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Bubier, John oral history interview

Nicholas Christie

Interview with John Bubier by Nicholas Christie

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Bubier, John

Interviewer
Christie, Nicholas

Date
July 16, 2001

Place
Bath, Maine

ID Number
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Biographical Note

John Bubier was born March 27, 1944 in Portland, Maine and grew up in South Portland, Maine. His father, Russell Bubier, worked for Maine Savings Bank. His mother, Vera Bubier, was a real estate broker. John attended South Portland High School and the University of Southern Maine. He worked for the Model Cities Program in Portland until 1974, then worked for Lion Ferry A/B (now known as the Prince of Fundy Cruises) doing commercial marketing and government relations with customs, immigration, and local permitting. In the late 1970s he was town manager of Boothbay Harbor. He served as director of the Greater Portland Council of Governments in 1990 and 1991 and in 1997, moved to Bath to become their City Manager.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Clean Air and Clean Water Acts; Model Cities in Portland; Portland City Council; Portland West Advisory Committee; diversity and poverty in Portland; Neighborhood Development Project; Portland Press Herald; Low Income People, Inc. (LIP); Southern Maine Economic Development District; neighborhood communities in Portland; and the development and economic problems and benefits of the Maine Mall in South Portland.

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Transcript

Nick Christie: This is an interview with John Bubier on July 16th at his office at City Hall in Bath, Maine. The interviewer is Nick Christie. Mr. Bubier, would you please state and spell your full name for the record.

John Bubier: Sure. My name is John Bubier and it's B-U-B-I-E-R, and I'm the city manager of Bath.

NC: And where and when were you born?

JB: In Portland. March 27th, 1944.

NC: And you grew up in Portland?

JB: I grew up in South Portland.

NC: So you went to all the way up through secondary schooling?

JB: Right, yeah, I graduated from South Portland High School in 1962, and then attended the University of Southern Maine.

NC: What were parents' names?

JB: Russell Bubier was my dad. He was a banker for the Maine Savings Bank, and Vera Bubier was my mom and she was a real estate broker, in those days.

NC: Now, what can you tell me about Portland when you were growing up?

JB: Well, it was a lot different than it is now. I think the thing that distinguishes it in my mind is the freedom of access for younger people. I can remember, again, as a South Portland resident, hopping on a bus, a full time transit system bus, and going to Portland and going to the YMCA and playing in the basketball league, (*unintelligible word*) basketball league. And then walking from there up over to Forest Avenue on the south side of Congress and picking up a bus there and heading back to South Portland. And, you know, it was a, the city itself was pretty much alive with retail and service industries. Congress Street was very active in a business sense. Of course that clearly in probably the next ten years, from '54 to '64, began to change rapidly. You began to see some of the larger retailers moving into malls and leaving the downtown area. In all, changing the marketing process, which then I think called upon city officials to try to change and redevelop the area.

The other thing that began to happen in the period, let me go back and say that in the period as a person going back and forth from South Portland to Portland, as a student, it was clearly family oriented, family neighborhoods throughout the entire city, the downtown area. And somewhere toward the end of the 1960s it began to change from its family sense to a combination of a couple of things. The university presence began to develop in the late sixties, early seventies. And I think you began a process of gentrification which began buying up a fair amount of the downtown areas and immediately adjacent areas and changing the character of those neighborhoods from traditional family neighborhoods to potentially more individuals who were there, young single family, or single parent, double income, no kid type families and so forth.

The other thing that happened I think that was probably significant was the driving of Interstate 95, 295, through the old Deering Oaks, the original Deering Oaks area, and the cutting off if you will-- the university and the downtown area. And it was clear that there was a distinction between areas that were west of 295 and those east of 295. Two ninety-five east was pretty much downtown, and the residential neighborhoods the west end and the east end and so forth. But the west side at that point or the university side was clearly a new and emerging university and law school and pretty much what you see now in this day and age. So it's a very interesting set of changes that have gone on.

NC: Complex.

JB: Very complex, very complex.

NC: So, you mentioned -

JB: Let me also mention, one of the other changes, too, and I apologize but some of these things will occur to me as I begin to look, the, one of the great neighborhoods in Portland was

the Franklin Street neighborhood and that whole section in Franklin Street (*unintelligible phrase*). That underwent a major change as the Franklin arterial hooked into 295 and brought a corridor, first, you know, urban transit corridor downtown. What we lost there in large part were a lot of moderate and low-income homes where people were able to function quite nicely, families were able to afford to live there. And although they were low and moderate-income families, they were able to function quite well and the prices and pocketbook figures were an even match. As we began to reduce the number of housing units in the general area, such as the Franklin Street neighborhood, I think what happens is that the combination of reduction of units and a more intense pursuit of housing by the dual income folks, no kid folks which, you have, was high demand, short in supply, and it doesn't take rocket science to figure that the prices were going to start cranking up at that point, which is exactly what they did. And we made it very difficult for low and moderate-income people to exist in the downtown area, and that was good and bad. The bad news was that their jobs were also there. This is at a point in time when a lot of manufacturing still existed in the downtown area. It was a traditional city where you had Nissen's Bakery, there were large service industries like (*unintelligible phrase*) were still there, you had a number of industries still functioning on the waterfront. There was still a fairly small contingent of longshoremen in the Gorham's Corner area, which is on the other side of Congress Street, between Congress Street and the harbor, the inner harbor. And we began to significantly disrupt, again, I say, I don't think it was a purposeful thing but I think the evolution of the region began to disrupt that very interesting family flow, which doesn't reoccur again, quite frankly, until the present day where we see a lot of people of color, the Somalians, Cambodians, all of those folks are reestablishing, quite frankly, what was there in 1962 and 1968, which are family neighborhoods. So it's been a really interesting evolution if you take it from 1960 to19-, or to 2001.

NC: So prior to the Model Cities project, I've talked with other people who have said that downtown Portland didn't look the way it looked fifteen years before.

JB: Well, remember that fifteen years before the Model Cities program I would have been probably, what, ten, like nine or ten. My recollections of the downtown area when I was that age was a pretty bustling service and retailing center with not only, you know, shoe stores and clothing stores but general department stores, the old department store, the classic department store, and there were three or four of them that were along that area. There were also I think two or three major supermarkets. I believe Shaw's was in two locations. One was on upper Congress Street next to Walgreen's Drug Store, which was at the intersection of Congress and State, I'm sorry, Congress and Forest. And then there was a second Shaw's, which was on Preble Street just below Congress Street, so west of Congress Street. And, you know, essentially it was a walkable city, it was an area that accommodated the hundreds and hundreds of people who lived on the east end hill, on Munjoy, who worked right there within walking distance, and the people in the west end, and although we don't have an east end neigh-, there is an east end neighborhood but the east end neighborhood was very different after the Franklin Street arterial. And there was, again, there's this double lane highway which performed a disconnect and then public policy, from a public policy point of view we see a fair amount of public housing being placed immediately adjacent to Franklin Street arterial, which did not exist prior to the Franklin Street arterial.

And I, you know, my sense is that what we did in public housing is we distinguished families by picking up pods. I think for example from a policy point of view that Section 8 housing probably is better because it uses existing houses and it creates a continual mixture of all of the economic groups, which does not occur frankly when we utilize a development, if you will, of public housing. Now that's not to say that public housing is good or bad, but I think that there are probably better ways to deliver public housing in the long term. And I think we talked about some of those things in the traditional Model Cities program.

NC: Now I want to go back to your early, to your childhood, or more, you finished secondary school -

JB: A long time ago.

NC: When you were in high school, what were your interests?

JB: I came from a pretty stable low-mod family, moderate-income family. I had a paper route when I was eight years old, and I kept it until I was about sixteen. I was, both my parents worked and so I spent time with my grandparents so it was one of those situations where you had parents working a fair amount of time. And I worked, in terms of the paper route, a fair amount of time, so you know, it was, growing up you hung out with your pals, you went to school, you went to the youth centers that were available to us in 1950s and '60s, (generally a combination of the cities and the school departments). And we had a fairly integrated, in the sense of the kids in the community, the children in the community as a group, had a fair amount of stuff that they could do that was reasonably productive. You know, I played some baseball and football, and I played some tennis, you know, did reasonably well in school, and then really had not thought too much about going away to school, or going to school, and then sent an application and wound up at the University of Maine.

NC: Did you know what you were going to specialize in when you went in to undergrad?

JB: No, and I think what was interesting is that compartmentalization, at least from my perspective, was not there. I mean, I was fortunately, or unfortunately; I think it's fortunate but from a grades point of view it was unfortunate, but fortunately for me I, and I still do it today as I have a pretty inquisitive mind, that I'm interested in a lot of different things which makes it very difficult for me to sort of focus on a narrowly defined discipline. And I wind up looking at a number of connection points between disciplines, and that's sometimes difficult if you're inside of a discipline so to speak and everybody in that discipline wants you to use that language and that sensitivity and sensibility, and you begin adding psychology and business to the sociologist realm and they get upset with you. And so it's, you know, it was something that I found extremely intriguing but it was also difficult at times.

NC: Frustrating.

JB: Yeah, very frustrating. And which is why I am where I am today because that's essentially what passes through these doors is virtually every type of problem that we have in a very small city. But what's interesting here is this is kind of a laboratory because it has tremendous

diversity; it's a small community, physically small, ten thousand people, but we've got the largest employer in the state, we've got a major Naval air station six miles to our south, and we are seeing incredibly large numbers of seniors developing relationships here because they're retired here. And so being able to kind of look at all of those things and see how they may fit together, and to see what kind of products we're going to have to deliver for them in two or three or four years. For example, a fixed income senior citizen with a reasonably good income comes in, buys a half million-dollar home. We've got a fair amount, number today of students in our system and we average probably twenty-one dollars per thousand on tax and seventy-five percent of that goes to schools. So we've got a person who has taken all their savings out, bought this half million dollar house on the water and that's their retirement, and all of a sudden, and they're not using schools and all of those kinds of things, and their income is no longer climbing because it's basically retirement income. So they've traded an asset, a fixed asset for a fixed asset, and they've got some equity. But what's happening is that their income is pretty much static but the tax rate continues to go up, and it's primarily driven by education issues.

NC: (*Unintelligible phrase*). So…

JB: Yeah, even though educational issues that we argued about (*unintelligible phrase*) state. So we've got a situation where the products, the city government product, that is being delivered to the folks who are beginning to be the majority here is not necessarily consistent with their income stream. How do we solve that? I mean, it's solvable, but the issue is you begin to sort of shift to a broader income, a broader tax base, a broader asset base. And that's where we keep arguing it needs to be something that state picks up. But the process frankly that Model Cities developed in the 1960s, which were, it was the task force structure. At least the Portland West Model Cities program designed a series of task forces, I believe there were seven task forces, and they were like housing, and employment, and economic development, social services, education, recreation, you know. And how it was policing and those kinds of things kind of came into it, what we would now call community policing. And we're so proud of ourselves because we have community policing, but essentially the same thing was going on in the 1960s, late sixties with Model Cities.

Those task forces brought together combinations of people who were administrators, people in the streets, students. Essentially, what it tried to do was to bring as many people who were consumers of public goods, whether they were local, state, or federal, and who were interested in a particular discipline with respect to those products, or were interested in whether or not the product application made sense, all of those folks were theoretically brought into a clutch of discussions and would evolve at some point into hopefully something useful, and something useful that could be done that day, six months, I mean a year or two or three years down the line.

And the most important thing that I think that the legislation did, or at least to me it was most interesting and we try to even do it today, is that when you develop a series of understandings and solutions that you try to design those solutions so that they are understandable and exportable. Because the notion of the Portland West program, like the city of Bath, is it's small. It's manageable. It's flexible enough to try a number of options, and once you've got one it's small enough to write it up in a way that may be understandable to somebody who's in a much larger city, a much larger domain, and in a way that may be usable for the people in that domain.

NC: Now when you talk about Portland West, you're referring to the West Advisory Committee of Model Cities Program?

JB: Yes.

NC: Okay.

JB: Well, to, yeah, I am. But I'm also talking about, Portland West was essentially the name of the organization, even though it was the Portland City Demonstration Agency I believe was the formalized name of it. The Portland West was we were referred to in the vernacular. And it included all of the task forces and all of the organizations that came under the aegis, I mean it included childcare, that must have been in the heyday, I mean six or seven major child care organizations. They were probably, my specialty was in employment and economic development and we had a number of jobs, matter of fact their jobs program, which was called ODC, that won a national award in 1970 or something like that as in its class the best manpower program in the country that year. And again, it was one of the, I think the reason it worked well is because we had a manageable set of variables that we could at least be able to understand as we were dealing with them and then exported at that level and hopefully somebody else would be able to latch onto it and to modify it for their venue.

NC: Now, how did you first become involved with the Model Cities program?

JB: In a couple of ways. I was living at the time, I was a student kind of trying to figure out what I wanted to do when I grew up and, I still have that problem. I'm not sure what I'm going to do when I grow up, but. I was living down around State and Grant Street and there was a little fledgling neighborhood center that was, and organization, that was trying to form up in the basement of a church over on Grant Street. And that neighborhood was at that point a combination of students and families. And I wound up going over to a few meetings and spending some time there, and I was still in school, and then when I got out in '69 a friend of mine, Patrick O'Regan, who was working for the Model Cities program needed to have someone who had had some advertising background and was an out-of-the-box type person to run an election. They had, it was a Model Cities election that, they were supposed to mirror the city council elections in the wards and districts and so forth, and it was supposed to develop this Portland West Advisory Committee Board of Directors. And they'd run two elections and nobody showed up, and it was just -

NC: No one showed up to vote.

JB: Right, yeah, it was really, it was tough. And part of it… Well, let me go back and just say that nobody had showed up. And I had had some experience in public relations and advertising and I was asked to come in and develop a process for this election, and in talking with them I, you know, I said, look, you know, if I do this you're going to have to let us run with it, you know, we, and I understand that, you know, there's going to be a desire to interfere because, potentially interfere. But if you're going to let us do this, let us run it, let us design it, you know, I can understand if you thought we were saying something that was wrong, but other than that, at

least . . . .

NC: Who specifically are you talking to at this point?

JB: I'm talking to the staff that was talking to us about being hired to do this job.

NC: Staff from the Model Cities project.

JB: And it worked out fine, I mean in the sense that they said, "Sure, go for it." So I put together a team of three or four people, a couple of whom were guys that I had spent time with at the university, a couple of them were good writers, a couple of them, one of them was an excellent, in fact he's still well known, Chris Church who is a photographer and was at that point just this kid with a Nikon wandering around trying to make a living, make a buck or two, but today is an extremely well-known photographer in the greater Portland area. In fact I think probably nationally at this point. And there was a young artist named Michael Waterman who was going door-to-door selling his drawings to stay alive and develop his, again, this is Michael. From the days when we paid ten bucks for a drawing to three or four thousand dollars for a painting of that size.

NC: We're looking at a painting on the wall here.

JB: But as you can see, that was, that's a fairly recent painting and yet that's the kind of sensitivity that I was looking for to portray, to bring the notion of this is a neighborhood issue, this is not just a cities thing, you've got to come do this to make us look good in the numbers. This is about you, this is about your neighborhood, this is about the streets and the buildings and the trees and recreation and the education, this is about the community that we all live in. And that team put together a pretty strong sort of presentations and we had, as I said, we had some background in this and we spent a lot of time with the papers. There were a couple of really strong newspaper reports that, in those days there was a fellow named Brian Arsenault who is currently the public relations guy for Bank North, People's.

NC: For who?

JB: People's Heritage. Brian was a reporter at that point and we worked very closely with him. Mickey Weisenthal, who's now dead, but he was an editorial writer and we worked closely with him. And we got a lot of good coverage -

NC: What papers are we talking about?

JB: *Portland Press Herald*. There was also, we run a little newspaper called *Shout*, there was another little newspaper written by the Low Income People, Incorporated which was called *LIP*, Low Income People, Incorporated., they wrote a little newspaper, and we coordinated, we dug out and isolated all of the local, or as many of the local media inputs that we could find, whether they were neighborhood or whether they were regional, subregional, or city wide and just utilized them. And another friend of the organization that we are very grateful for is Bill Johnson, who most recently was on the staff of Bill Cohen, Defense Secretary Cohen, who at the

time was a reporter for the WGAM and he gave us a tremendous amount of stuff. We sat down with him and explained what we wanted to do, said that, I mean we had to convince them this wasn't just a political hype thing, and he helped us a great deal. And when we finally got it done and Election Day came through, we actually had as many people voting in those districts as the city, in fact we actually had in some cases more people voting than the city council elections had had.

Now, given the fact, given the fact that the criteria for voting was not the same, I mean you didn't necessarily have to be, and there wasn't anybody there with, you know, with anything saying, oh, you don't live in this neighborhood, you can't vote type of thing. But in general terms we always, we felt that was a moral victory if nothing more to have, to have gone from a situation where there was virtually nobody coming to vote to a situation where we created enough of a sensitivity and a sense of feeling about the community that people came out in droves and we were pretty happy about that.

NC: And now the city had to take you seriously.

JB: And that was the point; they had to take us seriously at that point.

NC: Now, in 1966 LBJ, as part of his war on poverty, said that he was going to enact a Model Cities program in an effort to "improve the lives of slum dwellers". That was the language that his administration used. Now you have all this money coming in all across the nation to big cities, small cities, large towns. How did the Model Cities neighborhood in Portland fit into that broader national picture?

JB: Again, if we can keep the notion that Portland functioned pretty well as a model, and that we had some areas of terrible, terrible poverty, but we were not the lower east side of New York City in terms of sheer volume, but we had some cases that clearly got up into that zone. We had some crime problems, nowhere near what major cities, but we had crime problems. We had a reasonably diverse neighborhood in those days, mostly Black families up on the Munjoy Hill area near the old (*name*) Church which was up on Sheridan Street or St. Lawrence Street or up in that area. In fact, I read an article the other day that they're rebuilding that or something, they have to, they closed it down but they're going to rebuild it, and they're trying to raise money to do that.

We clearly had problems of striking similarity to any major urban center in the country; we just did not have the numbers. Good news and bad news. You know, the bad news is a lot of times you get people saying, oh, there's no problem here, and most of those people drove, you know, on Route 1 through the city and never really stopped in the city and didn't ever see any of those kinds of things. The good news is that it was small enough to manage, and I keep coming back to that, but I think that's one of the things that we did very well is we created some interesting models that people were able to export and do well with.

NC: Now, I want to go through a little bit the actual process of enacting a decision in the Model Cities program. The impression I've got is that an idea would be proposed by either a private organization or a city organization and then there'd be an entire series of going, of review

to a citizen's council, the city council, HUD -

JB: That's true.

NC: - contracts, requisitions.

JB: Ultimately.

NC: What do you remember about that process?

JB: It was lengthy, and to be honest with you I think what we did in 1968, '9, '70 was tough because most of us were not trained to do the kind of collaborative stuff and that's what, if we had the word collaboration in the context we have it today, that's what we were trying to do. It was not a period when you had to have a hundred percent; it was not a consensus period of time. It was a collaborative period of time, including those who did not agree with final outcomes in many of the cases. But they were in the minority at that point.

The process was going out and basically doing an inventory of issues in the neighborhoods in each of those seven categories that we talked about earlier. And each of those task force areas would go through a problem statement (much like we do today) and they would begin to isolate potential solutions for those problems and then they would begin to decide which ones they were going to use in priority and then they would develop projects around them, then all the projects would get a ranking from each of the task forces and then they would be dumped into the board. And I don't know, it was a long time, I think it was like fifteen or eighteen people at Portland West Advisory Committee, but the master board which was representative essentially of all the neighborhoods and, it's been a long time, I can't, I think there may have been representatives of each of the task forces but I'm not sure. And so all of those projects would then come before Portland West Advisory Committee, that came from each of the seven task forces, and they would run through there and then those would be again reviewed. And then the final package would be voted on by the Portland West Advisory Committee and then it was taken to the Portland City Council.

And so you had, you had presentation level, access levels at the neighborhood task force, you had further access and input at the task force level itself once it came out of the neighborhood and it came through on a prioritization basis, then you had Portland West Advisory Committee that you had to argue it again. And then in theory, if you didn't get the project you wanted you could still theoretically go to the city council and try to break ranks and bring the project through in a side bill or something of that type. Didn't happen often, didn't happen often, but it, on occasion. And in some of those cases pretty righteous projects but, you know, for whatever reason didn't get into the original bank. And then it still had to pass muster once the council dealt with it, with HUD Region and certainly HUD, National HUD. I didn't deal much with HUD National; we would make some presentations down at HUD Regional-Manchester but that was pretty infrequent, that was not something that we got to do very often, nor did we have to very often.

NC: Can you tell me a little about your general impressions of what the relationship was

between HUD Regional and the Portland Model Cities project?

JB: Well, I think there were a series of relationships that you have to kind of describe. I mean, the relationship between the city and Regional one in Manchester was probably fairly strong because if you look at the degree of difficulty and connection between the neighborhoods and the city staff people, city staff people as opposed to Model Cities staff people, okay, because there was clearly a difference, the finance director, manager and so forth really wanted to do good but they also wanted to make sure the money came in because it was in part supporting staff. Two, the distance between the person in the street who wanted to have a recreation program in maybe Bayside, and the connection between that person and the person who ran Region One in Manchester was unfathomable. There was no connection between those folks, and that's also understandable. But, over the years I think there was an attempt to kind of bridge that gulf, but I think you're going to find that federal bureaucrats and the policy venue that they come from, state bureaucrats and the policy venue that they come from and their constituencies, and then local politicians and their constituencies, and then PWAC members, or Portland West Advisory Committee members and their constituencies were all very different. And what I used to try to figure out was if you had someone who actually functioned in two or more of those venues, would they act differently depending upon the venue that they were operating in that day, or would they hold a consistent position regardless of what venue.

NC: You mean would they compromise?

JB: You generally compromises there, yeah, it's a -

NC: Compromise their integrity to their original constituency.

JB: Well, depending upon how you look at it, would they change their decision? And with the change in decision as you went up a ladder effect, the visceral day-to-day operation of the original project, and the answer was usually yeah, it could.

NC: And there probably wasn't much you could do about that.

JB: No, and I think it's part of what we see today. I mean, I think, again, it was something that you probably hadn't thought about and hadn't looked at and it became apparent in those areas I think if you were willing to sit down and think about it. And it wasn't something that you want to get out there and scream about, it was just really a reality and how the system worked. And if you understood it, you could create situations where you had toss-aways; where you would bring something up and let it get tossed and then bring your project through and that's it.

NC: So, were you familiar with the ins and outs of the local and statewide political system prior to entering Model Cities?

JB: No. I mean, I had been interested in local politics and, in South Portland, and had begun to think about state political situations and how they worked. But I really hadn't had an opportunity to work with any of those venues. And somewhere along the line, after the Model Cities experience with the Model Cities election, I wound up over as the director of the West-

End Neighborhood Center. And I think we all got a lesson there, but I certainly got a lesson there in how things worked, and how you manage to try to convince the people who were in a policy position to allow for pieces of what you thought your neighborhood was saying, how you got that through. And I think to some extent, began realizing, to some extent, why people changed when they were in different venues, because as you went into your own neighborhood, dealt with your own constituents, and then took that, those issues out and tried to get them implemented, and you had an opportunity to change the lives by having a project that would change twenty-five or thirty percent of what you were going to do, or try to bust it through and lose it all. And it's that kind of environment to some extent.

NC: And can you, not spin it, but can you bring to the surface in the public forum that what you did was a positive even though you compromised.

JB: Well, I don't think, I think there's no question that when it's all said and done Model Cities program was an extremely positive thing. I'm not sure that we did as much of what we were originally designed to do, but I think what we did is we learned an awful lot in that very short period of time from 1969 to 1974 I think, '74 or '75. And in those five years we became better tacticians and as a result have had more victories over the years. Because there are an awful lot of people that came out of that experience, whether it's in Portland, Maine, or in Boston or in Atlanta, all of those folks who went through that and struggled through it and asked the questions and said, which side are we on, and we all found out finally I think we were on the same side. We just took it on from a different point of view. Sort of Dylanesque kind of reference.

NC: You just brought up the idea that while Model Cities may have been a success, it wasn't necessarily a success in the way it was originally intended. I mean, one of the major parts of the Model Cities program originally was to create physical changes, infrastructural changes that would require citizen participation. That was one of the basic ideas of it, such as housing rehabilitation, tree planting, street improvements, creation of parks, and a lot of people, not just in the Portland area but in other urban areas that used the Model Cities project have said that it was more abstract changes that occurred, more, a better sense of community, a grass roots leadership level coming up. Where do you see the Model Cities in Portland as fitting in that balance?

JB: Well, I think we did both. I think we did both. I think, you know, sometimes it's hard to look at a number of the infrastructure projects and say this made things better when, I mean, as you come to my position here, I can show you why a new street or a new sewer, a new water line, a new curb, changing from beat up asphalt curb to granite curb, what does that do to a neighborhood. I mean, I can show you neighborhoods out here that are middle and low-income neighborhoods where people are out painting their houses because they've got new sidewalks and they've got new tree plantings and new street lights. So, those things, they're hard when you're actually looking at the choices you've got. Now do I build a new housing project, do I build, do I put a code enforcement program together, upgrade existing housing stock, is that more important than a housing project? Do I do the infrastructure so the landlords will put more money into some of these? I mean, all of those kinds of things going on. And I think we did those. So I think you can walk in the Portland West neighborhood area and you can see a

number of physical changes that took place during those years, and some of those changes are not there anymore. But I think the other side of it is that we made changes in the way people dealt with themselves and dealt with their neighborhood and dealt with local government that are still there.

I went through a, my older boy was playing football in a (*unintelligible word*) program and he went to Portland to do that, and at one of the games I ran into a lady who I haven't seen for probably thirty years, Sis Fontaine who was on the social service task force, and her grandson was playing in this game. And she was still involved with the Gorham's Corner Group.

NC: What's that?

JB: With the Gorham's Corner Group. She was still active politically, she was still involved, and I think to some extent probably because of those things that had occurred. I think she's a natural, I mean, I think she would have been involved in something but I think she's, the level of her involvement had ratcheted up in those five years so she was always a power, she was always someone that you went to in the neighborhood to figure out what was going on.

Yeah, things like physical changes that we made that have continued to drive good public policy. The People's Building in, up on, oh, what would that be, Brackett Street. You know, they're still turning out kids, you know, who don't make it through or have decided they're going to leave school, it's giving them some skills, giving them some confidence and many of them go back and go through their GEDs and then go to tech schools and so forth. I mean, that's still there. It's physically, they were going to tear that building down and I think it had gotten to be a tug and pull, you know, the building symbolized this whole notion of local control and there was a point at which that building was coming down. The neighborhood got together and put together a recreation project out of one task force, an economic development project out of another task force, my task force, and wound up funding both and keeping them built. And that building still, although the kids that are there probably are not aware of the history of that building, you know, that's in fact what happened there.

NC: I'm going to flip this tape over.

JB: Sure.

End of Side A
Side B

NC: Continuing our interview with John Bubier. We were talking about the physical versus the abstract success of the Model Cities program. I want to ask a few specific questions about how some of the programs worked out. How did Portland break down, when a proposal came before, you know, when it first originated. Was it more apt to be coming from a public organization or from a private organization? I don't know if that question is well worded or not.

JB: No, I think I understand what you're saying. I think that initially the projects that came through came from both of those venues, and probably to some extent initially neighborhood

projects came in more numbers. When you, if you're talking about assigning dollar values to them, clearly the bigger dollar values, the big ticket items, came in from local government and policy, public policy infrastructure venues. And, you know, there was, there was always I think a fair amount of discussion about the importance of the infrastructure issues. The, one of the more abstract things I think that we were successful in over the four years was teaching how to advocate for a project.

And I think that many of the neighborhood folks became very skilled at understanding how to construct a power base, how to bring in a good show, to mirror the good shows that other people were putting up that had been doing this for a long time. And I think that's clearly, the difficulty in the first couple of years I think was people were a little timid about the size of the projects they were bringing in, I think they probably could have done, but again, keeping in mind that they were all, all of the neighborhood groups were really kind of feeling their way along, that the early couple of years, first couple of years people were learning how to do these things, how to craft them, how to build some support. And once they got by that, then they put some really good projects together.

NC: And also I was wondering if -

JB: And I can't remember but I'm, it strikes me that there was a percentage of the projects that had to go for infrastructure. But again, I, that's just kind of floating around out here somewhere.

NC: How did funding break down in terms of, were funds matched nationally and locally for a project?

JB: My recollection is that they were and I can't, I'm, twenty-five/seventy-five or something like that. Again, this is -

NC: What about 75/25?

JB: This is a long time ago so, and I do think that projects were matched and. I know they were matched, I just can't remember the percentages. And in some cases a project might lapse because it didn't have the match.

NC: From loc-, not enough locally to get a match.

JB: Right, right. And that's, and again that's how, I mean there usually was strong local match from infrastructure projects. Those were the kinds of things that usually had the support. The city at the same time as Model Cities was going on was also doing an NDP project, which was I think called the Neighborhood Development Project, in which there were code enforcement programs and sidewalk programs and street programs going on in and adjacent to the Model Cities, the Portland West zone. That was also a HUD project, but I believe it was from a different section of HUD and was run by a different department, although we tried to coordinate.

NC: Okay, now, so when you first came in to Model Cities, who was chairman of the board?

JB: Chairman of the board or executive director?

NC: Who was executive director?

JB: Okay, Bob Hawkins was the executive director and he was an extremely bright visionary and as I said, I think ultimately went to work for Mayor, then Mayor Richard Lugar of Indianapolis and then followed him up and wound up being an aide to the future senator Richard Lugar. And then Jack Dexter took over after Bob left, and then when Jack went down and became city manager in Saco, Jadine O'Brien came in and she was there when I left.

NC: So you worked mostly under Jadine O'Brien?

JB: Jack and Jadine pretty much.

NC: Did they have different styles?

JB: Yeah, yeah. And both very effective but Jack was, as you can imagine, someone who was going to wind up as a city manager, was a very nutsy-boltsy kind of guy. Projects had to have a vision, had to be substantive, and you know, he did a lot of good work around the early days I think because those were the days in which infrastructure and kinds of things did well. Jadine was very bright, but very p-, she understood the politics much better, she was a very political animal. And she ran for congress in '72 or something like that.

She understood the neighborhoods, I think, better. And it may have been her ward politics, her background and understanding of the Portland waterfront, she lived out in the East Deering (*name*) area somewhere. Her husband Jack O'Brien was part of the, you know, the political, in fact Jack I think at that point was a city representative, and then Jadine, as I said, ran for congress. And then their daughter is currently the Secretary of the House of Representatives, so it's a family that was very involved politically. Very astute, and she had the connections to the congressional delegation that Jack did not have, and that Bob was not there long enough to develop, so.

The congressman at that point was a guy named Peter Kyros and, a Democrat; Jadine was a Democrat, and we did very well with them. Ed was around and she was a very close friend of Ed's. And the other senator, I think, was Bill Hathaway, he was a Republican. No, I think he's a Democrat, too, from up north. But she, I think she was, she was very aware of the politics but she also was very good at getting the attention of the administration which was, at that point John Menario was the city manager of Portland.

And by the way, let me add this little piece to it. One of the successes, and one of the reasons for success in the Portland City Demonstration Project, was that John Menario was willing to sit down and to listen to the issues that were being raised, whether they were being raised from the street side, from an aggressive point of view, or whether they were being raised from a staff side, from an esoteric or policy point of view.

He had an interest in making sure he understood the issues, then he would make his decisions

based on that information. For example, when we had serious housing problems, no other city manager before him had come into the neighborhoods. We asked him to come to a West End neighborhood center meeting, which wound up probably a hundred and fifty people in a small store front. And John came in, and you can imagine this guy wearing a real, you know, back in those days probably a two or three hundred dollar suit, and squeaky clean, crew cut, and just unbelievably brilliant, and he took off his jacket, I remember him now, he come into that room and he took off his jacket and he sat down in front and he engaged everybody. He didn't try to get around it, he didn't try to tell them they were wrong. He would, he would use a Socratic process, and he would ask his questions and they would all of a sudden realize that he was in fact interested in what they had to say. And the minute they discovered that, boom, they kept, you know, bringing stuff to him.

I've always described John Menario as a guy that had a mind like a steel trap. You would walk in on a project that you had been working on for six months, you'd brief him for an hour and a half, and you'd swear when he made the presentation on that project that he'd done the entire thing. He was that good. And he understood the nuances and he understood the neighborhoods and he actually cared, he did care a great deal. And I think that his efforts at the top in a day and age where political correctness was not the more, if he thought something was right to do he did it. And I think that was something that made us successful as well, because a lot of the things that we wound up doing I suspect were really kind of leading edge stuff and there were probably people who thought that, geez, how did they learn that.

NC: Right. Now, you mentioned the politics involved, but I'm curious to know about party politics. Did you ever see party lines or party platforms coming in on any level?

JB: No. Remember that the city of Portland's council is not bipartisan. It's vicious but, it can be vicious when they fight with each other, but it was not a partisan council. For example, Lewiston's got a partisan council, Biddeford's got a council and it's partisan, Sanford, you know, there are still some party divisions, communities that have party divisions and caucuses and so forth but Portland's not one of them. You had some very interesting and very strong people on that Portland city council. The only time that you saw their political strain was during the state elections, and you might see them lining up in advertisements, you know, with XYZ person of the Democratic Party and XYZ person of the Republican Party.

But there were not, there were no traces of Republican, Democrat in PWAC. What you got was conservative versus liberal versus moderates. And I think because everybody was from the neighborhood, if you will, in some way or another, there was, they were clearly arguing about issues and not about policy, not about politics in that sense. There was plenty of politics in the local neighborhood, but not partisan politics. Partisan politics got involved when you lobbied, you know, for additional, for example if you had a companion project that might be going through Federal Highway Administration or the agency formerly known as Farmer's Home Administration, if you had something of that type going through that was going to be a companion project to one of the neighborhood projects, you would then pick up the phone and what most of us would do is you'd go to both sides of the aisle because we all, I can't remember a period when we had all of our representatives one stripe. I just, you know, then it was Peter, the guy from Rockland and, Kyros from there, and the guy in Rockland and you wound up having to

go to both. And then Margaret Chase was senator before Hathaway for years.

NC: Can you tell me a little bit about her?

JB: Oh, She was an interesting character. She, I think that what was striking about her is her ability to get to the issue. And one of the things about being I think a Washington person is that you've got so many flavors of issues coming at you all the time, and yet you're dealing with a singular federal policy, national policy and trying to get that national policy to fit and feel comfortable with that individual who's sitting in your office from Madawamkeag or Portland or Scarborough or Kittery or whatever is a real trick. She had good staff people with her, and she was a person who just was ethical. And she listened, she told you what she thought, and when she said she'd do something she did. And it didn't much matter whether you were a Republican or a Democrat. Classic Republican moderate and classic Democratic moderates that we generally have here, very, you know, with the exception of Joe Brennan I think most of them have been moderates.

NC: Did you ever have any run-in with Muskie's administration on any level?

JB: Don Nicoll was around in the sense that he's a Portland person and we'd talk with him on occasion on issues. I'm sure we used Ed's office on some of the issues that would come up, especially on a companion project. I can remember, I can't remember the issues, but I can remember going to Washington, flying down there in these DC-3s with Clark (*name*) of the city's economic development department and going to visit Ed and going to visit the other house members at that point. And it was for me, at that point, at thirty and not really being involved or not having been involved between twenty- five and thirty, it's a pretty much of a trip to go and visit those folks.

And, you know, Margaret Chase Smith had already made her niche. Ed had already been, he was the first Democratic governor of Maine and already made a pretty good name for himself and yet he was then becoming a, becoming more of a national figure. And so those kinds of things were pretty important to you, people like ourselves who were going down there for the first time.

NC: Well let's get back a little bit, you mentioned Don Nicoll. What can you tell me about him personally?

JB: I think the striking thing about Don is that he was able to work with groups that were diverse, to say the least, and was able to without coercion or lack of subtlety bring them to a point where they found a ledge where they both could stand. And that's a skill, which is not in large supply. He has a personality which is able to be in a room with people who are warring and have them come out at least talking to each other on issues that matter. And he was able to do those kinds of things I think for Ed Muskie (*unintelligible phrase*), look at the Clean Water Act, I mean, you can imagine what that was like.

NC: Do you have a feeling for how the Clean Air and Water Act affected Bath, for instance?

JB: No, but I can tell, well I mean, yes, yes but I wasn't here. But I could tell you how it did.

And I think that as we, I was in Lisbon for ten years and that's the Androscoggin River, and of course the Androscoggin starts in Berlin, New Hampshire where is where the Brown Paper Company is, and it came down through Jay and that's where International Paper is. So when I, for example, when I went to Lisbon the Androscoggin River was not a place you swam or ate fish. And today they're fishing in the Androscoggin and there are a number of POTW, public (*unintelligible word*) treatment works, plants, along that river that were funded under Clean Water. There are a number of pre-treatment ordinances in the major communities that were part of the extension of that set of rules.

The opportunity to today, as we begin discussing estuary projects, the logical extension of the pre-treatment ordinances and local non-point pollution process which includes pre-treatment, if you will, inventory. So even though I suspect in specificity Clean Water Act didn't contemplate those specific actions, it contemplated them from a policy point of view, reaching out into the future thirty or forty years.

The Androscoggin River is a beautiful river, as is the Kennebec, but these rivers would not be what they are today had it not been for those acts. And we fought and grumbled and yelled and, you know, I mean we've all had our days when an environment situation didn't go our way, or was not interpreted the way we thought it would be. There are some classic ones that, you know, are fun to chat about but the fact of the matter is without that legislation, without that ability to talk about those issues we'd be a very different country. We'd be a very different country.

NC: Now I want to go back to Portland and talk a little bit about what's happened since Model Cities, or the entire evolution of it. You named a bunch of different changes that were responsible for where Portland was in the sixties. You mentioned Freedom of Business Access, you mentioned the change in how the marketing was going on, you mentioned the university, 95 coming through Franklin Street. When you finished, she said '74 that you stopped working with -?

JB: Seventy-four.

NC: Seventy-four?

JB: Yeah, late seventies.

NC: Did Portland look still quite a bit like what it looked like in, say, '64?

JB: No, it looked better in a visual sense. It was, but it was also showing the cracks in the retail area. And it was show-, and as a result of those cracks in the retail area it was beginning to show cracks in the service industry that supported those. And it was facing a, at least at that point because no one knew how to deal with it, a devastating enemy in the sense that the malls had begun to develop. And of course Portland's archenemy, South Portland, had built the Maine Mall. And although I don't think anybody had ever imagined where that was going to take retail marketing, in fact not just retail marketing if you look at it now, it made a lot of folks pretty fearful about what their histories were going to look like, or what their futures were going to look like. And certainly Porteous, Grant's, and Chapman's, I mean, whether it was a little store

like Chapman's, a personal store, or whether it was a, you know, a medium grand size franchise like Porteous or Grant's, a national franchise, Sears & Roebuck. I mean, I recall all of those being downtown. And when they began to move out people began to sit and think, geez, you know, there's no housing at the Maine Mall so people can't live next to where they work, there is, public transportation had begun its decline at that point and the cities and the states and the feds didn't see the efficacy of putting money into public transportation, they still don't in general terms, and as a result I think we saw low income people get, I think it was more difficult for low income people and moderate income people because a larger share of their income now went to transportation.

A person who was making x-number of dollars and had, let's say, fifty dollars of disposable income before the mall went out there, and they worked at let's say Grant's, and now you've got the mall and there's no public transportation out there so you got to now have an automobile and you're got to pay insurance, you're going to pay gas, you're got tires, so the fifty dollars in disposable income -

NC: Is gone.

JB: Is gone. So how does that affect the family? Well, I think you can safely say that it's not a positive effect, even though the economic flurry of activity looks good on the charts, the underlying issues that are there don't, are not quite as obvious -

NC: And now this other income, that fifty dollars that you had to go into transportation, probably more than fifty dollars had to go, where are they going to shop now to get the better price. They're already working at the mall.

JB: Well, and then price becomes more of a consideration, and you remember from your economics, that as money begins to tighten, substitutes begin to be apparent. And to the extent that those substitutes are at the mall and you're right at the mall, then you're shifting, your power of purchase begins to ship out to a different area. What does that mean? It means that the people who live in the city of Portland may very well be less wealthy than they were before. I mean, and they certainly weren't wealthy to begin with and now they're having even more trouble, financially. And it also I think meant that people began to move out into areas, substitutes. Their housing in Portland used to be reasonable because they didn't have to drive a car, but housing in Portland began to get more expensive because we have gentrification and we knocked down a bunch of buildings, and the feds came in with a policy under the 550 program and 222 program under Farmer's Home, hey we'll build you a house out here and we'll give you a one percent interest rate.

So everybody began, not everybody, but certainly a large number of people began to move out into these suburban areas and they would build these little projects around the malls. Their cost of housing went down because they, in Portland they owned a house for four percent or five percent in those days, and they're going now out to Gorham or they're going out to Windham or they're going out to Dayton, you know, and they're getting a Farmer's Home house for one percent, so either they buy a bigger house or they buy the same kind of house with less interest which means they now have a little more money to spend on the transportation to drive back to

the mall.

NC: So we're talking considerably rapid change.

JB: I think you, yeah, I think, I think of that seventies and eighties period up until '89 as a period of time when growth occurred in the initial stages, which was understandable. Then growth continued and it was not always as logical, it certainly defied many of the economic principles that many of us had dealt with, and in fact in the late 1980s blew up. And a lot of people who had invested in properties, in real estate, in those late 1980s went up in smoke.

NC: Right.

JB: And guess what? Because the prices of property had risen in the inner city, in the old Portland west neighborhood, guess who couldn't afford to live there any more? And guess who couldn't afford to live out in Gorham and Windham? We created an area, a whole new class of homeless who were then trying to figure out where they could afford to live, and if they could afford anywhere, in fact that's to some extent still an issue today, where they could live, how much money would be left in disposable income, and how that would get applied to a family. The first, I think the first new housing in Portland for a long time in a complex is Dick Berman's project behind city hall, that new, I mean that's a neat little concept. Dick Berman, by the way, is a very interesting character. I think he was around in Model Cities days, too.

NC: Really?

JB: Yeah. He's a very innovative character. He did a, when I was director of the council of governments in Portland, which is where I was before I came here for eight years, we did a transit oriented design which was a concept where you literally built housing, a shopping mall, you built it with a small light rail line and you built it for public transportation, all incorporated into the entire macro project. Fortunately the now city council didn't see that as a good idea, so, because they were, they were at the time, from a policy point of view, they were at the time struggling with school costs. And so here we were saying, build a hundred fifty moderate income houses, subset which you'll get three thousand bucks a year out of it, and it costs six thousand dollars to educate a child.

(*Interruption*).

NC: So, let's see, so 1974 you finished your work with the Model Cities project. Where did you go immediately after that?

JB: I had experienced a burnout, I was just fried, and I left for the private sector and went to what was then known as Lion Ferry A/B, which was, we know now as the Prince of Fundy Cruises. In those days it was owned by a Swedish and German company, (*name*), and had nineteen ships throughout the world. And there were two here at that time, and there were two running in Miami in the winter. And so I went over there and did commercial marketing and handled their government relations with customs and immigration and local permitting and stuff of that type, for both Miami and Portland, and stayed there for almost four years. Made some

money, enjoyed myself. Too much, I agree.

NC: This got rid of that burnout?

JB: Yup, yeah, and then somewhere around 1977, '78, just, you know, got thinking, geez, I miss it. So I went back to, actually wound up as a town manager in a vacation community called Boothbay, which is down sort of around the coast.

NC: Boothbay Harbor?

JB: Yeah.

NC: Okay, and you stayed there for a while, or?

JB: I was there for three years, and then I went up to Lisbon for ten, and then I went to the Greater Portland Council of Governments as the director there.

NC: Around '90, '91.

JB: Yeah, actually for eight years, until '97. And then I came here.

NC: So you've been working in Bath for about five years.

JB: Going on five years, going on five years.

NC: And you entered, you work at Bath as the city manager?

JB: Yes.

NC: How did that come about?

JB: Oh, it was an odd situation. I was at COG and pretty much enjoying myself there. We had developed the last economic development district in Maine called Southern Maine Economic Development District, and we had formed one up, there hadn't been one in York and Cumberland County, and so we had lobbied that through, we got into a lot of interesting trans-. For example, we were responsible for the mountain division rail line, that whole concept of turning that into a combined rail and trail kind of process, we started that. We did the TOD, we did some neat fun things like bringing the Tour de Sol to Maine, electric car races.

It was a nice place for me to be for a while because you could really do some creative stuff. And we even had a staff of, when we got done, twenty-one full time professional planners, and for a city manager to work with twenty-one planners was, you can't leave that experience the same person that you go in. It was interesting because part of my going there was to restructure their financial situation. I've done that twice, I did that with COG and I did that with the town of Lisbon, then both bankrupt when I took them over, so that's been fun, as well.

NC: So the first time you did that was with Lisbon.

JB: Yeah, they had gotten up on January 1st and they had a million two in bills and they got, they had no money in the bank.

NC: So how did you approach that problem for the first time?

JB: Well, the first thing that you do is begin thinking about what are the financial tools that you can bring to bear to the board of a state takeover, which is the thing that happens if you don't react. I mean, there's a provision in the state statutes where there's a triumvirate that could come in and run your city or your town.

We sat down with the bankers and creditors and explained what we thought had happened to this community, and to COG, and showed a future income, I mean a city is a lot easier because you can tax people, but there's an elasticity in tax. I mean you can't just go out and say, okay, this year I'm going to tax you forty percent more, because you wind up with an uprising.

So we showed them how we thought we would be able to pull out of it. We had to actually cut back some of the services, and we did what was called deficit bond financing. We took out a short term note for a million two. Now short term, I mean, I think it was seven years. And we created a budget expenditure item for that, and then we also began booking expenditures for uncollected taxes so that you would have, instead of, in other words, if you have a hundred dollars in tax and you only collect seventy-five, the twenty-five dollars you don't collect has the tendency to act like an expenditure. And if it acts like an expenditure and you have gone through and you've expended all of your money on your projects, that were all authorized but you didn't get your money in, then a deficit. So -

NC: You went back and got that money that hadn't been paid.

JB: Right, so we, part of, I had said earlier that part of my schizophrenia is not knowing what I want to do when I grow up, in the meantime I had gone back to school and done a bunch of undergraduate hours in business administration and then done some graduate work in business administration, and one of the techniques in financial management was to make sure that you stated in some way all of those expenditure items. And so we keep that up, we worked with a terrific firm, (*name*) Ouellette, and we were able to restructure the town of Lisbon, and we restructured (*unintelligible word*) COG. My second week at (*unintelligible word*) COG I got a phone call from a woman named Judy Nevers who was the credit lady for Apple Computer National and she said, “We realize you've only been there for a short time but when are you guys going to pay us the four hundred thousand dollars you owe us,” and it wasn't on the book.

NC: Oh, wow.

JB: So, there are some times when you just have to kind of react to those things and it sort of makes it fun, problem-solving. And part of the problem, well, the connection is the skills learned to some extent in analyzing problems in the Model Cities experience, and the process used there is not at all unlike what, the process you have to use in any of these things. Because if

you don't have the information, if you don't understand the problem, your ability to solve, in any way that makes sense, is nil.

NC: Right. And this goes back to your original point about not allowing yourself to get centered in one concentrated area of knowledge.

JB: That's right.

NC: Now, I guess-

JB: The other side of that is if you were asking a very specific question about quantum physics, I wouldn't have a clue.

NC: You're a city manager.

JB: Right, and I would take that too. I'd say, "Hey, what am I supposed to know about it?"

NC: Now, I guess this is a two-part question. First of all, what was Bath like when you first came here as opposed to how it's like now? Has much changed?

JB: When I first came here, and keeping in mind I came here initially in probably 1963 and '4, no, '65, '66, because I have friends here who were in the theater business and I used to come down here and paint sets and, you know, do those kinds of things. And Bath at that point was going through a terrible time, there were just stores, storefronts were just vacant, buildings on the waterfront were vacant. You know, Bath has a very, very unique location and a unique set of demographics. It physically is one of the very smallest communities in the state. It's density is probably second or third to Portland and Bangor in terms of bodies per square mile. And the fact that it houses the state's largest employer and -

NC: Who is that?

JB: Bath Iron Works.

NC: Bath Iron Works is the largest.

JB: Is the largest in the state, yeah. And given the fact that in addition to the iron works, they have a population of ten thousand, we have another fifteen thousand people who come in and out of the city every day. They don't live here and, and, but make a living here. And so we act as a community of about twenty-five thousand population. There are very few other communities of our size that have twenty-five full time police officers, who have twenty-seven full time fire EMTs on board. So we, we have some really interesting financial and policy issues that we scrape by with every year.

We, when I first got here there had been a project on the books for probably fifteen or eighteen years called the Wing Farm, and it was an industrial park up on Route 1, the west side of Route 1 as you come in. And it had been on again, off again, but it had never been done. We had built

inside of fourteen months. And the city has always wanted a hotel down here on the northern end of the downtown area, and we managed to design that and we've got a fellow from Ocean Properties who's coming in and we suspect that that'll built inside at least twenty-four months. We're trying to reuse the waterfront, keeping in mind public access. That's had eight years of planners. The notion of having any waterfront that still gets to be used for marine uses and mixed uses, but also has a public aspect to it, that all of the, the strong cities and towns with rivers and ocean front have public access. We've been able to do those kinds of things and that's been, again, part of the, part of the Model Cities legacy, if you will, even here, is that when we do a set of discussions we go out into the neighborhood and we ask: what would you do in this situation?

NC: You take that inventory.

JB: We take that inventory.

NC: It's always striking to come from Lewiston as a home base for the project into all these different cities that are so similar and so different.

JB: My father grew up in Auburn, Lewiston and Auburn, and my grandfather was a pharmacist in the Anderson Briggs in Auburn for years so I'm familiar with that.

NC: You must, I'm sure as being relatively close and as working in the city department, really is, where Lewiston is today.

JB: Oh yeah, and you know, I don't understand, yeah, I think part of, I often think that the ward politics may have something to do with that. I don't know, I -

NC: What do you mean?

JB: Well, there's, to me there's, in Lewiston it's been, there has never been a vision for the city that has been consistently carried forth. The guy that came the closest was, when Lucien Gosselin was over there, [Alfred] Freddie Plourde I think was the mayor's name. He was there three or four years, and he had a really interesting vision and he tried very hard just to, but I think part of what has happened in Lewiston is that no one looked at the city as a whole. That they looked at it in . . . .

Well, remember I was saying if you sat down and you looked at seven or eight categorical areas, but you didn't have a way to ratchet that up and connect them up, that you ran into trouble, I think that's kind, to some extent what's happened in Lewiston is you've got your wards and you've got each of the folks wanting to have something done in the wards but there's never really, you got a mayor and then you got an administrator, so you've got a natural division there to some extent. And, you know, I don't know, it just never seemed to work out the way, maybe this new fellow will have some success.

Auburn on the other hand has I think begun to move forward. Pat Finnegan's done a good job.

NC: It's a drastic difference.

JB: Oh yeah. Now, well, in Lewiston, you know, the only place that's really beginning to come together is the area where you guys are, over near Bates. And I think part of that is that you've got a group of citizens who have been able to sort of work through some of the really interesting issues and created their neighborhood. Now if you could take that -

NC: And spreaded it downtown.

JB: Yeah, I, the other thing is if you could build a series of task forces that represented disciplines, not neighborhoods, then maybe that works.

NC: I haven't heard anything about that.

JB: No, and neither have I. (*Unintelligible phrase*). But maybe that's how you can get around that, I mean as a developer. But again, it's a good model, it's a good model.

NC: Well, I guess I just want to ask you, is there anything else that you want to add to the record?

JB: You know, it's a hard question to ask because, you know, as you sit here, as I sit here, you think of all kinds of different things. That was a long time ago, but it was also a very interesting and innovative period of time.

I think the other thing that strikes me about that period was that the diversity of the group in terms of economics, in terms of races, in terms of location of where they lived, and disciplines that they represented, the fact that those people got together, I think that each task force for example was probably thirty people, plus or minus. So you had seven base line task force, so you're talking two hundred and ten people right there at the base line planning process, you know, then outside of that you had people from the public coming in to each one of them. And they were usually pretty active in their neighborhoods, again advocating for their disciplines, not for their political roots. And, you know, the PWAC as well was pretty well attended and pretty feisty. The fact that all of those things came together and all of those ideas got blended together and they came up with some of the good projects, and some of those projects are still there.

As I said, that People's Building is still there, still doing the same things it was doing in 1960. St. Elizabeth childcare, it's still there. Parts of the university's presence in the neighborhood down on lower State Street, or not State Street, what's the next one over. Forest Avenue, no, First Avenue, what's the one between Forest Avenue, anyway, the downtown branch of the University of Southern Maine that's on, (*unintelligible phrase*), that probably wouldn't have been there had it not been for the advocacy stuff.

You know, the neighborhood connection, you know, the East End Center which is, I mean, it's been there since those days. The West End Neighborhood Center which is now, I think, at the People's Building. The community center, the Cummings Community Center up at Munjoy Hill where the fire station is. There are a lot of, there are a lot of those vestiges and they're still there.

To some extent I think that the same community organizing techniques helped to get that building built that's on the corner of Washington Avenue and Congress; the same kinds of things.

The same theories that, in terms of problem-solving, problem developing, problem-solving would work well today in the multi racial aspects over there, they could crank some of that stuff up now. I mean, that said, the neighborhoods over there are now, they're no more diverse than they were, they're much more diverse racially than they were. But they're no more ideologically diverse than they were back then and I think that the issue is if you could get people together in the same room talking about (*unintelligible phrase*). Yeah, it's -

NC: That a plaque, a memoriam?

JB: No, it's the, that was from the Institute for Civic Leadership, they were -

NC: John Bubier, class of 1984, Institute for Civic Leadership. "If you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information it will create authentic visions and sustainable responses to issues and opportunities within their communities and organizations." It's a mission statement right there.

JB: Yup it is. And there's, I think a lot of the opportunity to bring people together is sometimes lost because people fear bringing people together. I mean, one of the things that to me has lasted over the years is that, get the people who disagree with you in the room. You don't want someone who's disagreeing with you, disagreeing with you three days before you take a vote.

The second thing I think that I learned that may be interesting is there is never any one right way to do anything. And too many times we see people say, I'm sorry, we can't do it that way. Well, the point is you can do it that way. You know, you've just got to get the people in the room working together to decide where you want to go and then figure out how to get there. And I think the last thing is, it's okay not to know what you're going to be when you grow up. And yeah, those kinds of things I think people take those to heart certainly will get you through a lot of times where things are not looking like they're going very well, like (*unintelligible word*) negotiations.

NC: Right, right. Well thank you very much for this interview, the Archive appreciates it.

End of Interview