"If the bridge permit is denied, we would have to have a serious reappraisal of this entire plan," Mr. Heldrich said.

Mr. Pei agreed that traffic flow was essential to relieving the congestion in George Street, the main artery of New Brunswick, and that traffic circulation depended on completion of Route 18 along the Raritan River.

Four Phases Planned

The reconstruction plan would be undertaken in four phases:

First, revitalization of George Street into an area of retail specialty shops, and possibly a 1,500-foot pedestrian mall when Route 18 is completed. A \$5 million office building is scheduled for groundbreaking later this summer.

Second, construction of a "first class" hotel on Albany Street to provide meeting space for area groups. Also, construction of townhouses and row houses to accommodate between 400 and 700 families in a section of town near the river.

Third, transformation of Albany Street, which Mr. Pei said was now "a liability," into a tree-lined boulevard, and refurbishment of Railroad Plaza.

And fourth, construction of additional office buildings totaling 525,000 square feet.

Mr. Pei emphasized that the proposed plan was only step one in the move to make New Brunswick a model city.

"First, the city needs to develop some self-confidence," he said. "It's too early to talk about works of art, because it's not believable now. That will come later."

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