Introduction to the Charrette Process

Tony Costello, FAIA / Charrette Facilitator
2018 Indiana Preservation Conference, Columbus, IN
Student Design Charrette / 17 & 20 April 2018

Introduction two the Charrette Process
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1. Brief history of the charrette process
2. Previous charrettes in Columbus
3. Three (3) examples of the diversity of charrettes
Columbus, Indiana as a Teaching Tool ... for students

Figure 2: La Charrette, by Alexis Lemaitre

The History of the Charrette Process

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Opinion

Columbus lab for architects

Katie Zurlage and Matt Goeringer, students from the University of Kentucky and Ball State University, spent some time designing for a hypothetical real estate firm on Interstate 69 near Terre Haute, during an American Institute of Architects symposium in Columbus last weekend. Students will take on similar projects as part of the AIA 150th anniversary celebration in Columbus next month.

"It was pretty interesting, at first," he recalled. "For a bit, a lot of my students were older than the project. But then we got to know each other and realized we could work together."

"We had a great time on the project," said one student. "It was a great opportunity to work with other people and learn from them."

"It was a great experience," said another student. "It was a lot of work, but it was worth it."
Decade of the 1960’s: A DECADE OF “CHANGE”
challenging the status quo / civil and social unrest / urban riots / world nuclear
& spread of communism threat / Vietnam War

This is evident in a few schools of architecture & planning ...
where a limited number of faculty promote socially-informed
planning and design education; community-based charrettes
become a common methodology used to study projects.
“Quick & dirty” charrette analysis drawings

- Drawing “on the spot” at the Tour Guide Training Program lectures for the Columbus Visitors Center
“Quick & dirty” charrette analysis drawings
Neighborhood redesign

Ball State University students came up with several designs for Lincoln Central Neighborhood in a national competition.

BSU gives Lincoln Central several affordable designs

nationally to receive a grant to stage the project this summer. The goal was to design historically compatible, low-rise, affordable housing prototypes, said Tony Costello, Irving Distinguished Professor of Architecture at BSU.

Costello led the four-week summer class, which consisted of seven Ball State students competing against each other for the chance to attend July’s NCMA national conference in Boston. Architects from across Indiana judged the final projects.

Jared Hunt of Eaton placed first in the architecture category and shared top landscape architecture honors with Andrew Glass of Richmond.

"It was very, very hard to pick out one," Costello said. "There was definitely a lot more potential in the landscape category."
Professional executed charrettes in Columbus: 1988 / Columbus “Gateway” project led by Paul Kennon, FAIA / 1991 - VSBA w/ Steve Izenour further develop gateway plan from I-65 east to city center / 1997 - Gateway bridge at I-65 / 1999 – 2nd street bridge
A Note from Marsh Davis, President, Indiana Landmarks

As host of the 2013 National Preservation Conference, and as perennial attendee of the Real Estate Convening hosted and sponsored by The 1772 Foundation, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s meeting of the Statewide and Local Partners, Indiana Landmarks sought to offer an engaging, practical exercise for attendees as well as to create “leave behind” product as one of the legacies of the National Preservation Conference. Indianapolis’ former City Hall emerged as a logical subject for such a program. It’s a grand, historic place in need of a new use. The conference offered an unprecedented gathering of great preservation-savvy minds in our city. Our thinking was this:

“If this group cannot come up with a sensible, sustainable, appropriate use for such a property, then probably no one can!”

Employing the well-tested charrette process we came up with a range of possible new uses. Sustainability was a requirement among the ideas that survived the winnowing process.

One year later, I am pleased to report that Historic City Hall is now being used on an interim but active basis by the Division of Planning, Department of Metropolitan Development, City of Indianapolis.

Meanwhile, work continues on closing a deal that would deliver precisely what the charrette was designed to produce: a significant historically sensitive adaptation of the building that would constitute one of the most exciting developments ever in downtown Indianapolis. As of November 4, 2014, this development is in private discussions.

“If it moves forward, as we are assured is likely, it will be the direct result of the charrette and the participation of many wonderful preservationists from across the nation who engaged dynamic problem solving.”

It was completed and occupied in 1910 and provided a truly magnificent edifice and interior spaces for city functions until 1962 when the current City County Building was opened. Since then, it has served the city well as interim facilities for the Indiana State Museum until 2002 and the Central Library of the City of Indianapolis until 2008 when it mothballed

HISTORY OF THE BUILDING. In 1906, Mayor Charles Bookwalter became the major catalyst to champion the construction of a fitting building that would consolidate all of the City of Indianapolis’ government functions. The Indianapolis firm of Rubush & Hunter was selected and designed the city hall in the Neo-Classical style that was popular at that time for public buildings.

A CEREMONIAL CITY HALL that would also house the Mayor’s Office and the executive branch of city government. The grand rotunda would be used for formal ceremonies as well as other community functions.

PRE-PLANNING FOR THE CHARRETTE IS CRITICAL TO ITS SUCCESS: Marsh Davis enlisted Tony Costello, FAIA, architect, urban designer and his former professor at Ball State University to guide the main facilitator. Tony has over 40 years of experience in both planning and facilitating charrettes and is considered a national pioneer in developing the charrette process.

He, along with his students and faculty colleagues at Ball State, has conducted numerous charrettes focusing on center-city urban design and development. As a logical subject for such a 1969. Others have centered on historic preservation and neighborhood revitalization. They ranged from a single day to four days effectively using the input from front-end, citizen participation forums.

FACILITATORS FOR EACH TEAM ARE CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CHARRETTE: In addition to Tony being asked to be the overall charrette facilitator, Marsh asked Tony to invite his Ball State faculty colleagues to be facilitators for each team. Their names appear on page 4.

CHARRETTE MUST BE SEEN AS ONE ACTIVITY IN A CONTINUUM: Tony emphasized that this charrette must be seen as one of many planning and design components on a continuum whose ultimate goal is to develop a successful adaptive reuse strategy.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF THE CHARRETTE: demands that the decisions by the design must drive the PROCESS. Every participant was asked to approach their contributions with a mind-set informed by “brain-storming,” conceptual design thinking and the production of graphic images. This page of the executive summary includes only a small fraction of the incredible array of graphics produced by the four teams.

AN ICONIC IMAGE FOR THE ENTRY, LOBBY, RESTAURANTS AND PUBLIC FUNCTIONS FOR A NEW, HIGH RISE HOTEL to be constructed on the quarter block north of the current building. An option would be a high-end condominium development and residential hotel.
FOUR SCENARIOS STUDIED.
During the charrette planning process it was concluded that four scenarios, each distinct in its primary future use of the historic city hall and the quarter of a city block to its north, would be studied by four teams. All teams included urban designers, architects, experienced real estate developers, preservationists, and representatives of local government as well as the educational and fine and performing arts communities. Some teams did have members who were specific in their expertise such as a developer experienced in hotels.
After and walk-through and quick analysis of the existing building, the four teams: brainstormed programming requirements; developed multiple schematic designs with variations on an agreed-upon concept; wrote a synopsis of their concept; executed graphic images; and orally presented to the public and media at the conclusion of the charrette.

DIVERSE IMAGES ARE CONVEYED THROUGH THE MANY DRAWINGS PRODUCED BY EACH CHARRETTE TEAM. In the words of David Lewis, FAIA, FAIB, who facilitated the White River Park Charrette process in the early 1980’s, “… all drawings, images, and other graphics produced during a charrette must be considered “TALK PIECES”; that is, they are to be seen as an aid to stimulate and add content to future discussions and debates on the project … nothing more.”

David, a true pioneer in development of the citizen participation component of the charrette through his involvement in the AJA’s RUDAT Program in the mid-1960’s cautioned that images are very powerful and they can be taken by the media and the public to be a final image of what will be.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS:
Based on the fact that a one-day (8 hour) format was the only realistic given the conference schedule and numerous other activities, as well as the participants willingness to volunteer to take part in the charrette on the day preceding its formal program, Tony stressed that it is critical that all involved have a realistic understanding of what can be accomplished.

GOALS OF CHARRETTE ARE ACHIEVED: How is the success of any charrette measured? Typically, it is considered a success if after it takes place the real issues that will drive the project during next phases dealing with: the commissioning of a strong design / development team; working out the ownership and long-term management agreements; and, developing a viable financial pro forma and recruitment of investors are executed.

RECOGNITION:
We are extremely grateful to the 1772 FOUNDATION & NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION for supporting the charrette and allowing a departure from the traditional conference format. And, of course, we could not have carried it out without full support and cooperation from the building’s owner.

THE CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS, MAYOR GREG HALLARD, and DEPARTMENT OF METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, ADAM THIES.

APPRECIATION: Many thanks to all team members and all others who participated and contributed in your own way. We apologize all your names could not be accommodated in the limited space provided in this document. Your contributions are GREATLY APPRECIATED.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We also want to acknowledge the very important contributions of the following individuals, without whom the charrette would not have become a reality.

Dan Ely & Mary Anthony, 1772 Found’r
Stephanie Meeke, President, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Alecia Leuba, Northeast Office, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Susan West Montgomery, Senior Director, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Brian Payne, President, Central Indiana Community Foundation
Liz Tate, Program Office, Central Indiana Community Foundation
Lilly Endowment, Inc.
Marsh Davis, President, Indiana Landmarks
Tony Castello, FAIA, Ball State University

TEAM’S FACILITATORS: The four teams would not have been able to achieve the incredible results from their efforts in such a limited time if it had not been for the facilitators of the teams. They are all members of the faculty of the College of Architecture & Planning at Ball State University. Their collective experience and well-toned skills in facilitating the charrette process within their own team was very evident to everyone. They are:

Vera Adams, Assist. Professor of Planning
Harry Eggink, Professor of Architecture
Loren Deeg, Assist. Professor of Planning
Bruce Race, Director, MUD Program / Indy Scott Trues, Assoc. Professor of Planning

PUBLICATION CREDITS:
Text: Marsh Davis & Tony Castello
Graphic Design: Tony Castello
Photography: Tony Castello
Drawings: Individual team members
Production help: Ball State / CBP students
Charrette Envisions a New "City Center" Linked to Park

When it comes to construction at the Recreation Center, there’s good news and bad news.

The good news: construction is on schedule, and the revamped Aquatics facility is expected to open in June as initially anticipated.

The bad news: excavation uncovered buried cans, bottles, and tires in Wolfe Park. Although these materials pose no health risks, moving and re-burying the rubble adds an unexpected cost to the overall project.

"But because the pro-construction soil borings didn’t reveal the rubble, we were able to delay the problem until we’ve found a way to deal with it," said Craig Gees, Parks and Recreation Director.

"We’re working with the Pollution Control Agency (PCA) to determine the most environmentally and fiscally responsible means to handle the problem," Gees said.

The buried material—while PCA standards isn’t defined as "garbage"—is not releasing methane gas. Because it is not posing pollution concerns, the City will be allowed to move some of the material to a disposal site and re-bury the remainder under clean fill in areas of the park that will serve only as landscape green areas.

"What we can’t do is build the aquatics facility over this stuff," Gees explained.

Despite the additional costs, a tax increase is still not required to build the new facility. Construction is being paid for by a $5.5 million bond, grants, and economic development funds. Tax increment funds will be capped for the municipal site correction.

Tax increments are new surcharges generated from redeveloped properties that have gained value—and now pay more taxes—due to improvements.

Citizens consistently use tax increment funds to pay for soil corrections, infrastructure or site improvements needed to make major commercial redevelopment possible. "In short, we’re doing the same thing for ourselves that we do for private developers who run into soil problems," said Gees.

So, how did this end up in the park?

"What isn’t allowed in the 1960's was entirely allowable 30 years ago. Most rubble was buried back then and leftover material was considered allowable fill. As best as we can reconstruct, rubble was used to fill in low areas in the park during the 1960's," said Gees.

Despite the additional work in dealing with the soil conditions, work is progressing on schedule, Gees noted. "Rubble has been moved out of the main construction area, and both the pool shell and ice arena walls are done," he said.

This winter, the Aquatics center will open. By the end of December, most of the work will shift from outdoors to indoors where contractor will work on walls, plumbing, mechanical, etc.

This spring, contractors will pour concrete for the pool deck, install tiling, hook up the mechanical system, and reflect the inside of the pool.

An artist's sketch of the overlook offering a vista of Wolfe Park. If the redevelopment plan is adopted, it would be possible to see the park from Excelsior Boulevard.

The renovated Recreation Center—featuring an outdoor family aquatics center and indoor ice arena—is located within the town center redevelopment area.
Decade of the 1960’s: A DECADE OF “CHANGE”
challenging the status quo / civil and social unrest / urban riots / world nuclear
& spread of communism threat / Vietnam War
This is evident in a few schools of architecture & planning ...
where a limited number of faculty promote socially-informed
planning and design education

FACULTY, STUDENTS, ARCHITECTS & COMMUNITY ACTIVISTS

"INFORMAL" • UNCERTAINTY & "IN YOUR FACE" (SHOUTING)
"STUDIO OF THE STREETS"
J. Irwin Miller & Xenia Residence & Gardens MINI STRATEGIC PLANNING CHARRETTE (2008) — Exploring options for transferring ownership and stewardship from the Miller Family to a worthy owner with the stipulation that all effort should be made to have it open to the public as a national landmark / treasure. Secondarily, finding an owner for the Irwin Mansion where J. Irwin Miller grew up.
Case Study: Miller & Irwin Houses & Gardens
A one-day charrette in 2008头脑风暴了两个伟大的住宅在Columbus, IN的未来
One-day charrette: “Brainstorming the future of the Miller & Urwin Residences & Gardens, Columbus
This is an example of a charrette where the most important “final product” is both ascertaining what the REAL ISSUES are and BRAINSTORMING SOLUTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES.
Participants represent “the world of heavy hitters” in terms of both the patron and an architects & landscape architects who have (executed commissions) in Columbus

- Robert A.M. Stern, FAIA
- Michael van Valkenburg, FASLA
- Dean, Yale School of Architecture
- Former Chair, Dept. of LA School of Architecture @ Harvard’s GSD
- (Colum. Reg. Hospital)
- (Mill Race Park)
A “WIN-WIN-WIN” RESULTS

[ AND FINALLY ]

What a Gift!

LANDMARK HOUSES OF
the modernist era often face
uphill preservation battles. In
Indiana, we avoided a crisis over
the fate of the renowned mod-
ernist home of the late Irwin and
Xenia Miller in Columbus, de-
signed in 1957 by Eero Saarinen.

Historic Landmarks Foundation, working with the Miller family, devised a
charrette involving national experts to develop a preservation solution, facilitat-
ed by Tony Costello, Ball State Professor Emeritus of Architecture. The result
fulfilled their best hope. In November, the Miller family donated the house to
the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA), a perfect fit for IMA’s new design arts
initiative. Once re-furnished, the house will be open for tours conducted for
IMA by the Columbus Visitors Center.

Thanks to the Miller family’s generosity, and the collaboration of talented
and civic-minded people, preservationists face no 11th-hour fight, and people
from throughout the nation will be able to visit this stunning landmark. For
information, visit www.imamuseum.org.

Historic Landmarks put together
a multi-disciplinary team to
consider the best future for
the National Historic Landmark
Miller House. Eero Saarinen,
avtect of St. Louis’s Gateway
Arch, designed the Miller House
in 1957.

SORRY!

This issue is late because a major fire in
a neighboring property seriously dam-
aged Historic Landmarks’ main office in
Indianapolis. Details in the next issue.

www.historiclandmarks.org
A special report about our community's future
Proving that a charrette can lead to a substantial realized project ... IF ... IF ... implementation is considered from the beginning and detailed planning and design development takes place as well as political and financing strategies ... all executed in a phased manner.
Public Square, Transit And Bike Paths Proposed

(continued from page 1) Monterey Drive and West 36th Street. To make the town center concept a reality, the plan recommends:

• Opening a vista of Wolfe Park by creating a public square that connects the park to Excelsior Boulevard. This public square, similar to the courthouse square found in small towns, would provide visitors with a view of Wolfe Lake from an overlook and opportunities for arts and civic events. Although plans are sketched, the public square location is recommended for the area north of Excelsior Boulevard between Princeton and Natcher Avenues. If feasible, the businesses now located on this site would be relocated nearby.

• Making physical changes to Wolfe Park that could include reshaping Wolfe Lake, building walking and bicycling paths, and creating sloped areas to provide a grassy amphitheater for events.

• Attracting new developments—service-oriented businesses, entertainment, apartments over retail shops, and townhouses—to Excelsior Boulevard between Highway 100 and Monterey Drive as well as 38th and 39th Streets.

• Creating a local transit circulator to help people get to and around the area.

• Building a roadway to enable vehicles to get into the town center area. This new north-south roadway would be designed for slow moving traffic and would run from Quentin Avenue in the back of Byerly’s and then link to Park Center Boulevard.

• Making Excelsior Boulevard more pedestrian friendly by narrowing the street at crosswalks, installing new traffic lights at the public square intersection, and extending bike light times.

• Creating more parking in the town center area by building low level parking ramps behind future businesses and townhouse complexes. Underground parking could also be constructed.

On November 18, the St. Louis Park City Council accepted the initial town center plan and directed City staff to continue refining the plan by asking for input from citizens, advisory commissions, neighborhoods, and area business owners. Once details are worked out, a more refined concept plan will go back to the City Council in January or February.

Will we see any big changes this year?

"Not really," said project manager Janis Jeremiah. "Right now we're still refining the overall concept and working out details.

Nonetheless, the plan is already having an impact. The City has begun to purchase homes from willing sellers in the area adjacent to Wolfe Park. (About 15 homes would be directly affected sometime in the next 8 to 15 years if the redevelopment plan is adopted.) In addition, some reconfiguration of Wolfe Park is being considered to better match the Recreation Center improve-
ments to the town center plan. Several developers have also expressed interest in the town center proposal, notes Jeremiah.

"Overall, the charrette is about process," said Jeremiah. "Traditionally, development occurs when either city planners or private developers work up a plan. Under this traditional scenario, citizens and business input occurs sometime after the plan is already well developed. The charrette reversed this process. The public didn't just react to the proposal, they helped create it. Citizens and businesses' concerns and hopes were integrated into the plan right from the very beginning."

Here, another of the ten groups of charrette participants, talk about their hopes and concerns for the Excelsior Boulevard area.

Got A Catchy Name?

We need a name for the redevelopment area bounded by Excelsior Boulevard, Highway 100, Monterey Drive and West 36th Street. For lack of a better name, we've been calling it the "town center" project, but we'd like something a little more catchy.

A suitable name should:

• Convey the goal of the project. Does the name sound like a place that's our community's "focal point"? Does it sound like a place where residents would want to gather?

• Sound conjure up an "identity." Does it convey something about St. Louis Park's "personality"? Does it convey a friendly image of our community?

• Be unique to St. Louis Park. Is it a name that isn't used for other Twin Cities projects or places (i.e. City Center)?

If you've got a suggestion, please share it:

My suggestion:

Your name: ____________________________ (optional—but needed if you'd like credit)

Your phone number: __________________ (In case we have a question)

Mail to: Janis Jeremiah, City Hall, 5000 Mintoenska Boulevard, St. Louis Park, MN 55416-2295.

Another of the recommendations calls for a public plaza connecting Excelsior Boulevard to Wolfe Park.
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The bad news: excavation uncovered buried cans, barrels, and tires in Wolfe Park. Although these materials pose no health risk, moving and burying the rubbish adds an unanticipated cost to the overall project.

"Just because the pre-construction soil borings didn’t reveal the rubbish, doesn’t mean we can ignore the problem now that we’ve found it," said CCGC Parks and Recreation Director C. "We’re working with the Pollution Control Agency (PCA) to determine the most environmentally and financially responsible means to handle the problem," Grae said.

The buried material—which by PCA standards isn’t defined as "garbage"—is not releasing methane gas. Because it is not posing pollution concerns, the City will be allowed to move some of the material to a disposal site and replace the remainder under clear fill in areas of the park that will serve only as landscaped green areas.

"What we can’t do is build the aquatics facility over this stuff," Grae explained.

Despite the additional costs, a tax increase is still not required to build the new facility; construction is being paid for by a $10.5 million bond, grants, and economic development funds. Tax increment funds will be tapped for the improved soil correction.

Tax increments are new revenue generated from redevelopment properties that have gained value—and now pay more taxes—due to improvements.

Citizens commonly use tax increment funds to pay for soil corrections, infrastructure or site improvements needed to make major commercial redevelopment possible. In short, we’re doing the same thing for ourselves that we did for private developers who have taken soil problems," said Grae.

"So, how did that end up in the park?"

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Despite the additional work in dealing with the soil conditions, work is progressing on schedule. Grae noted "Rubbish has been moved out of the main construction area, and both the pool shell and armor walls are done," he said.

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This spring, contractors will pour concrete for the pool deck, install tiling, hook up the mechanical system, and surface the inside of the pool.
activities.

Task Force Members Needed (Again)

The City is again looking for interested individuals to help create detailed design plans. This time, the focus will be on the west side of Park Commons (west of Wolfe Park to Highway 100). Input is needed to help resolve issues relating to a proposed roundabout that would extend Quentin Avenue north to Park Center Boulevard. Ideas are also needed for integrating existing businesses and residential with new development, ensuring a positive appearance, and providing pedestrian and bicycle connections through the area.

This is your opportunity to work with professional designers and engineers to draft recommendations for City Council consideration. If appointed to the Task Force, you will need to attend at least 5 meetings that will be scheduled in the evening or early morning (depending upon applicants’ schedules).

Interested individuals must complete the enclosed form and mail, FAX or bring it to City Hall. Applications must be received by 4:30 pm on October 25, 1997 to be considered. Feel free to call Janet Jeremiah, Project Manager, at 924-2573 if you have questions.

Transit Study Expanded

During the charrette, a local transit circulator was envisioned as a possible means of connecting Park Commons to the rest of the community. With the help of LSA Design (a transit consultant), the City has been studying the feasibility of such a system. Interviews with City residents and employers have revealed an interest in connections beyond the boundaries of St. Louis Park. For that reason, Hopkins, Minnetonka and the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce have joined St. Louis Park in the study. The study is scheduled to be completed in late November or early December. Questions can be directed to Judie Erickson at 924-2354.

Market Study Will Help Guide Redevelopment

A Market Study is currently underway to help answer questions about the proposed redevelopment. For example: How many new townhomes, condominiums, and apartments of different price ranges are needed now and in the future? What types of new businesses can be successfully integrated into the area while retaining existing businesses? Where should redevelopment start? What types of amenities are needed to attract new residents and businesses? How should parking be provided?

Answers to the questions are expected in mid-November. The Market Study is a collaborative effort between a local firm (Masfield Research) and a national firm (Zimmerman/Volk).

Questions should be directed to Janet Jeremiah at 924-2573.

City Receives Award for Charrette

St. Louis Park received a City Achievement Award from the League of Minnesota Cities for the community design charrette that was held last Fall. The League commended St. Louis Park for the extra effort to get citizens involved with designing concept plans for the area. Over 200 residents, business people and other interested individuals helped make the charrette a success. You know who you are!
Project Features

- The completed development will include 338 apartments, 322 condominiums, 91,000 square feet of retail space for shops and restaurants, and 1,650 structured parking spaces (joint-use parking).
- Phase 1 (complete) of the development includes 338 apartments, 65,000 square feet of retail space, and 850 structured parking stalls and 265 on-street parking stalls.
- The mixed-use project's design is transit friendly. Metro Transit serves the project along Excelsior Boulevard (Regular Routes 12, 114, and 605). There are also two circulator routes connecting employment, community and housing centers.
- There is a 1.5-acre town green and a 300-seat amphitheater for civic events and celebrations.
- The city made significant upgrades to Wolfe Park, improving the connections to the neighboring recreation center and regional bike trails.

Completion:
Developer: TOLD
Design: Damon Farber Associates
Construction: BOR-SON Construction, Inc.
Financing & Sources:
- $66 million – Excelsior and Grand Phase 1
- $128.2 million (total estimated) – Excelsior and Grand Phases 1, 2 & 3
- Sources: Private $98.2 million, public $30.0 million (City of St. Louis Park, Metropolitan Council and Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development)

Shared Vision: The city employed an extensive public participation process that included:
- A citywide visioning effort (1994-95).
- A charrette for Park Commons, the larger precinct where Excelsior and Grand is located (1996).
- Task forces, and
This process resulted in a set of goals and objectives and a vision for the area, which guided the development and its evolution.
The first developer dropped out after a year and a half of working on the project (1998 to May 2000). TOLD was selected in July 2000 to develop the project.

Funding Partnerships:
- The city provided tax increment financing.
- The Metropolitan Council provided Livable Communities Act program funds for predvelopment planning (community design charrette and market and transit studies for the Park Commons Initiative) and infrastructure improvements (structured parking and pedestrian and transit improvements); and
- The Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development (now DEED) provided pollution clean-up funding.

Approval and Construction Process: The project benefited from:
- Continued, ongoing public involvement,
- Clear city goals for project (town green, public edge to Wolfe Park, vertical mixed-use development with affordable housing component, structured parking, pedestrian and transit-friendly design, police “cop shop” substation and public restrooms, high-quality design, and civic space for public events and celebrations),
- A strong city project management team, and
- Regulatory tools.

Project Flexibility: The project evolved over time with several development design iterations in response to changing market conditions/trends and a change in developer.
- The town green design changed to be more supportive of the ground floor retail tenants – narrower with angled, on-street parking while maintaining a “public green” connection to Wolfe Park.
Aerial view of the development and its context taken in March of 2008. The last of the development's "mega-blocks" (northwest) was in the construction phase.
First-phase, streetscape improvements "announce the project" to the public.
Before (right) and after (left) clearly show how important good urban design and architecture is to creating a sense of place that is pedestrian friendly.
Every detail... from the landscape treatment of both the sidewalks and traffic islands, to the incorporation of the parking structures within the interior of the blocks, to the high-quality and detailing of the materials used in the architecture of the multi-use buildings... has been considered.
Panorama of the intersection of Excelsior Boulevard & Grand Avenue
(Tower crane in distance is at site of final phase of construction)
The quality of life for residents and visitors alike is enhanced by the integration of good urban design, architecture and landscape architecture.
Mid-block parking for residents (included w/unit cost) and free for shoppers (top) and pedestrian amenities (bottom) *enhance both the convenience and quality-of-life for residents, visitors and shoppers.*
The incorporation of a major piece of public/civic art in the form of a large sculpture in the center of the complex’s round-a-bout is informed by concepts of the “City Beautiful” era of city planning.
“The Gateway” to Wolfe Park.
Providing a pedestrian and bicycle link between Excelsior Boulevard and Wolfe Park was a major goal established by “stakeholders” during the urban design charrette.
A VISION DEVELOPED IN A CHARRETTE ... if powerful enough, can inspire a community to achieve it!
Pre-planning for the Charrette is Critical to its Success: Murph Davis invited Tony Costello, FAIA, architect, urban designer and his former professor at Ball State University, to both guide the planning of the charrette as well as serve as its main facilitator. Tony has over 40 years of experience in both planning and facilitating charrettes and is considered a national pioneer in developing the charrette process.

He, along with his students and faculty colleagues at Ball State, has conducted numerous charrettes focusing on centro-city urban revitalization and development efforts since 1989. All have centered on historic preservation and neighborhood revitalization. They ranged from a single day to four days and effectively used the tools from hands-on; site participation forums.

Facilitators for each team are critical to the success of the Charrette: In addition to Tony being asked to be the overall charrette facilitator, Murph asked Tony to be his Ball State faculty colleagues to be facilitators for each team. Their names appear on page 4.

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A Ceremonial City Hall that would also house the Mayor’s Office and the executive branch of city government. The great rotunda would be used for formal ceremonies as well as other community functions.

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