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University of California  
Berkeley, California

Jim Chappell  
Directing the Resurgence of SPUR & Urban Planning in San Francisco

Interviews conducted by  
Shanna Farrell and Todd Holmes  
in 2016

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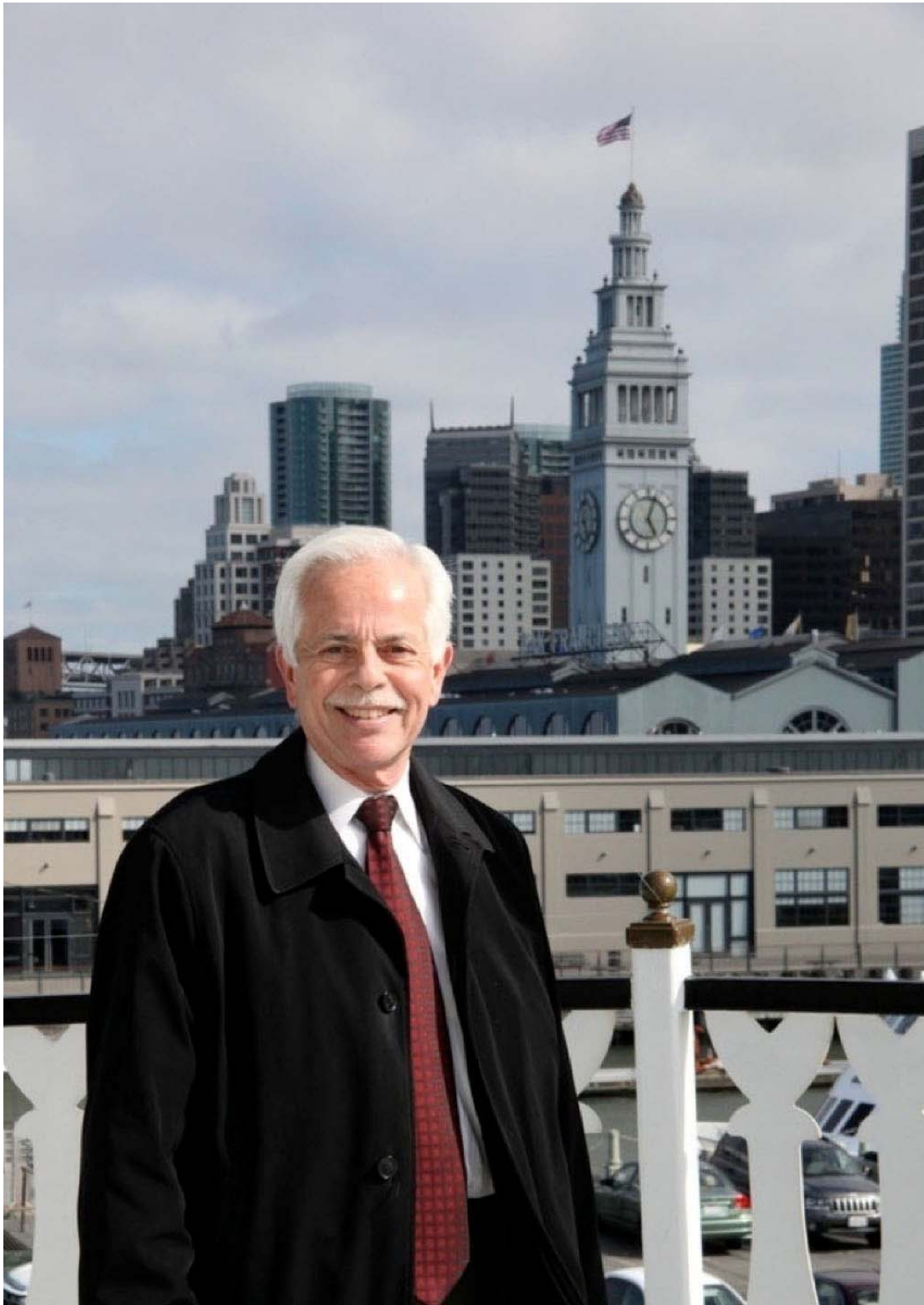
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Jim Chappell  
Photo Credit: SPUR 2009

**Jim Chappell** is an urban planner whose forty-year career focused on intertwining environmental conservation into urban design. He earned a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Syracuse and Masters in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania. Chappell began his work in urban design and regional ecological planning in Denver during the early 1970s before relocating to San Francisco in 1978. After a three-year stint with the Bechtel Corporation, Chappell began to work exclusively with a host of nonprofit organizations such as the Environmental Design Foundation and, most notably, the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), which he joined in 1980. Chappell took over the directorship of SPUR in 1994, and over the next twenty-five years helped steer the organization back to prominence and a more secure foundation. Under Chappell, SPUR addressed a host of planning-related issues in the San Francisco Bay Area, from waterfront development and the construction of Giants Stadium to new transportation and housing projects. Among Chappell's many achievements is the creation of SPUR's Urban Center in San Francisco. In this interview, Chappell discusses the many facets of urban design and ecological planning that SPUR addressed on many key issues and projects during his twenty-five year tenure. The interview also documents Chappell's successful efforts to revitalize this important nonprofit agency that has served the San Francisco Bay Area for over a century.

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Anne Halsted  
January 24, 2017

# Jim Chappell

## Introduction to Oral History

How could we have been so lucky? When Jim Chappell told me that the position of Executive Director of SPUR was his dream job, I thought he was slightly crazy - SPUR had been on a pretty steady downward slide for the prior three years! But we believed in its future, and I was willing to believe him since from every other perspective he seemed to have all his marbles! We presented him and another candidate to the Board, and Jim was clearly the right choice to move us ahead, and what a difference he made! He employed his open and welcoming personality to bring people who hadn't worked together to the same table - to promote civil conversation and to build a stronger community. Ten years later he had accomplished that beyond our wildest dreams and had moved us to an entirely new level.

Jim's oral history is a really compelling story - I loved reading it all! Jim had never shared with me many stories of his early life or his work in architecture, all of which clearly made him who he is. What stands out to me is his constant interest in not only the built environment, but his commitment to building relationships and community. While clearly a strong personality, he doesn't seem to have let personal issues outweigh the larger issues he addressed. He was always direct, honest, optimistic, fun - and he always maintained and nurtured relationships and saw the benefits of collaboration. His eyes and his mind have been open to new ideas and nuance, as well as to new people.

What I saw in Jim's work was that he was always enabling those with whom he worked, and as a result, everyone loved working with him and did better work. Jim chronicles many fascinating stories, and I am amazed how much he remembers! I enthusiastically recommend it to you to read in full! And bouquets to Jim for all he has done and continues to do to improve the quality of our lives!!

## Interview 1: August 4, 2016

01-00:00:00

Farrell: This is Shanna Farrell with Jim Chappell on Thursday, August 4, 2016 and this is our first interview session. We are at the SPUR headquarters in San Francisco, California. Jim, can you start by telling me where and when you were born and a little bit about your early life?

01-00:00:19

Chappell: Okay. I was born in 1943 in Rochester, New York. My father was born in 1908 and my mother in 1911. They actually met when my mother was thirteen years old and didn't marry until 1938. That was the Depression and they couldn't afford to get married. They were definitely products of the Depression and were very careful, I would say, throughout their lives. I have an older brother, Skip, who's a year older than I am. My father went to the University of Rochester, was an accountant. My mother went to the College of New Rochelle, a small college north of New York City. And she was certainly the first woman in her family to go to college and maybe the first person altogether. She was one of six children, the closest of which in age was thirteen years older than she was. Her mother died when she was young and she was largely brought up by her sisters. My father's family is Alsatian, English, French Protestant, came over to this country in the seventeenth, eighteenth centuries. My mother's grandfather was from Switzerland and he was an immigrant and was a farmer in Switzerland and ran a hay and feed shop in Rochester when my mother was a kid. Her family was Swiss, German Catholic, and grew up in what would probably be called the German ghetto of Rochester. Her best friends throughout her life were a Cohen and a Goldstein. My father was one of two siblings. His sister married a surgeon and, as I said, my mother was one of six. We found the receipt for her college education one time and it was fifty dollars a semester in those days. She always said there weren't any jobs so the family sent her to college. She graduated in 1934 and taught school for a while, then married in '38 and had children in '42 and '43.

We lived in a suburb of Rochester, a suburb that had been a farm community and there was still farmland there. There were probably fifty houses on the block, 1920s vintage houses. And of those fifty families, there was one family that was not an intact family, that was a divorced woman with two children who worked and was probably the only woman who worked in that neighborhood, who worked outside the house. It was a very close community and I'm still very close friends with our next-door neighbors from childhood. It was probably about three-quarters of a mile from where my father grew up, and half-mile from where my mother's family was. Rochester at that time was 300,000 people and it's 200,000 people now. It's a Rust Belt city with terrible weather and Kodak, Bausch & Lomb, Xerox were the mainstays and they're long gone. We had one car. My mother, in fact, didn't have a driver's license until after my father died, when she was seventy years old. Even with a college education she was a homemaker her whole life and never had a job

after she was married and it was a point of honor, I think, with my father that he supported the family.

01-00:04:42

Farrell:

You had mentioned that your parents were both definitely products of the Depression. Can you tell me a little bit about how that manifested in your childhood or maybe some habits that they had?

01-00:04:55

Chappell:

Certainly working hard. We were expected to go to college, and they helped us with the homework every night or made sure it was being done. I think finances were probably pretty tight but as children we didn't feel that. But they certainly did not spend money the way people spend money today. Going out to dinner was a special occasion that you did a couple of times a year, maybe. Big emphasis on *saving* money. But also, interestingly, I clearly remember my parents saying, "Don't worry about *making* a lot of money. Earn enough to support yourself and your family but you don't need a lot of money." That stuck with me and making money has never been important to me. It was, I think, a very disciplined household. Also very family-centric. The family, the extended family would have dinner every Sunday night, and in the summer a couple of family members had cottages on Lake Ontario and we'd spend, if not much of the summer, at least all weekend swimming, sailing, water skiing, those kinds of things. I think we did what most middle class kids probably did then. We had music lessons and dance lessons and swimming lessons and Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts and summer camp and so on.

A lot of my childhood was spent with adults, particularly my mother and her three sisters. I think they all doted on the two boys in the family. And not many people in the family did things beyond the family. I remember in the broom closet in the kitchen was the family calendar. There was a calendar that everything went on and there was very little on it. It was usually whose house you're going to Sunday night. But in terms of clubs and other things, not much of that. My father sailed in the summer. In Rochester, summer is Memorial Day to Labor Day and that was it. And then as I got older I took sailing lessons and I sailed throughout high school. The family was not intellectual or spiritual. Most of the family were Republicans. I think everyone voted for FDR the first time but then went back into a conservative mold. It always surprises me that the struggling middle class, or people struggling to get in the middle class who would be much better with a Democratic president, end up supporting Republicans. Only late in her life, in reaction to the Bush presidencies, did my mother become a Democrat. And, of course, we're seeing the struggling lower classes voting Republican in this election this year also.

My upbringing was completely white. At one point my mother had been seriously sick and got a cleaning lady who was African American or



“colored,” as it was called at the time. We all sat down and had lunch with her once a week. But this was a woman who today would have been a professional leader and had a daughter with a master’s degree and was prominent in her community. But here she was cleaning white people’s toilets.

When it came time to go to high school I chose to go to a Jesuit high school. It was fairly new in the city at that time. It was probably the academic equivalent of Lowell in San Francisco in that it was the real training ground for university education. It was a hundred dollars a semester in those days. Four years of Latin was required. I was in the honors program that also required three years of Greek. I rebelled and wouldn’t take Greek. I wanted to take something I thought would be more useful than another classical language, and so I took German. But that’s about as rebellious as I got, I think. I played in the band. The education was very rigorous. It wasn’t creative. In fact, it was kind of anti-creative, I would say. Interestingly, many years later my mother said, “Oh, I was creative until I went to Catholic high school and they beat it out of me.” I think the Jesuits did the same thing. It turned out learning Latin was very helpful. It’s how I really learned English and opened me to understand other romance languages and made me a good writer and a clear thinker. I can still diagram a sentence. It’s always been very easy for me to write and to write correctly and to edit things and to be very precise and I think it goes back to four years of Latin and reading the classics in Latin.

On my own I really did a lot of, I guess, adventure reading and I think back to the early American colonial novels. *Red Badge of Courage*, *Northwest Passage*, *Last of the Mohicans*, *Pathfinder*, *Deer Slayer*. Then I got into the French romances. *The Count of Monte Crisco*, *Three Musketeers*, *Scaramouche*, *Cyrano*, *Twenty Years After*. Some of these I read several times. The complexity of complex plots and many people, and diagramming the plot or the people. Very analytical. In Rochester there was ice-skating then. There wasn’t skiing when I was a kid and so there wasn’t much to do outside in the winter. But it’s interesting that I read these swashbuckling kind of stories. I’m not a swashbuckling guy – never have been.

It did prepare me for becoming an opera aficionado in that the complex plots and the dozens of characters that you really need to analyze. When I first started going to the opera here, it was before there were supertitles and I would get the record, record in those days, and listen to the record and read the libretto and took a class. The opera had classes then in each opera, and helped me really know what I was going to see before I saw it.

And then I think also in high school that I got into the popular American authors who were read at the time. Willa Cather, Carson McCullers, *Great Gatsby*, Ralph Ellison, *Little Women*, all of Tennessee Williams, and James Michener was just starting then and throughout my life and his life, reading those novels as he produced them. In the summer I think I sailed, swam, water skied kind of stuff.

The University of Rochester has the Eastman School of Music, which is a very good school of music, and good philharmonic orchestra and chamber orchestra. A friend and I from high school would go to performances often. As a little kid there was a program Saturday morning on the radio. We did not have a television until—well, they didn't exist when I was a little kid. We were the last people in the family or in the neighborhood to have one. My parents resisted. And there was a program Saturday morning called *No School Today* that started out with the song "The Teddy Bear's Picnic." It went: "If you go into the woods today, you're in for a big surprise. The teddy bears are having a picnic." That was Saturday morning. But more important, after that at one o'clock, the Metropolitan Opera live from New York came on the radio. I was listening to the Metropolitan Opera as a grammar school kid and high school kid and I often joke that the only music I listened to was stuff that was written by white men who'd been dead for 200 years. It's a joke but it's kind of true, too.

The local newspaper was a Gannett paper. It was the only Gannett paper at that time. The Gannetts lived in Rochester. My parents subscribed to *Life* and *Look* and *Saturday Evening Post* and *Colliers* and *Readers Digest*, Book of the Month Club. Both of my parents read every book that came through the Book of the Month Club. My father read *Yachting* and my mother *Better Homes and Gardens*. But kind of middle class publications. Nothing very intellectual. As a kid I read *Popular Mechanics*, and *Motor Trend* as I got to be a teenager. And then *Scientific American*. The *Popular Mechanics* morphed into something a lot more intellectual. I was thinking of a scientific career at one point.

01-00:17:09

Farrell:

I want to go back up quickly, though, and ask you—you were just talking about opera and how important music was. You had taken music lessons. What were you playing?

01-00:79213

Chappell:

I played the clarinet and saxophone. It was a marching band in grammar school and college, an orchestral band in high school and in college.

01-00:17:43

Farrell:

What was it about playing woodwind and not a string that kept you playing through college?

01-00:18:04

Chappell:

It was a very nice group activity. I can remember my father saying—and he'd been very athletic. He said, "People are much nicer to each other in the music world than in athletics." It is not individually competitive. An orchestra is playing together. It was a circle of friends in that activity and you're sitting down for a couple of hours several times a week together.

01-00:18:51

Farrell: You had also said a couple of times that your family wasn't intellectual but they really valued education and that college was assumed. Can you tell me a little bit more about that because I feel like—if your parents read a lot I feel like education was valued. Can you just tell me a little bit more about the value of education?

01-00:19:12

Chappell: Yeah. I think in one sense it was to be able to earn a living but in another sense that it's just how you become a better person and a productive member of society. And sophistication. I can remember, after going off to college, and then getting together with some childhood friends, some of whom were in college and some of whom weren't, and I can remember my parents noticing the difference in sophistication level.

01-00:20:08

Farrell: Interesting. Can you tell me a little bit more about your brother Skip and your early memories of him?

01-00:20:20

Chappell: We were a year and a half apart. I think when you're a kid, older kids don't play with younger kids. We really had our own circles of friends. We've never been close.

01-00:20:47

Farrell: One thing I did forget to also ask you. Can you tell me both of your parents' names?

01-00:20:52

Chappell: Yeah. Well, my father is Bud and my mother's Dorothy. There seemed to be a lot of nicknames in the family. And I, of course, am actually James, although since I have been in the West it's Jim.

01-00:21:03

Farrell: One thing that you had written in sort of your biographical material is that you were in Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and went to summer camp. Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences there, especially since you liked swashbuckling, adventure stories, and what the relationship was there?

01-00:21:20

Chappell: The Scout camp was in the Adirondack Mountains and was quite rugged actually. Sleep in tents. I don't particularly remember the food but there must have been a cafeteria. But again it was swimming, canoeing, hiking, and, again, with a bunch of guys living together in tents in the woods. I really liked it.

01-00:21:58

Farrell: Growing up, before you got to college, were there any teachers or mentors or influences that you had outside of the family?

01-00:22:15  
Chappell:

The homeroom teacher in high school was an older priest who actually just died a couple of years ago, who was very personable. Well, he was writing me letters for decades afterwards. We would go on weekends—I don't suppose it was weekend trips. It was day trips to go to the art museum in Buffalo or things like that. That's the one who's most memorable.

01-00:23:04  
Farrell:

Okay. What kind of things did you learn from him?

01-00:23:07  
Chappell:

Pardon?

01-00:23:08  
Farrell:

What kind of things did you learn from him or how did he influence you?

01-00:23:14  
Chappell:

I think a moral compass probably. I think I do have a strong moral compass. It probably came out of high school as much as anything.

01-00:23:35  
Farrell:

You had developed an interest in architecture growing up. Can you tell me a little bit about how that developed?

01-00:23:46  
Chappell:

A couple of ways. There was a vacant lot next to our house that was sort of geographically and socially attached to our backyard and I was always building things in it. I was building buildings, bridges, lakes, rivers. Get one thing built and then go build another. And the toys of the time. There were Lincoln logs, which were invented by a son of Frank Lloyd Wright, actually. And then I can remember a set of hardwood blocks, beautiful hardwood blocks. They still make those today. At some point plastic blocks came along. Not Legos. It was before Legos. The things that young boys do. Model airplanes, model boats, those kind of things. We had an electric train and had quite an elaborate setup that we built. And at some point I entered the Soap Box Derby, at, I think, probably around ten or eleven maybe. So building a car with my father. I actually won an English bike on that. And, of course, I had a bike but this was a much classier bike. A bike is a passport to freedom for a teenage kid. I think I was interested in the things that all young boys are interested in. But I still am. I'm still interested in transportation and I'm still interested in building.

To get to the high school it was a two-bus trip. The bus system was a hub and spoke system where you took the bus to downtown and then downtown transferred to another bus. After school another friend and I would go exploring downtown. One of the things we learned to do is go up on the top of buildings, which in those days you could just walk in. On the roof of these twelve-story "skyscrapers" in Rochester you could essentially see the whole city and understand the city. Eastern cities, unlike western cities, are not a grid

pattern. The street layout follows the topography essentially. Downtown there was also a very good library. I was in downtown every afternoon.

My father was a businessman. He was an accountant. I didn't find that interesting. I had one uncle, my father's sister's husband, who was a surgeon. But blood and I don't get along well together so I wasn't going to be a surgeon. One of my mother's sisters was married to an architect. In those days architects really supervised construction, in the days before lawsuits. He would be going around to his buildings all the time. If it was a school holiday or a weekend or something he'd take me with him. He built a lot of schools, hospitals, libraries, public buildings. That was great fun and impressive. He had a son, my cousin, who was in architecture school five years before I was maybe. That looked like an exciting possibility to me.

I also learned from him—as an architect who built public buildings—a little about the economy and the recession economy. As you know, capitalism is a continual series of ups and downs. Going back to my childhood, I was very conscious of recessions, and architecture tends to be a hire and fire business, because there is no printing press in the basement. You have to have jobs to keep employees working. I learned the importance of taxation and public bonds because these buildings were all built with bond issues. My uncle would be campaigning for these bonds so that there would be buildings that would get built. And to this day, a big part of SPUR is analyzing ballot measures, analyzing bond measures, analyzing tax measures. I'm a "tax and spend Democrat." I like to pay taxes because I like the things that government does and can do for us.

01-00:29:37

Farrell:

Okay. So can you tell me a little bit about, on that note, your decision to go to Syracuse University and to do the five-year program and to study architecture?

01-00:29:53

Chappell:

My cousin had gone to Syracuse. So I knew him, and a little about the program and the school. It was an hour-and-a-half away from Rochester. Not a very ambitious goal probably. But surprisingly, Syracuse has a very good architecture school. I say surprisingly because architecture professors are practicing architects and I don't know how any architect could have a good practice in Syracuse because it's this not-very-prosperous Rust Belt city. But one of the things that the school did was have guest lecturers who would come in for a semester, or come in one day a week for a semester, two days a week. And so I studied with: Hideo Sasaki, who was the chair of the Landscape Architecture Department in Cambridge at Harvard; his partner, Masao Kinoshita; Robert Furneaux Jordan, who was the principal of the Architectural Association School in London; Victor Christ-Janer, who was one of the hot 1960s architects you don't hear about anymore. I also studied with two San Francisco architects, Charles Warren Callister and Henrik Bull—they were part of the great Second Bay Tradition of California modernism in the '50s,

'60s, '70s, and I can remember each of them well, very clearly, and we became friends after I lived out here. But it was different from the European international school. A warmer, more accessible modernism, I think. I had a New York State Regents scholarship, and room, board, tuition, and books was about \$2,000 a semester. I look at people today and their loans. I can't imagine.

The summer before architecture school started, the school sent a reading list. The books I remember on that reading list were Frank Lloyd Wright's *Autobiography*, which is a very romantic view of the world. Anybody who reads that and doesn't want to be an architect I don't understand. And then Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*. Most of the other books, interestingly, were urban design and planning books: Victor Gruen's *The Heart of the City*; Raymond Unwin's *Town Planning*, the new towns in England; Clarence Stein's *Toward New Towns for America*. Kevin Lynch, his book *Image of the City* had just come out at that time and that's a book I still refer to today. But I was hooked after I read those books. I said, "This is definitely for me."

The program was very strong. It was a 10-semester program with eight-semester of structural engineering, eight semesters of construction drawing. There's also eight semesters of history and theory of architecture. I came out actually able to do things, to sit down at a drafting table and work. Also took painting and sculpture, which was a great deal of fun, and I played in the symphonic band. Oh, and the marching band, too, at football games. Architecture school was a hundred percent white. Our starting class was fifty students. I don't know if there were 175 students in the school or something as it played out. No African Americans, no Asians, one Jew. When you think of the great architects and planners of the twentieth century, Oscar Niemeyer, Marcel Breuer, Lou Kahn, Robert Moses, Jim Freed, Jaime Lerner. Today Frank Gehry, Richard Meier, Daniel Libeskind. Many, many of the great designers are Jewish. Somebody wasn't doing that at Syracuse.

The dean had a lecture series for freshman and it was actually something I remember very clearly and something I put together when I was teaching at CCA (California College of Arts, in those days California College of Arts and Crafts). A group of prominent architects and planners carefully curated for different lessons. The first one was given by the dean himself and I remember he said, "Look at the person on your left and look at the person on your right and neither of those people will be here in five years." He also pointed out that there were three "girls," as they were called, in the class at that time, which he disapproved of because they were "only going to get married and they're taking the place from somebody who was going to be a real architect."

01-00:36:21  
Farrell:

Was he vocal about that?

01-00:36:22  
Chappell:

Oh, yes, it was 1961. He was the head of the largest architecture firm in Syracuse. This was also the time of *in loco parentis*. The “girls,” as they were called, had to be in at 9:15 at night the first semester and then after that they could stay out until 10:15 at night. Relations were very heavily policed by housemothers and so on. How quickly that changed when I got to Penn (University of Pennsylvania) graduate school just a few years later. The housemother was thrilled if the girl would call up and say she was safely tucked in some man’s bed for the night. It was a time of great social change. 1963 Kennedy was assassinated. The world was changing.

The biggest influence on my life was my roommate and his family. His name is Tom Genné and he was an architecture student. We had most classes together and spent a lot of time together. Architecture is a group activity in many ways; teams on projects, or you’re sitting at the drafting table with your classmates for every afternoon for five hours. Tom and his family lived in a suburb of New York City and his father, Bill Genné was a Congregational minister and Director of Family Life for the National Council of Churches in New York. That’s kind of a euphemism for sex education and birth control. The birth control pill was just starting at that time. His mother Betty Genné was the education director at their local church but also on the boards of the local and the national YWCA and an ardent feminist. There were four kids, one boy and three girls. This was a family with a real intellectual and spiritual life. If you think of Eleanor Roosevelt’s hierarchy of people who discuss ideas, events, and people, my family discussed family. Well, this was a family that discussed ideas. It was very stimulating, challenging, totally out of my experience. Women’s rights, civil rights, Cesar Chavez, the lettuce boycotts. They had a very racially diverse set of colleagues and friends. This was all new to me but I saw a better world there.

The family and I have maintained these friendships. They visited me in Iran. We went to Greece and Turkey together. When I lived in Philadelphia and Denver, and now San Francisco—Tom and his wife Perky live in Oregon, and we’ve often seen each other many times a year over all these years. He’s my closest, most constant friend from college. They helped me change more than anybody else. I know Tom has said he’s amazed at how I changed. I was such a jerk. [laughter] My eyes were opened and I accepted the challenge.

01-00:41:08  
Farrell:

I do have some more questions about your time at Syracuse actually. You did a five-year program. Can you tell me a little bit about the application process or what those five years entailed?

01-00:41:25  
Chappell:

So there, of course, were College Boards to take. I do remember there was an essay and an interview with the dean. Everyone had to interview with the dean. It’s interesting. He did the interviews on Saturday because people’s parents were expected to come with them also. I don’t know if this was some social

screening probably as well as academic screening. I also applied to Cornell, which is another nearby school, and did not get in. Well, I know my parents were pleased that it was Syracuse and not Cornell. Cornell was, I think, a much more artistic school. The architecture school was covered with graffiti. It was kind of like Wurster Hall in Berkeley as opposed to Stanford that's more academically straight-laced.

Syracuse also had a very good landscape architecture school, which was actually not part of the university but part of a state college but on the same campus. In my career, as I have worked with lots of landscape architects, just the mention of Syracuse brings good feelings in the field.

01-00:43:22

Farrell:

I guess why was it a five-year program as opposed to a more traditional four-year?

01-00:43:28

Chappell:

I think in those days all architecture schools were five years. Many of them later went to a four plus two program, where you got a Bachelor of Science or a Bachelor of Arts *and* a Bachelor of Architecture. I think now many of them have gone back to the five years. It's too much material to do in four years. And, in fact, there were relatively few electives. It's technical training as well as education.

01-00:44:07

Farrell:

You had mentioned a guest lecturer series. Did you know about that before you applied? Was that something that had attracted you to the school originally?

01-00:44:16

Chappell:

I don't think so.

01-00:44:17

Farrell:

Okay. As you were describing who each of those, the bigger names were, there's a difference between being a national or international. What were their differences in styles? Do you remember that at all—even just sort of how they conceptualized architecture?

01-00:44:38

Chappell:

The studio system in architecture goes at least back to Louis the XIV and École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. It is learning by doing but it is also more than rigorous. It tends to be very negative. This gets often debated in the architecture journals today, that professors cut you down and disparage you. That was very much what the local professors were about. But I only remember these guests as being gracious. The most gracious probably being Furneaux Jordan out of London, who was very English, of course. And I kept in contact with him for a number of years. I think Tom Genné actually visited him once in England afterward. He was a friend of Frank Lloyd Wright's. When I went to graduate school, Lou Kahn was teaching at Penn. He was the



greatest architect, most famous architect in the world at that time, and he was so nice in studios. When I went to graduate school I did not take any studios. I had a hard time wrangling that but I did wrangle—because I thought the experience was so negative. But I would go sit in on Lou Kahn’s studios because they were so wonderful. As I have taught, and I’ve always taught a little on the side, I have tried to inspire students and find the good in things that will help them instead of the bad. As this gets debated in the architectural journals, architects say, “Why do we keep doing this? It happened to me so I’m going to do it to them, too.”

01-00:47:14

Farrell:

You had mentioned that on the reading list, Kevin Lynch’s *Image of the City* had just come out. How was it relevant then? I think it’s an important book so I’m wondering how it was relevant then and why you still recommend it today.

01-00:47:36

Chappell:

Planning then was really quite romantic and you look at the great plans. You look at the *San Francisco Urban Design Plan* from 1970s and they’re extremely visual and profusely illustrated with beautiful drawings showing a better future. To me this is what planning is. Planning today has been taken over by lawyers and bean-counters. The *General Plan* of San Francisco is a pile of papers three feet high with hardly a map in it. Basically planning has to lead to physical change. That’s what it’s about. When you have planning students who are social workers or economists and not visual people, or lawyers, the result comes out differently. Things have gotten very codified, especially environmental legislation—NEPA and CEQA. And both NEPA and CEQA, while they’ve had some good effects, they’re really anti-planning because you can only deal with one project at a time and planning is dealing with the world.

01-00:49:26

Farrell:

After college you traveled with Tom Genné for three months in Europe. Can you tell me a little bit about where you went and how that influenced you, what you were able to see?

01-00:49:42

Chappell:

Yeah. This was the summer after our third year and we did Europe on six dollars a day. The book was *Europe on Five Dollars A Day*, in those days. We did it on six dollars a day. We splurged, but we stayed in youth hostels. It was really an architectural odyssey. And England, Scotland, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Germany. Did I say Switzerland? Norway, Sweden, Denmark. We rigorously prepared and I suspect it was probably mostly me. But this was the great buildings of the last thousand years we aimed to experience. We also saw the new towns in Vällingby and Farsta in Sweden. And social housing. And we saw how wonderful social housing could be. What cities are like that haven’t devoted their downtowns to automobiles. Just the small-scale fine grain traditional European cities. Also see what paying real taxes does in terms of providing a good environment. It

amazes me that people in this country go to Europe and rave about how wonderful it is and then come back and vote “no” on all new taxes and they wonder why. It was very eye opening. It was also culturally eye opening, too, to see what socialist countries are like and just to see what each of those countries, what different sociocultural, religious patterns, and how that has affected things. I even got to use Latin where I needed some help on something and I found a Catholic priest and we worked it out in Latin.

01-00:52:16

Farrell:

Did that travel influence your decision to join the Peace Corps at all?

01-00:52:23

Chappell:

I'm sure it did. It affected my work at Syracuse. One of the studio assignments the next year happened to be an international airport. Both Tom and I hit it out of the ballpark because we knew how an international airport works. I think we were the only students who had been to Europe. Very different in those days, although I think the plane ticket was \$200 or something. Yeah, I really think we were the only ones who had been to Europe. This was 1964. A lot was going on then. There were the race riots in Rochester and all over North America, and that happened while we were in Europe. When people are burning down their own neighborhood that's a signal. We haven't solved it yet, clearly, sixty years later.

Also that summer Lyndon Johnson dedicated a building at Syracuse, the Newhouse School of Communication. Two days after that was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and Johnson's speech had all been a warmongering speech. It became apparent that he agreed to dedicate the Newhouse School, a trivial thing for the president of the country, but he did that because he was getting Sam Newhouse's support for the war.

By this time I was really questioning my Catholic upbringing. It was two things. One was race relations, where clearly the Catholic Church dragged its feet, and leadership was coming out of Protestant and Jewish religions. The other thing was the Vietnam War. I don't know if you remember Tom Dooley, this Irish Catholic American missionary but strident anti-communist, and then Kennedy, followed by Johnson, having to be “tough on communism” as Democrats. But I saw this with the support of the Catholic Church and the missionary thing.

And so in 1966 I graduated. As senior year was progressing I started looking around. I knew I would go to graduate school but I was so sick of school after five years. I needed a break. I had worked in architects' offices most summers; I guess three, four out of the five summers. Knew I would be spending most of my life in an office and wasn't ready to do that yet. I certainly had no interest in going to Vietnam and burning villages. There was this wonderful alternative called the Peace Corps that John Kennedy had started. While at Syracuse, I guess in my senior year, I applied to the Peace Corps and got

accepted to go to Iran. I met at Syracuse a woman by the name of Donna Shalala. Donna Shalala went on to be Bill Clinton's Secretary of HUD, was president of two universities, and now runs the Clinton Foundation. But she had been one of the first Peace Corps volunteers in Iran. So she kind of filled me in on it and said, "Oh, yeah, this is a great experience." My parents, after spending all the money to send me to school, weren't too thrilled for me to go work in some third world country for two years. But it turned out to be a great experience in lots of ways.

There were, I don't know, maybe forty or fifty of us who went to Iran that year, architects, and we had expected to go to Tunisia. There was a great Peace Corps program in Tunisia where volunteers were doing substantial buildings. So Iran was kind of an unknown but in an exotic part of the world. And, as I say, Donna Shalala said, "Oh, yes, this will be a really good experience." It was life changing in many, many ways. One way was my roommate in Peace Corps training. We just sort of showed up at a dormitory and took the first room down the hall. My roommate was a young Chinese-American engineer from San Francisco. This was the first Chinese I had ever known. We're still best friends now. We've been opera partners for over forty years. I'm about to go to his daughter's wedding. So we were close. We were roommates in training. We were close when we were in Iran and then we didn't see each other for maybe a year, and I went to visit him in Boston. When he opened the door there was this Chinese person, because I never thought of him as Chinese. He was just Vic, you know, he was Vic Seeto. He didn't look Chinese to me. I look at the pictures going back and of course he looked Chinese. But it was just a really good lesson in racism. When you don't label people and just accept people for who they are.

Iran is a very complex culture. It's an ancient tribal culture, thousands of years old. On top of that is the Islamic overlay, and then on top of that was the Shah's modernization. This really was in some ways a modern country, in other ways mud villages. But the culture is so different from our culture in that there's no history of self-actualization, no history of democracy. Education was memorization. Pure memorization. One of the things I did on afternoons was run an English club, because everyone wanted to learn English. I'd get high school kids in to speak in English. They'd come in the room and I'd say, "Okay, what would you like to do today?" "Oh, you tell us what to do. You're the teacher. You tell us." The value system is very different. When I look at our State Department, that clearly knows nothing about other cultures in any depth—when we march into Iraq and expect, first of all, they're going to welcome us as heroes and, second of all, immediately form a democracy, no way is that going to happen. The Shah was at the height of his power at that time. There's a love/hate relationship. On one hand, "he's our father, he takes care of us. The Shah takes care of us." Then on the other hand, the crown prince was sometimes called the "wolf baby." I look at the recent negotiations on the nuclear test ban treaty in Iran, and what the American government doesn't understand is the necessity to save face. Saving face is

very important in that culture. You need to let them say what they want to say because they'll do something different in private. When Iran says, "We want death to America," or "We want to destroy Israel," they don't necessarily mean it. In our culture you want to say what you mean, and mean what you say, and that's an important value.

In Iranian culture what you say and what you do can be completely different. Once you've said "destroy Israel," you've met your obligation. It is no longer necessary to destroy Israel. But you've saved face and you've said it. That's a huge difference. There's also personal responsibility. The most common phrase in Farsi is Inshallah, "God willing." "We're going to make this video tomorrow, God willing." You don't show up, not your fault, not my fault, it's God's fault. "I'm going to finish this drawing today." Don't do it. No responsibility, no blame. It's God's blame. The culture's very fatalistic. Death was ever present just from natural causes. One time my roommate was sick and I came into the office alone. "Oh, where is he?" I said, "Oh, he's sick." "What's the matter?" I said, "Oh, he's on death's doorstep." People were scared because they thought it was true. Especially they didn't want the American dying on their watch. The attitude toward honesty. We would play poker and backgammon and people would be cheating like crazy and I'd call them on that and they'd say, "Well, of course I'm cheating. How else am I going to win? It's my duty to win."

The architecture system there is the British system where the architect does the "materials take-off" and orders all the materials. I counted up how many bricks were going to be in the building. I knew exactly what they were and could do a very accurate estimate. So one time I watched this one building doubling in cost. So I went to my boss and I said, "Okay, I know what's going on here." He said, "Of course I'm taking the money. It's my duty. I have a wife and children. It's my duty that they should be fat and it's my duty to have fine carpets on the floor. You Americans are irresponsible. You don't take care of yourself. You don't look out for number one. You don't take care of your families because there's this additional income that you're not availing yourself of." If you don't understand those things, you do some of the very stupid things our government does in dealing with those cultures. You don't have to like it or you don't have to dislike it. It's just a different culture. When we penalize American companies for paying bribes, for instance, not only is it not making America look good in those countries, it's making us look bad. Not only are they not getting the money but, we're showing how irresponsible we are and how little we regard them.

Iran had a real strong developing middle class under the Shah. And, in fact, the Peace Corps probably wasn't necessary at that time. Lyndon Johnson and the Shah had a meeting and the Shah got a bunch of jets and had to take Peace Corps in exchange. I lived in a town of, I think, 20,000 people. I kind of counted houses and figured out it was probably 20,000 people, although it felt like a village because it didn't have the social institutions we have. There was

the family, and then there was some government. Not a lot of government. The towns were the most conservative places. The women in the town, all women wore a chador in public. A chador is like a bed sheet but with no hardware on it. Pulled it together and so the women would put this around their head and hold it at the neck with their hand. Now, in the villages where the women were taking the goats to the field or tilling the field, you couldn't do that one-handed, so they didn't wear chadors in the village. I lived part of my time in a village of a couple of hundred people or a hundred people, I don't know. They nursed babies in public. Perfectly natural. Why would anyone notice? No one noticed. We're hardly getting to that ourselves here now. Oh, and the little kids wore shirts but not pants because it's hard to wash diapers in the desert. So like Donald Duck and Minnie Mouse, they wore tops but no bottoms. Up until a certain age that was fine. In Tehran women dressed very modern. Some wore chadors over their outfit. They knew what high fashion was but didn't know what was appropriate. There would be young women going to the university with an evening gown under their chador and six-inch heels and made up to the hilt and covered with jewelry.

Interestingly, unlike what the mullahs would have you believe, there was plenty of sex going on everywhere in the village, in the town, in Tehran. It was definitely "don't ask, don't tell." But human nature's human nature. Whatever priests, rabbis, or mullahs say doesn't affect what people often do. Hashish was also readily available, which was a nice social, relaxing, loosening kind of thing. I had not had any experience with drugs in this country before then, as I don't think anyone did. College kids didn't in those days.

It was a great architectural experience. I built a dozen buildings. I also designed and built a reinforced concrete bridge, a water system. Far more experience than you would ever get in this country as a twenty-two-year-old. Did the drawings all in ink, lettered them in Farsi, printed blueprints with sunlight. I set up a pre-cast concrete operation to save steel because steel was imported and expensive. Did it all have any lasting effect? It had a lot of lasting effect on me. I'm not sure if it did on anyone in Iran. And, in fact, while John Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," in Peace Corps training they said, "Go for what you're going to get out of it. Don't expect you're going to have a big impact, or you will be disappointed." I think that was true. I think it was also a clever political maneuver to get radical American college kids off the streets and to a country that clearly works worse than this country works. As many problems as this country has, you go to a third world country where nothing works, and you see it's not as bad as I thought it was.

It was also an opportunity to do a lot of travel. We traveled in Iran to 2,000-year-old sites, to medieval towns, to villages. I had a trip booked to Egypt and Israel when the 1967 Six-Day War happened, so I didn't do that. But instead I went to Greece and Turkey and the Genné family joined me there. Then we

toured around Iran together. I later went to Afghanistan, went to India three times, Nepal, and then on the way back to the USA, spent three months going through the Orient on my way to graduate school. So I saw lots of different cultures, different religions. Really broadening experience. When I think that when George W. Bush was elected president he never had had a passport, no wonder.

01-01:14:27

Farrell: Wait, he really didn't have a passport?

01-01:14:28

Chappell: Pardon?

01-01:14:29

Farrell: He didn't have a passport?

01-01:14:30

Chappell: He had never been abroad.

01-01:14:31

Farrell: I did not know that.

01-01:14:31

Chappell: Never been to Canada.

01-01:14:33

Farrell: I did not know that. Can you tell me a little bit about how you brought those experiences into your master's program in city planning and into the next step of your career?

01-01:14:55

Chappell: Yeah. It was in Iran that I really made the pivot from architecture to planning. This was the 1960s so an environmental conscience was developing. But moreover, I would design and build these buildings that I thought were fabulous. Every architect thinks everything they do is fabulous. But I could see they had no effect on the environment. That if the physical environment all around you is terrible, how important is one nice building here? I said, "I'm going to go to graduate school but I'm going to go to planning school, not architecture school." Somehow I was able to do the research on schools in Tehran, maybe at the embassy, maybe at Tehran University. I don't remember. I was able to take the GRE's over there. I suppose I applied to a number of schools but I don't remember. But I got into Penn (University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia).

1968 was the Tet Offensive and then in April, Martin Luther King was killed and in June, Robert Kennedy. I was still in Iran when that was happening. So the graduate program was two years, fall of '68 to spring of '70. And I got a fellowship. The war was an ever-present thing. The draft was, of course, going on. People were drafted out of the Peace Corps. It was not an automatic deferral. I guess my local draft board didn't need more people. I completed

the two years in Iran. Kent State, I think that was in '70. There were frequent marches and teach-ins. I was reading the *Village Voice* and the *New York Times* and *Ramparts* at that time. I remember once coming back from a march and one of the campus cops said something to me about, "Those dirty hippies." I immediately quit shaving, grew a beard. Wanted to be clear where I stood on things.

Sometime when I was in graduate school I got my draft letter and I took a physical and I failed the physical, as I thought I would. I have a crippled arm. That night I remember I got more drunk than I have ever been in my life. This really was something that hung over everybody. Penn is in central Philadelphia and I lived in central Philadelphia. This was a city of two million people and my first real urban experience. And, boy, did I love it. A walkable city with great transit. Fine grained, small, eighteenth, nineteenth century neighborhoods. Central Philadelphia has always been vibrant. The wealthy, there always were wealthy people who lived in Central Philadelphia and did not abandon it for the suburbs. Jane Jacobs wrote about Rittenhouse Square as the most successful public space in America. Ed Bacon was the planning director. He'd been planning director for twenty years under four different mayors and was a professor at Penn and we became friends there.

The University of Pennsylvania was, of course, very diverse. It was where I had my first African American friends. I just loved having African American friends, Jewish friends, and European friends. I had two roommates. One was Canadian and one was Welsh. It was an apartment in a house. Most of the people in that house for some reason were Brits. I don't know how that happened. That was great.

Planning school was pass/fail, which was wonderful because there was no pressure to perform in a certain way. You could be as good as you could be, as you wanted to be. It was a true intellectual meritocracy. As I say, Lou Kahn was an important presence in the school and just a great intellect, a great spiritual guy. We were neighbors and did our clothes at the same laundromat. He was the most famous architect in the world. There was the Institute of Contemporary Art that had shows of famous artists. I remember one of the first ones my first year there was Christo, who did this big site specific installation. Every Friday night the school had wine and cheese for the students. It was very, very social and artistic. The art school and the planning school were the same school, same building.

When I arrived and got my assignment of an advisor it was a social worker and I said, "I don't think so. What's a social worker going to do for me?" I said, "I want an architect who's going to be able to hire me." The man who had been chair of the city planning department up until that year was a guy by the name of Dave Wallace. He was a PhD in planning. He was the most prominent planner in the country, I would say. He had a firm, Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd and his partner was Ian McHarg, who was

chairman of the landscape architecture and regional planning department. And Ian was just coming out with a book that year called *Design with Nature*, and *Time* magazine called Ian the new Rachel Carson. I got Dave to accept me as my advisor. The summer of 1969, then, Dave hired me to work in his office. Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd, three of the four partners were teachers at the university and so it was a real teaching office. The office was only about twenty people, I think. But everybody who had been there had recently been a student. Boy, Dave just gave me huge responsibility. The first day at work he sat me down and spent all afternoon laying out what I was going to do for the next three months on this project. And he had a very strong methodology and then I was set loose to do it, to meet with government officials, to meet with the client, to just do everything. Dave was writing a book at that time and I helped edit the book for him. The project I worked on that summer, Ian McHarg was being interviewed by *Life* magazine, and he highlighted this project. Ian was a brilliant romantic and Dave was a hard-nosed businessman. Both brilliant planners. I remember Dave saying, "When we have to get the garden club we send Ian. When we need to get the bankers we send me." That's been a very helpful idea, that you don't have to be everything to everybody. The team needs to be everything to everybody but different people have different roles.

At SPUR we learned very much to segment the membership, that some things for some people, some things for other people. We watched a SPUR-like organization in Portland not succeed because they couldn't figure that out. They couldn't figure out that it's okay to have rock music one night and chamber orchestra another night. You just invite different people.

Ian was the most famous landscape architect in the country at that time. One of the guys in the office said, "He got this way because he'll talk with anybody. He'll meet with anybody. Three ladies in a garden club want him, he'll come talk to them." When he had written his book, then the audience was there. I have really found that very helpful. At least once a week I'm meeting with someone for our mutual edification. I still give a lot of speeches, and I have done gardening clubs and I do undergraduate students and professional associations, things that maybe seem a little far afield but it has always been valuable. I love meeting with students. It's great. Ian was a self-created person. He did not go to college. He was in the Second World War. And came from Glasgow. Decided he was going to get a planning degree from Harvard and sent a telegram to Harvard saying, "I arrive on such and such a date. Prepare for my arrival. Captain McHarg." Talked himself into graduate school without a bachelor's degree and, as I say, became very famous. Both he and Dave were extremely helpful. There was just a helpful attitude in the studio, that the older guys helped the younger guys. I learned some serious things, like how to keep a checkbook and I remember one of the guys saying, "Don't ever get into debt more than two weeks salary because then you can tell your boss where to stick it if you need to. Never charge anything except a house and a car." Good advice.



The summer between semesters, the summer between years, I don't know how many, forty students in the program, I don't know, two of us got jobs in private businesses. Me at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd, another person somewhere else. Everyone else worked for a government agency. Some of those people criticized us for going to the "dark side" and working for private business. But I think it's very important to work, wherever you end up, both in private business and government, for someone in the planning/architecture field because there are completely different constraints and completely different opportunities. The public sector has to be very careful with the public's money. It's the public's money. They'd better be careful with it. They have to absolutely follow the rules and treat everybody equally. There's a process, there's public participation, all of these things. In the private sector, you make a decision and you do it. When I worked for EDAW, I remember Dave Blau, one of the principals, saying, "This is our firm. We can do whatever we want. We just do it." That's the way I ran SPUR, that we make a decision and we do it. And also I always like to be the one proposing, not reviewing someone else's proposal. When it comes to planning, city planning departments are mostly reviewing private proposals. That's not nearly as much fun as it being your own idea. I worked for government agencies in the Peace Corps, where I was working for two governments, the American government and the Iranian government. We used to say volunteer morale was directly proportional to the distance from Tehran because we were on our own then.

So in 1969 Ian came out with *Design with Nature*. 1970 was the first Earth Day. December 1969 was the Santa Barbara oil spill. This resulted in NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act being passed in December of '69. Scoop Jackson wrote that and Nixon signed it. Earth Day was April 22, 1970 and so there was great excitement. After the first summer at Wallace, McHarg I was hired part-time through school that year, and so there was great excitement at the office, as well as at the university preparing teach-ins and seminars. You have to remember, this was a time when the word environment was not ever used. No one talked about environment and ecology. No one had heard of ecology. By the end of that year the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act all passed, 1970. And then also in 1970 Governor Ronald Reagan signed CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act, supplementing and expanding on NEPA. This was huge changes in what it means for all of us and, of course, we're still on that path.

01-01:33:14  
Farrell:

Some of this I feel like, especially the environmental things, I feel like those are huge topics and I'd like to talk more about that. But I feel like maybe that's a good transitional point for next time and a good pathway into our second session. I do have a couple of reflective questions from sort of your early life as we transition into your professional life. One thing that you had noted growing up was the lack of diversity. Rochester, sort of western northern New York, Syracuse there's three women, there's one Jew and then

everyone else was white. Well, everybody is white. But then you start to travel. You go to Europe and then you spend time in the Peace Corps and then you move to Pennsylvania where there's more diversity. All of these events are going on. Can you tell me about how your social and your racial consciousness changed over time leading up to this point?

01-01:1034330

Chappell:

I suppose I started out at best neutral on the subject of race. My parents clearly did not want us to be prejudiced. But I think they had very little experience either. I can remember Martin Luther King and then the school board Supreme Court decision. I remember watching that with my parents. I remember them saying, "This is big. The world is really going to be different." But it was all kind of abstract. And then with the Genné family, they had African Americans in their house and friends and colleagues. And then when I got to Penn it was exciting to have people from different cultures and very much the Jewish intellectuals. It was so wonderful. There was a couple there who I have kept up with, somewhat older than I am. At one point I remember they moved to Kalispell, Idaho and they were the only Jews in town. There was also one "half-breed" they said. But they said people loved it, that they gave Seders, invited all kinds of people. He ran for some office and got elected. A lot of people are hungry for this. You see what there is to learn and that it's a bigger world and that's certainly what I felt. That there was so much that wasn't in my experience.

01-01:37:17

Farrell:

How did your time abroad, both in Europe and in Iran, how did that inspire you?

01-01:37:28

Chappell:

I guess in different ways. So Europe I saw how much better the physical environment could be. Ideas about historic preservation. I've had a lot of involvement in historic preservation over my life, and in Europe, I mean, the most exciting building is the medieval fortress that became a Renaissance palace that became a nineteenth century wool spinning mill that became a twentieth century museum. There are these layers and layers that are all additive. In this country we don't have that long history. But the attitude toward historic preservation is to encase it in amber and don't touch anything here. As I say, I've had a lot of involvement. Now I'm involved as board chair at Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture, which is a national historic landmark, and working with the historic architects who want to preserve everything untouched. There's a better way. In terms of pedestrianization I've worked with the Union Square Association for many years. When BART and Muni Metro were built, Powell Street was supposed to have been pedestrianized from Market Street to Union Square. The Union Square merchants fought that at the time, and I've kept saying to them, "I've never seen a Mercedes make a purchase in your store." A couple of years ago, the Union Square Business Improvement District got a grant to do some pedestrianization on Powell Street. I remember the board chair of the BID

saying, “Well, I guess it’s okay as long as it’s not being completely closed to traffic.” Well, now the Union Square Business Improvement District is trying to get Stockton Street closed to traffic. During the subway construction, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, it became a public plaza and they said, “Wow, this is the best thing for business that’s ever happened. It’s so cool. Lots of people are just hanging out here.” Those lessons are so easy if you just open your eyes. There are many places ahead of where we are. Many places in this country, too. San Franciscans seem to think if it wasn’t invented here it’s not a good idea. But in fact there are a lot of good ideas.

Iran was the opposite, in a way. There was very little good design. There’s one city, a sixteenth century city, Isfahan, that was designed and was quite beautiful and works quite well. But other than that, not so much.

01-01:41:25

Farrell:

And, Todd, do you have any questions? Okay. So I think that’s probably a good place to leave it for today and then when we come back next time we’ll talk about the start in your burgeoning professional life.

01-01:41:35

Chappell:

Okay.

01-01:41:35

Farrell:

Thank you.

## Interview 2: August 10, 2016

02-00:00:00

Farrell:

This is Shanna Farrell with Jim Chappell on Wednesday, August 10, 2016 and this is our second interview session. We’re at the SPUR headquarters in San Francisco, California. So, Jim, when we left off last time we were talking about your time in grad school at the University of Pennsylvania and your time working at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd. But I want to spend a little bit more time and kind of finish up talking about your master’s education. So I’m wondering if you could tell me a little bit about the type of training you received. Was it more theoretical, was it more applied, was it more technical?

02-00:00:49

Chappell:

The program was very flexible and you could take it where you wanted to take it. I took it in the applied direction, learning actual skills and how to do stuff. And doing independent research but applying it to real life situations. I remember doing a paper on the history of refuse collection in Philadelphia, and it was pretty interesting how it went from individuals doing their own, to a city system, to a much more robust city system. All kinds of services, because, of course, when new cities were formed there weren’t any public services and it was do it yourself. In some ways we’re coming around again. DIY, “Do it yourself” planning is very popular right now. I observed in

graduate school that people who had strong skills, like architects and engineers, did really well and were able to apply that to planning, because there isn't a discipline of planning. It's pretty open. People who came in with a history degree or something, there wasn't much to grab on to, or they didn't know how to find what to grab on to. I think that's a problem with American planning education.

The chairman of the city planning department had been Dave Wallace, who is an architect-planner, a PhD, but had strong methodological skills. And the year I started, the department chair was taken over by a social worker and was just not as rigorous in a practical sense. Maybe in a theoretical sense it might have been more so. But planners have to *do* something. Planning has to result in physical changes.

02-00:03:23

Farrell:

Was that something you knew before you applied and, if it was, did that attract you to that program?

02-00:03:30

Chappell:

No, I learned that in the program just watching how people did and what they did.

02-00:03:38

Farrell:

What were some of the skills that you learned there that you took with you into your professional life?

02-00:03:43

Chappell:

It was really lucky to be working at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd because I could take the projects I was working on and do more research on them in school. Frankly, recycle things as school projects and papers. But decision systems, graphic display of data, applying general research to specific urban problems, questions.

02-00:04:36

Farrell:

You were in school for a year and then you started at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd?

02-00:04:43

Chappell:

Yes. And then a second year of grad school when I worked part-time at the firm, and then back to full-time for a couple of years.

02-00:04:44

Farrell:

What was that like, balancing school with work?

02-00:04:48

Chappell:

Extremely busy. One of the funny things was the office was downtown. School was on one end of the transit line in one direction and my apartment was at the other end. Sometimes I'd get off the train and realize I'd gone to the wrong place, gone in the wrong direction. Compared to architecture school and compared to studios, there was less time in actual school time. In

architecture school, a studio is 1:00 to 5:00 five days a week. In graduate school it was much less, frankly.

02-00:05:40

Farrell:

Your first project was featured in *Life* magazine. Can you tell me a little bit about that work?

02-00:05:48

Chappell:

The office was hired to study a proposal for a dam that was being proposed by the Corps of Engineers. In those days the Corps of Engineers' job was building dams, so that's what they did. The client was a citizen group who had put themselves together. There were a lot of people whose houses were going to get flooded out by this dam. The assignment was to do an ecological study of the best highest and best use of this land and how to control the water, if there were other ways to control the water other than a dam. The McHargian part, the McHarg method, is to look at all the natural resources, the subsurface geology, the surficial geology, the soils, the vegetation, the animal life and then overlay a set of values that were environmental values, for environmental protection, and moreover, to keep the natural processes workings. We worked with a great number of environmental scientists on this. Luna Leopold, the geomorphologist from Berkeley, was on that team and worked with us on many projects at the office. The other half of the job was the Dave Wallace method of predicting growth. Just as the McHarg method mapped all the natural resources, the Wallace method then mapped existing land use, existing plans, existing and proposed sewers, existing and proposed water systems, demographic projections, and did a map of "the face of the future" under existing regulations. What we found out was that there were better ways to control the water than this dam that were better ecologically and socially and resulted in a better future for the community.

02-00:08:43

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit more about that? About how it was better both ecologically and socially?

02-00:08:52

Chappell:

Okay. When we looked at the social resources there, these were colonial houses, farms that had been in existence since William Penn's day, quite a beautiful area with active river recreation that would then be replaced by a reservoir, which provides recreation but a different kind of recreation. It also turns out that reservoirs often are not good recreation resources because the water level varies and you get this "ring around the bathtub" phenomenon. And, in fact, it's just a different recreation experience. At that time, the Corps' only job was to build dams and so that's what they did. It was the same hammer for the same nail every time. It turned out there were other ways, land use ways, to control flooding and so on.

02-00:10:25

Farrell: When you were doing the study were you working with the public at all to convey to them how this would work, that this might be flooded, their homes, this historic place?

02-00:10:37

Chappell: Yes. It was a teaching office. The day I started Dave Wallace sat me down and went through the whole project, of everything I was going to do in three or four months that summer and just talked me through it and then sent me off on my own. I was meeting with government agencies, with residents, with the feds. It was a huge amount of responsibility that they gave people and that was a very valuable experience.

02-00:11:26

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit more about that? What was that like in interacting? That, I'm sure, sort of shaped your future work?

02-00:11:33

Chappell: Yes. It's like sometimes the more you get to know people the less regard you have for them because you see their selfish self-interest. If I talked too much with the Corps of Engineers, saw their motivations, or where they were going. If I talked too much with the neighbors, their motivations were just as self-centered. You want to do that but you need your own strong set of values.

02-00:12:18

Farrell: What was that like seeing your work in *Life* magazine?

02-00:12:25

Chappell: It was pretty heady. Ian was wonderful with the reporters because as he went around the office and around the site with the staff all there, he'd introduce everyone and spell their name for the reporters. And, of course, they didn't care. They were writing about Ian. But he always gave people credit.

02-00:12:55

Farrell: You had also brought up this idea of ecological determinism. That came from Ian, correct?

02-00:13:07

Chappell: He hated that term.

02-00:13:08

Farrell: Oh, he hated? Okay, okay.

02-00:13:10

Chappell: He never used the word ecology. The *Life* magazine article, the first sentence says ecology. He said, "I'm not an ecologist. I'm a landscape architect." Other people use "ecological determinism" as a short-hand for what it is, really. The difference, and the difference that I think many others using the method later on didn't get, is it's not just the data but there's an overlay of values, of social values. There's a whole set of maps of all of the resources just as they are, just

facts, and then there's a whole other set of values that are discussed and negotiated, and try and get some agreement on the values. You reinterpret the data for those values and the values are generally enhancing natural process, avoiding water pollution, groundwater or surficial water, those kinds of environmental values.

02-00:14:47

Farrell:

For the record, just to define ecological determinism, what does the land want to be, but can you elaborate on that a little bit?

02-00:15:01

Chappell:

If you look at all of the resources, I mean, the hip bone is connected to the leg bone. You start in the center of the earth and overlay everything that is there, whether it's rock or water or soil. Some soils, some gradients, some whatever are suitable for development, some are not. Some are suitable for high-density development, some are suitable for very low-density development. Some really need to be protected. It's remarkable. And then the animal life, the historic animal life that came in. They understand better than we do where they need to be. As you overlay these things there's just a remarkable convergence. It's a very clear picture. Doing it with land use things is not so clear. Or social things. And in Ian's book, *Design with Nature*, there's one chapter, a social science chapter, looking at crime and density and all of these things. I think that's pushing it a little. Like the hip bone isn't necessarily connected to the leg bone when it comes to human behavior.

02-00:16:48

Farrell:

These ideas of natural processes and the land having a specific function, that is meant to have a specific function. Meanwhile you're overlaying that with animal life and that gets altered a lot when you think about things like the Army Corps building dams. You're basically going against that principle. I'm wondering if you could talk about if and how the firm balanced those two ideas.

02-00:17:25

Chappell:

Ian was absolutely outrageous. He would go to a conference of CEOs and tell them they needed to be toilet trained because they were polluting the lakes and rivers. Ian saw things in great sweeping blacks and whites. He had an assistant, Narendra Juneja, who saw things in a thousand shades of gray. Together it worked really well. For as outrageous as Ian was in public, he was actually very shy in private. This was a persona that worked very well for him. Dave, on the other hand, was much more hard-nosed businessman, although a brilliant, creative planner. But there was a tension there and some jealousy there. I remember I said once to Dave about, "So-and-so said what a great firm it is." He said, "Well, who are they talking about? Were they talking about Ian or were they talking about me?" It mattered to him who it was that was great. Yeah.

02-00:19:05

Farrell: How did these ideas influence you and your work? You had said before working with the public you have to have a set of principles yourself. How did these influence that?

02-00:19:20

Chappell: Well, I could legitimately brand myself as an environmentalist. Not just a city planner, I guess, but an environmental planner. On different projects at different times in my life I've branded myself differently. But an environmental planner is often what I was called. At EDAW I was the chief environmental planner. I've lost the train of thought.

02-00:19:59

Farrell: I guess how did you build your core set of values and beliefs? I guess how did your time at the firm influence that?

02-00:20:10

Chappell: Yeah. Environmentalism was really new as a popular activity at this time and as something that people talked about. It went along with the youth, it went along with the anti-war movement. I think that's still somewhat true today, although we have a lot of people who have been active in the environmental movement for many decades. It's a badge of honor amongst young people. Whether today it's responsible food sourcing—SPUR now has a whole sustainable food effort going on here that would not have existed some time ago. I think it also enabled me to see things differently and more broadly perhaps. Ian used to call me the "brown thumb on the green thumb projects" because I was the city planner on the environmental projects. Later on when I was in Denver and working closely with people from another firm on this major project, Ian and his team would come in from Philadelphia for a few days and go back and I'd have to figure it out. The project leader said to me, "You understand it better than they do, being a little bit removed," and I think that's often the case. Some things are too important to be done by experts. Being able to step back is helpful.

02-00:22:43

Farrell: Moving into a little bit more of the aspects of planning. Off-camera you had mentioned that there were a lot of natural scientists that worked at the firm. I'm wondering if you can tell me a little bit about them and their roles and what role they played in the planning process?

02-00:23:02

Chappell: Okay. Most people were recent master of regional planning graduates of Penn. But they were people with bachelors in geology or bachelors in hydrology or bachelors in pedology, soil science. This scientific knowledge and ability to, first of all, find the information and to know where to find it, and then to interpret it was crucial to the method. Ian was the orchestra leader but you have to have the piccolo player, too. It made it a much better product than you could get it any other way. It's the only way it could be done, I think.



02-00:24:10

Farrell: How did the natural scientists interact together? Were there competing forces at work?

02-00:24:17

Chappell: No. We were on a mission to save the world and we were passionate about it. The natural science part really does all go together. The soils aren't going to tell you something that contradicts the geology. It does all go together.

02-00:24:45

Farrell: I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about how you started? Well, how your ideas of planning developed. So the functions of different aspects of an urban environment, whether that be open space or public transportation or commercial or residential. How do things work together to best serve its inhabitants?

02-00:25:08

Chappell: Yeah. It's a matrix of things. I remember once on another study, and we went into the city hall or wherever it was, and we hung up the drawings around the room. There were maybe forty drawings as big as a dining room table or something. Ian loved big drawings. There were all the natural science things and then there were all the sewers and water and so on. The county engineer came in and he looked around and he looked around. I could just see him wondering, "What the heck is this all about?" He said to me, "And you're going to put this all together and make something out of it?" in a way that he clearly didn't think it could be done. I said, "Oh, yes." We did. [laughter] They do all interact and they can interact in a happy way or interact in an unhappy way. You can pollute your groundwater by the wrong sewer, by development in the wrong place.

02-00:26:37

Farrell: At that point, though, were you thinking specifically about how open space worked to benefit people and the environment?

02-00:26:46

Chappell: So there were always a number of jobs in the office. Typically an individual might be working on a couple of jobs at a time. One of the early jobs was a very interesting project that had a three-part client. It was a plan for Gettysburg National Park, for the town of Gettysburg, and for the county. It was this three-headed client. So we needed to be working on recreation. We needed to route a new road that instead of just becoming a road could become a scenic highway. We needed to develop where the city should grow and where it shouldn't grow. As complicated a job as you would ever find.

02-00:27:56

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about how the planning process changed when the law became a factor?

02-00:28:07

Chappell: Yeah.

02-00:28:08

Farrell:

Environmentalism we've discussed a little bit, but the environmental decade was from 1969 to 1980. When the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, all these things are passed, standards are put in place as benchmarks. There's an environmental review process, there's feasibility studies. So how did this interact with the planning process?

02-00:28:30

Chappell:

What had started out as a freewheeling inventive process, where values and design are important components, it then got codified. Laws are written by lawyers and codes are written by lawyers. Over time, the plan, instead of being these great poetic documents filled with illustrations and maps, became tables of numbers. If you can't demonstrate it in a number, it doesn't exist. A whole group of people over time got trained to do numbers. If you can't measure it, it doesn't count. Planning is an art, not a science, and a lot of it you can't measure and you shouldn't measure. Now you can pick up plans that don't have a single map in them, and that aren't place-based but are just policy-based and they're going to result in people doing things on the land. Just pick up a plan from the 1970s and pick up a plan from today. The San Francisco General Plan is code three-feet high in its requirements. There isn't a "plan" in terms of an overall view. In the early 1970s, Allan Jacobs, planning director, did the highly thought-of Urban Design Plan for San Francisco. It has stood the test of time for forty-five years. But it isn't a plan. It's a policy document. Beautifully illustrated. Very smart policies that we still follow in many things. It isn't an overall plan for the city. In contrast, a plan done at the same time, Ed Bacon's plan for Philadelphia, first page is this great birds-eye view of the city and what the whole armature is, and you know where every commercial street versus where the neighborhoods are. It's kind of all laid out in a grand vision. That's missing in San Francisco.

02-00:31:54

Farrell:

The firm opened a new office in Denver in 1971 and you were a part of that endeavor. Can you tell me a little bit about that experience?

02-00:32:09

Chappell:

Yeah. When I graduated with my master's, that summer I was the only student hired in the office and I was the young single guy. The firm was doing planning work all over the country. When a proposal would get written that required somebody to be on the job, required a project office, they'd put my name on it. This opportunity came in Denver and I said, "Sure." If I'd have waited six months, the same opportunity came in San Francisco and I could have gotten here some years earlier. But I was favorably disposed to Denver. When I was a kid our next-door neighbors had been from Colorado and I heard these stories about how gorgeous it was. I remember the plane circling Denver on one winter afternoon, and I saw that this was not a city in those days. It was very low density. No transit. Small. But I really loved Colorado. There used to be a billboard along the freeway with a smiley face that said, "Smile. You live in Colorado." Compared to the East Coast, people were

much friendlier. A lot of people in Denver from the Midwest on their way to California. It was a stopover place. And a city of the scale of Portland and Seattle. All had an affinity in these mid-sized, third tier cities. But yeah, people were very friendly. Things were very slow in Denver. Oh, my gosh. You sent out your blueprints and you expect the guy to be back on his bike within an hour. Well, not in Denver. Just setting up an office and getting things—I had never heard the word “backorder” until I was in Denver. You’d order something and, “Oh, that’s on backorder.” A lot of things did come from the East Coast and took time.

The job was a terrific job. There was a newly formed—what is called the regional transportation district. We were hired as a joint venture with a transportation engineering firm from Los Angeles. Our role was to do a regional land use plan and then meld that with the transportation. It was the full McHarg method on a 100-mile stretch of the Front Range, and then the full Dave Wallace method of projecting growth with and without the transportation system, or with alternative transportation systems. We brought out a staff from Philadelphia and then the partners would come out periodically. We hired junior staff locally. But it was setting up a whole office. Architects like to design their own furniture, so we designed the furniture and got it made. Over time we needed a bigger office and I went through the process again. In my life, I have set up many offices. So there were two offices there for Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd in Denver.

It was different being the head staff person and not having the partners there. The partners didn’t particularly like the West. They didn’t particularly like San Francisco after this opened either. They were really East Coast people. They didn’t come out that often. It wasn’t the teaching environment—or I had to be the teacher—that it had been in Philadelphia. But I did a lot of public relations. The reporters called me and I was the one they knew. I learned a lot about transit planning. The LA firm heavily consisted of economists and transit engineers. I got a good new technical basis in transit systems. We looked at a variety of different systems. Went around the country and visited systems.

02-00:38:05

Farrell:

Where were some of the systems that you were looking at?

02-00:38:12

Chappell:

WMATA in Washington. Oh, and BART in San Francisco. Those were the two new transit systems. There hadn’t been a new transit system in North America for forty years when BART was built. We went to a Department of Transportation proving ground somewhere where there were new systems being tested. What was then called PRT, Personal Rapid Transit. Little cars for two or four people on a track. There were even some that were air cushioned, that were wheel-less. I don’t remember where that proving ground was. We ultimately developed kind of a hybrid system where you’d have

these little systems in neighborhoods. Denver is kind of a multipod city like Los Angeles, with the armature of a big train throughout the rest of the area. This study went on for two years, I think. Did you have other questions about that or we move on?

02-00:40:05

Farrell:

No, go ahead.

02-00:40:07

Chappell:

Okay. It went to an election of the public and passed, handily passed. For a city that hardly had a bus system, this was fairly remarkable. I remember our drawings were on exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art. This was kind of a big thing in Denver. One day Dave Wallace called up and said, "Want you to go to LA and finish the downtown plan there that we'd been working on. Go there for six months and then to Washington," or vice versa, I don't remember, "and finish up these downtown plans." I thought about it a few days and said, "Sorry. I want to stay in Denver," because I had a lot of close friendships. After living out of a suitcase since I was seventeen or something, I had a lot of roots down there and it was a very nice place to live. Just the hiking, and skiing, and camping that I had not experienced as a kid. Every Friday, afternoon Denver cleared out in those days. People went to the mountains. That was great.

One of the directors of the regional transportation district was a planner. He was a policy planner. He'd been a city councilman in Boulder. He and I formed a business together. We were able to do that based on a big new town study that just kind of fell into our lap. He and I both had the connections with the client and I had the known design skills to do it. So we went through the full McHarg method on it. We went through the Wallace method of alternative futures. And got the land, which was zoned for forty-acre ranchettes or something. Got it re-entitled for this new town which never got built, as things happen. Takes a long time as a planner to get things done.

Denver's a boom and bust economy, a lot of it based on natural resource extraction. The thing that was clearly coming down the line, they thought, was oil shale extraction, all taking place in western/northwestern Colorado near Wyoming where there weren't any cities. There were towns of 5,000 people or something. The projections were that you'd have a thousand guys showing up a week in their pickup trucks. We got a number of projects there where I was able to do, again, the Dave Wallace method of projecting growth and then trying to figure out alternative ways to handle it. That went on for some number of years.

We had some other development plans. Planned unit developments. They were a new idea, probably in the late 1960s. That's instead of zoning swathes of land for single-use, where you mix uses. There's an overall formula for what the end product looks like but a lot of variety is possible. In a way, mini-

cities. So we did a couple of those. But these weren't the glamour jobs that Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd garnered. Everything they worked on was of national importance really. Denver was not that kind of place.

02-00:45:37

Farrell: Just real quick. Had you left the firm at this point when you had started

02-00:45:43

Chappell: Yeah. Yeah.

02-00:45:45

Farrell: You had left in 1973 and that's when you started—was it the Denver Shared Center? Is that—

02-00:45:50

Chappell: No, no.

02-00:45:51

Farrell: That's later. Okay, okay.

02-00:45:52

Chappell: No, this was just a partnership, two guys.

02-00:45:55

Farrell: Okay. I see. Okay.

02-00:45:56

Chappell: One of the things is, at one point I hired a landscape architect who had gone to Berkeley and he told me about SPUR. And he said, "When you're in San Francisco be sure and go to SPUR. There are these great noon events there." And so I did that when I would be in San Francisco, which was once or twice a year.

Amongst the social connections in Denver, I was a member of the Unitarian Church. This had a lot of affect in a whole bunch of ways. One of them was it's a very liberal philosophical place. I quickly found my philosophical home there. The minister was an atheist. I can relate to that. Services were more like political rallies than a church service. The two recurring subjects were, one, anti-war, and the other was civil rights. It didn't even call itself a church. It called itself a society, the First Unitarian Society. It was filled with activists of all ages. That was very intellectually stimulating. A number of important things happened there.

One is because Denver is a city with so many in-migrants from so many other places in the country without families in Denver, they had a program, and I think still do, called Extended Families, that were communities made up of members of the Unitarian society. They had this shared philosophical basis—the idea was there would be grandparents and parents and kids and single people all supporting each other like any family, and socializing with each other. It was a good experience for them, as they were for me, as a gay man

coming into this family situation with people with teenage boys. They had to think about it and talk about it. For me, to interact with moms with little babies, which I've never done before, was really very valuable. And to have the grandmother figure. What's not to like? That was interesting.

I was also with several other young people. I was in my twenties. Formed a group that we called the Plus or Minus Thirties. We didn't want a singles group. But we wanted a group, a young people's group. There was a young people's group for the high school kids but this was sort of the in-between group. It was straight and gay, married and single. We did a lot of socializing together, camping trips, skiing trips, hiking and so on.

It is something that has affected some of the things I tried to do at SPUR. SPUR now has the wonderful Young Urbanists group. We talked about it here for years. And, of course, it took a couple young people on the board to put it together. We old guys aren't going to put it together. But the idea was, and it was the correct idea, not to overload this with ideology. Just have a party. Meet in some bar and have a party, and people start having a good time together and they start coming. Then you can put some content in it. Like one of the first Young Urbanists events was a talk by a filmmaker at a movie theater and then see a movie. The Young Urbanists here at SPUR—in a couple of months there were hundreds of people coming. We got asked for advice by a lot of other groups in the city, "How did you do it?" The way you do it is start with the fun and layer on the program as people want it or not. And just finding people of a similar bent is really important.

There was another group that was trying to form at the Unitarian Society called the Shared Center. The Unitarians owned a bunch of property: an old church that was built as a church by some other more "churchy" religion, and three other buildings that were not very well utilized. The idea was to form an intentional community of social service organizations that would share the property and share the secretarial service or the Xerox machine, but also share programs. This had not really gotten off the ground. Somehow I got leading that effort, and soon became board chair of the Shared Center and we were able to fill up the buildings and start earning a little revenue off of them. But filling them up with like-minded groups. There was a meditation group called Ananda Marga that also had childcare; there was a reform synagogue; the Metropolitan Community Church, the gay affiliated church; the Black Caucus. It was a lot harder than we thought just to be the traffic cop of different groups, and harder for church members to realize they couldn't just use a room anytime they wanted to, that they needed to all of a sudden make a reservation for it. We ultimately had to staff it. We had to get a secretary to do the scheduling and so on. We never got to sharing programs, that was a level too complicated. When you have different boards of directors, they all have a duty of loyalty to their own organization, and a fiduciary duty to their own organization, and they're all promoting their own organization. Well, I still love the idea of joint programs. It just never happened in my tenure.

After I left Denver I didn't follow what was happening, but there is a group in Denver now called Denver Shared Spaces. It's different people in a different location, a different mission, but just this idea of shared spaces. Coworking, we know about that, and cohousing. It's still an idea that's a great idea. Based on the Shared Center experience, I was elected vice-president of the board of the Unitarian Society, and elected at the same time was a new president. We'd worked together on the Shared Center. They said, "Oh, here's some people who can help the organization." When we started, the board met in the evening sitting on overstuffed chairs drinking wine. Wrong. Board meetings would go on until 1:00 in the morning. The first board meeting we were leading, we sat at cafeteria tables on metal folding chairs and the meeting was over by nine o'clock. We instituted some things like you can't propose a new program without identifying the money in the budget, and which program you're going to cut. I wish our San Francisco Board of Supervisors had that discipline because, of course, there are many good ideas, but they're not always financially feasible.

We got the business things working, and as part of that we got an appropriate amount of fire insurance on all these buildings, which they hadn't had before, and that turned out to be very important because after I had left and was in San Francisco, the church burned. The board president called me up that night and he said, "I'm thrilled. This is the best thing that could ever happen," because the church then got rebuilt in a way that was appropriate to the organization that it was, and not a churchy-church.

But the most important thing I learned was succession planning. The church had a minister who I suppose was in his fifties and had been there for twenty-five years, and had been wonderful at one time, but twenty-five years is too long in any organization, but particularly in a non-profit, I think. People develop into camps of support and non-support and "his side" and the "other side." This was apparent because membership was declining, revenues were declining, attendance at events was declining—a sure sign that something's wrong. It fell to me to encourage him to find another job. He ultimately found another job that changed his city, changed his job, changed his wife. It worked out much better for him. It didn't work out right away for the Unitarian Society, because people had been so into one camp or the other, and it took a year to find a replacement. The replacement only stayed a year because, in fact—more change needed to happen. The organization needed to go through this.

When I came to SPUR this was paramount in my mind. That experience always stuck with me. I said to myself, "I will be here for eight to ten years. I will have all the systems in place so someone else can walk into it without ever losing a beat and I will have that person in place." I was very, very lucky to find Gabriel Metcalf, and we'll talk about this in the future. But he came here and started as a volunteer, and did that for maybe a year and was sitting at the front desk as the receptionist. I hired him as the deputy development

director and he went through every job in the place. By the time I left he'd already been doing the executive director job for several years under me. It was seamless. This is exactly the way it should work and it happens so rarely, I think.

At some point while I had this little company with this other planner in Denver, I decided I was going to take some time off. So I had a friend, and he and I both said we're going to take two years off and be ski bums, which you could do in Denver. Living expenses were very, very low at that time. Shortly thereafter there was an announcement for a design competition to paint a mural. It wasn't just painting a mural. I could see this was what we now call DIY, or do it yourself planning, that this was to mark a location of a future center. It was a warehouse that was a half-block long, huge warehouse at the confluence of a river and a spring, in downtown Denver in the old rail yard neighborhood. The purpose of this was to put a marker there, and to attract people there, and to get people to start coming there, and to think of this as a future development area. I designed a mural and won the competition. I don't remember who the client was. I think you have the newspaper clipping that probably says. It was a community group, business group, and got a prize of a few hundred dollars to buy the paint. And so my friend and I then painted this mural. It was videoed for TV every night on the news and it really started to make people think about this as someplace they hadn't thought about before. That is now the center of a vibrant new neighborhood in Denver. A few years back, friends called up from Denver and said, "They're tearing the building down. You have to come stop them from tearing your mural down." I said, "No, that's what it was for. It lasted thirty-five years or something. It wasn't to be there forever. It was to be a holding place until the next really great thing came along." Now it is a very interesting neighborhood.

02-01:04:20

Farrell:

I do want to back up and ask you a couple clarifying questions. With the Denver Shared Center, how did you find that? How did you find your way to the Denver Shared Center?

02-01:04:35

Chappell:

Okay. So I was going to the Unitarian Society and this was a program of theirs, because someone had come up with this idea and they had these buildings and it just hadn't gotten off the ground.

02-01:04:54

Farrell:

And were you living there, as well?

02-01:04:56

Chappell:

I was living in Denver.

02-01:04:58

Farrell:

So with the Shared Center—



- 02-01:05:03  
Chappell: It was office and meeting space.
- 02-01:05:05  
Farrell: Okay, so it wasn't cohabitating space, as well?
- 02-01:05:09  
Chappell: No.
- 02-01:05:09  
Farrell: Okay. When you were talking about the family dimension I didn't know if it was—
- 02-01:05:12  
Chappell: No. The Extended Family was not living together.
- 02-01:05:18  
Farrell: I see. Okay, okay.
- 02-01:05:20  
Chappell: The Extended Family would get together every other Sunday, for Sunday night supper, holidays, and then periodic camping trips or skiing trips.
- 02-01:05:32  
Farrell: I see. Okay. And then were you doing that the same time that you were working with the partnership?
- 02-01:05:41  
Chappell: Yes.
- 02-01:05:43  
Farrell: Was the Denver Shared Center one of your clients or something you were doing on the side?
- 02-01:05:48  
Chappell: No, this was voluntary.
- 02-01:05:49  
Farrell: Okay. One thing we also did not talk about was your architectural license.
- 02-01:05:52  
Chappell: Oh, yes. You have to work for a licensed architect for three years before you can take the test. It's a title law and a practice law. You can't call yourself an architect or do the work unless you're licensed. I wasn't working under an architect in Iran, and then for Dave Wallace at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd. The three years came along when I was in Denver working for that firm and I went out and dutifully bought the handbook for how to take the test. Places like Philadelphia or San Francisco, the AIA had classes, but not in Denver. But there was a handbook. I read the book and then there's a sample test and I took the sample test. It's different modules. There's structural engineering, design, grading, materials, city planning section. I had all my

school notes and so on. But without ever reviewing anything I just took the mock test to see how I would do. I did pretty well. Like I got 65 percent in most of the stuff, except for city planning where I got 35 percent. I was, of course, as a twenty-something-year-old, outraged and said, "These people don't know anything about city planning. I don't want to be an architect anyway." I didn't want to be an architect. But having the license is what you do. So I said, "That's it. I'm not going to take the test." And I didn't. Afterwards the woman who was the state licensing officer called me up and said, "You didn't take the test." I said, "No, I didn't." She said, "Well, you really should have because this was the first year that they had computerized the test and the test was too easy and that everyone who took it in Colorado passed it." She said, "Oh, you missed your chance. It'll never be that easy again." But I was off and flying. It is something I regret, that I should've done it and I could have done it. But it's what you do when you're twenty-something. [laughter]

02-01:08:39

Farrell:

The year that you took the sabbatical, that you wanted to ski and that you entered the DIY planning competition, was that around 1977?

02-01:08:50

Chappell:

Yeah. Probably was. Could have been '76 or '77.

02-01:08:56

Farrell:

Okay, so right around then. You ended up taking a sabbatical then. Is that right?

02-01:09:01

Chappell:

I did but it didn't last for very long. It was supposed to last for two years. So first I got this mural gig. But that was fun. That wasn't work. But then I had a friend who worked for an engineering firm called Stone & Webster. Stone & Webster was kind of the Boston equivalent of a Bechtel, in that it was an engineering firm that did big infrastructure projects, power plants, things like that. They had a branch office in Denver and I had this friend who worked at that branch office and he called me up and said, "We've just gotten this project in San Francisco. Would you like to go there and do this project?" That was not a hard ask. When I packed my bag I knew I'd never be back.

It was an interesting job. First of all, Stone & Webster, like Bechtel, wasn't just a consultant but it implements projects. It's was a construction company. It built them and owned them, operated them sometimes. Incidentally, the firm no longer exists. It got bought out and merged into something else. So that was attractive, to get closer to the source of implementation. As a planner, it can take decades to get things done and you have little ability to affect it because you're not the decision-maker. But San Francisco was the big attraction. It was a six-month project. It was something totally new. It was called a Notice of Intent. It was an environmental document and it was the first one that had ever been done in the state. It was a Notice of Intent to

modify the PG&E power plant in Pittsburg, California in order to close the Hunters Point power plant. This was 1977. We did the study. The Pittsburg power plant closed in 2006, twenty-nine years later! But we were inventing a study and we had all of the “-ologists” that either came from Denver or Boston, or local consultants, and we were making up what we were doing. There weren’t a lot of regulations. We just had to figure out what we had to do. I got to set up another office.

Just in terms of office technology and how different it is today, when I was at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd in Philadelphia, there were maybe twenty people in the office and there was one person who was the accountant. He’d be the CFO today, but it was the accountant. There was one adding machine in the office, which was a big heavy thing and you punched the numbers in and you pulled the crank. To get demographic data you’d go to the census department with graph paper and a pocket full of sharpened pencils, and write down all these numbers and then you’d come back to the office and have to fight to get the adding machine and punch in these numbers. How much more productive we are today.

When I was in Denver and we sent drawings back and forth to Philadelphia, I would drive to the airport, hand them to the pilot, who would take them to Philadelphia. Somebody from the office there would go to the airport, get the drawings from the pilot.

02-01:13:51

Farrell:

Wow.

02-01:13:52

Chappell:

Wow. How different our world is today. So at Stone & Webster, being a better capitalized firm, we had a teletype machine. But our client was PG&E. And they had this new thing called a fax machine. In that thirty-story building in the Financial District, at the top floor, was the board of directors office suite, where they would have their board meetings. They had a fax machine for the directors to send orders to their stockbroker in New York or whatever. Along with that fax machine was a directory of every fax number in the country. And this was a booklet maybe four by six inches and twenty pages long and it was every fax number in the country. And, of course, we know what happened to fax technology.

So here I was in San Francisco and could go to SPUR noontime events. I spent my spare time exploring the city. It was interesting coming with a group of people partly from Denver and partly from Boston. The people from Boston never saw such a clean city in their life as San Francisco. The people from Denver said they’d never seen such a dirty city in their life. As I discovered things around the city I started doing tours for people in the office, urban tours. I remember going to Embarcadero Center and John Portman’s glorious Hyatt Hotel with this eight-story atrium in it. I remember one of the

engineers saying, “What a waste of space. This is terrible. They wasted all that money on this.” The difference between architectural education and engineering education—it’s so completely different. Engineers are taught to do things as cheaply as possible and that it’s immoral to spend more money than you need to. They also often seem to have a belief that if a speech is interesting it’s bad. It’s so different from, you know, if you look at Michelangelo, who was an architect, an engineer, a city planner, a painter, a sculptor. That engineering education today is so straight-line and that you start over here and it’s a straight line and the answer is, “it’s a two-inch pipe.” Architects start with this big circle. I always think of the cartoon of Pig-Pen kicking up dust, that you’re exploring every possible thing and then finally you get to—and that’s just been my experience in so many things.

02-01:17:35

Farrell:

Where did you fall? John Portman has won the Pritzker Prize for architecture and that Hyatt Hotel atrium is highly regarded. Where did you fall in between the architecture and the engineers?

02-01:17:50

Chappell:

Loved the architecture. Absolutely.

02-01:17:55

Farrell:

I had a feeling but I just wanted to—

02-01:17:57

Chappell:

Setting up the office, we got a secretary from, I don’t know, an agency. She walked in the office the first day and looked around and in a great loud voice said, “Okay, who’s gay and who’s straight? I don’t want to waste any time putting the make on gay guys.” Shocked. [laughter] This was at the time when Armistead Maupin’s “Tales of the City” was serialized in the *Chronicle*. It was just coming out then. So three days a week or something, everybody would rush for the *Chronicle* to read this soap opera, essentially, this serialized soap opera about people and their sexual peccadilloes. I know Armistead later said that the editors were so nervous about that, and they put a requirement on him that 50 percent of the characters in any one issue had to be straight. He said in one of the issues, he had to make the dog straight just to get to the 50 percent. This is so out there. I remember the day after Halloween dragging myself to the office at eleven o’clock in the morning or something. They said, “Oh, Jim, good time last night?” Such a liberating environment.

02-01:19:55

Farrell:

I do have one quick question about your transition from Denver to San Francisco. So back at one time you were still in Denver and you were at the firm, they had wanted you to move to LA but you said, “No, I’m good here right now.” What had changed and what freed you up to want—or I guess maybe not freed you up but what made that decision to move to San Francisco different than to move to LA?

02-01:20:24  
Chappell:

In Denver I got to the point where I was no longer a kid and had a life and had relationships. That was good for a while. After, I think it was seven years in Denver, I was getting bored with Denver. It's two hours from everywhere. It's two hours from New York and it's two hours from San Francisco but it's not thirty minutes from Berkeley or something. It's a trip. I'd been to everywhere you could drive to. Albuquerque, Phoenix, Tucson, Salt Lake, Cheyenne. And the quality of the work was not as exciting. There was only one "city" and that was Denver. Everything else was on a smaller scale and not as important.

02-01:21:33  
Farrell:

Okay. From Stone & Webster you started to work for Bechtel? Or what was that transition?

02-01:21:43  
Chappell:

Yeah. This job was five or six months and Stone & Webster had hoped this would be the loss-leader for continuing on with that job or some other job. And, as I said, it took twenty-nine years for the second shoe to fall on that. So after six months it was time to go back to Denver. And I literally walked across the street to Bechtel. At this time Bechtel had 20,000 employees in San Francisco. They had an architecture department with some very good architects in it, and two competing planning departments. I walked in and got offers from both planning departments. Also the idea of designing and building things – I thought this was a step closer to implementation, a company that really, really builds things.

I went to work first for the planning department that did physical planning for new towns. And they were new towns in this country connected to new industrial facilities. You build a power plant in the middle of Nevada or something and you'd have to provide some amount of community with it. It also was designing and building a major new town in Saudi Arabia. And what I quickly saw, though, was that after you got your feet on the ground, you got to go to Saudi Arabia for a two-year stint. I said, "I've been to the Middle East. I want to stay in San Francisco." I did have projects all around the country with Bechtel. I definitely did not want to go to Saudi Arabia. I then went to the other planning department and was able to do a lot of, again, the Dave Wallace kind of studies to do with major facilities. I also got to do a lot of decision-making theory, or game theory I guess people probably call it today. But something the engineers had not seen. How do you make nuanced decisions when there are choices? I did a lot of work on that. I think people thought I was nuts. But, in fact, they used it. We got better decisions on things.

When I went to Bechtel my goal was to stay there three years. To get out the day before three years, because they had an extremely lucrative retirement program there. There were two programs. One you put money in and they matched and the other they just put money in. You were fully vested at three years. They put a lot of money in. People retired very, very well on this. But I saw it was a trap. Like the golden noose. I saw people rusting out there. But

how can you walk away when they're giving you, I don't know, how many thousands of dollars a year in addition to a salary? This came, I think, from the Bechtel family values. The firm, first of all, had in those days a lot of multigenerational employees—a father and son, or mother and daughter or son. The Bechtels liked that, and that was a loyalty that was intended to go in both directions and did. They were very personable. Steve Bechtel once a year came around and shook hands with every employee and talked with them. Twenty thousand employees. Sort of amazing. I think that's why they did this retirement program, because they really felt this family. It was their family business and their employees were their family. I still bump into Steve and Betty Bechtel and they are very nice people. Their daughter Laurie Dachs and her husband. They're very conservative. They're religious. They take their religion seriously and that's where they make a lot of donations. There's been a lot written about them in the muckraking magazines. And all I saw was straight-arrow engineers. Some of the things they're accused of, they could never even conceive of because they're engineers. Yeah, engineers build nuclear power plants. Of course they do. Yeah, they want to get the job. Frank Lloyd Wright said the three most important rules of architecture are: "Get the job, get the job, and get the job." Bechtel's very expensive because they do really good work. When you look at whose power plants have problems, it's none that they built. It's very expensive but very high-quality control. But as an engineering firm, it wasn't my self-image. While the company actually implemented projects, in the position I was in I wasn't any closer to implementation than I would be in a planning form.

I started looking around. I'd been active in the American Planning Association here. I knew a lot of people. Dean Macris, who was then at ABAG, the Association of Bay Area Governments, before he was San Francisco planning director. Marge Macris, who was Marin County planner. Allan Jacobs, the chair of the planning department at Berkeley. Allan Temko, the late architecture critic for the *Chronicle*. Ann Kriken, planner, and Paul Sedway and Tom Cooke, of Sedway Cooke, most of these people I'm still friends with. Rai Okamoto, who was the San Francisco planning director; he's dead now. But as I talked with people I kept coming back to EDAW, and this is from that landscape architect I had hired in Denver who told me about SPUR, also told me about Garrett Eckbo, who was the E in EDAW, who had been chair of the landscape architecture department at Berkeley. While Dave Wallace and Ian McHarg were the department chairs at Penn, Garrett was at Berkeley and Hideo Sasaki was in Boston. These were the three firms: Wallace McHarg, Roberts, and Todd; Sasaki; and EDAW, that, when I was at Wallace McHarg, we'd always get shortlisted on the same projects and that we'd be competing with.

EDAW just had a very good reputation. So I called up Howard Altman, the design principal, and he hired me. At that time I think there were only twenty people in the San Francisco office and there were offices at several other places around the country, such as Newport Beach, Georgetown, Fort Collins.

Ultimately I think there were over thirty offices and thousands of people and EDAW has since merged into a conglomerate, AECOM. But in those days, like WMRT, it was an intimate group of people and everybody did everything. You kept your eye out for projects that were coming along. You developed relationships. You wrote the proposal. You interviewed for the job. You got the job and wrote the contract and managed the job. So it was a really good training ground in that respect. I did a number of recreation planning studies. Early on worked on new town planning for a community in Southern California and was commuting to Orange County. I also worked on a number of projects in the Sierras.

And then the firm got a huge job and opened a separate project office in San Francisco with other firms from around the country. EDAW was the lead and the lead was a woman by the name of Teresa Rea, who is just a brilliant planner with degrees from Berkeley and Harvard. Just a great strategist. I'm now working with her on the Board of Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture. This job was a series of new towns connected to military bases for a new program, a new military adventure. Ultimately Ronald Reagan cancelled the program. But we'd spent, I don't know how long, couple of years, I don't know, doing a lot of very, I think, groundbreaking work. One of the things I learned, though, was that the military was a terrible client. First of all, they had too much money. They couldn't decide. You'd meet with them and show them everything and they'd say, "Well, why don't you try that? Why don't you do that?" They just had too much money. Also, there's a revolving door in government. This was the first time I had really seen that. One of the reasons military bases tend to be not very nice places is that the base commander gets transferred once a year if they're successful. If they're not successful they're there two years. They get rated on how many buildings they build in that year. On the ground, the people you're working with at the bases, were not as good as the actual headquarters client group.

I'm still dealing with this revolving door now at Fort Mason where the National Park Service is our landlord. There was a head of the GGNRA (Golden Gate National Recreation Area) and we just got things working out with him and he's gone. Somebody else comes in who had been regional director. They had to get a new regional director as well as this new head of GGNRA. She's there a year. She's gone. It's a problem. When projects take many years and you have to reeducate somebody every year it's a problem.

02-01:36:25

Farrell:

EDAW, which stood for Eckbo, Dean, Austin and Williams, was an international landscape architecture and design firm. You had talked a little bit about the new town study. But can you tell me a little bit about the recreational planning in the Sierras?

02-01:36:50  
Chappell:

Yeah. The firm was the largest planning firm in the country rooted in landscape architecture. So there were other large planning firms that were engineering firms or architecture firms. The principals were generally landscape architects. While Howard Altman, who was an architect *and* landscape architect, hired me, as time went on I worked more and more with the environmental partner, Dave Blau, who was a great systems thinker and really understood decision-making and how to communicate that to the public, because, of course, all planning only gets done with the participation and agreement of the public. We did visual impact studies, routing of linear facilities, whether it's parkways or pipelines or electrical transmission lines. A lot of recreation planning for the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service. I think the National Park Service is the biggest employer of landscape architects in the country. A lot of nice recreation work. I spent three months in Alaska doing recreation planning there. The firm was extremely well run. When I started out Howard Altman was the principal in charge of San Francisco and then Dave Blau. There were the kind of office systems that made the office both quality and profitable. At Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd, Ian was all about quality and Dave was about quality and profit. EDAW really had it figured out how to run a tight ship and how to keep everybody busy. Every Monday morning at 7:30 there was a staff meeting and went through everybody's week. And then you're off running. A great discipline.

I was there for five years. I would have stayed, but this is when the AIDS crisis hit. And I think the first person in San Francisco who came out as having AIDS was in December 1982. The disease that people got early on was Kaposi's Sarcoma, which was a rare cancer that previously had been gotten by Eastern European Jewish men. All of a sudden people would wake up one day with spots and would be dead in two to five days. The Star pharmacy on the corner of Eighteenth and Castro put up Polaroid pictures of people in their window and said, "Be careful. There's some disease going around." I saw that. It really clicked. Nobody knew how it was transmitted. I had to assume it was sexually transmitted because only gay men were getting it, and at that time it was called GRID, Gay Related Immunodeficiency Syndrome. But people didn't know if you got it through the air or from touch, or what. I remember talking with my physician and he said, "I don't know how it's transmitted but I'm not going to not kiss my partner." Nobody knew. And landlords were evicting doctors who treated AIDS patients. Funeral homes wouldn't do funerals. People were really afraid. People were dying like flies. The *BAR*, the gay newspaper, there'd be four or five pages of obituaries every week in it. Other people would just disappear.

As time went on people started getting more pneumocystis pneumonia instead of Kaposi's Sarcoma. I don't know why. But they would linger for a couple of years. You would go down Castro Street and there would be these eighty-year-old people with walkers, except they weren't eighty, they were twenty-



five. Death was a hundred percent. Most of my generation and most of my friends died. I said, "Well, I don't want to die sitting at my desk." I said, "Dave, I need to take off." I had a house and inflation was high and I had some equity in it, and so I sold the house. There was a high rate of investment return, eight, ten percent at that time, so I could live on that money for some amount of time. And decided, well, I'd go to Europe for the summer.

Before I went I asked to teach a class at UC Berkeley Extension the coming fall. And Extension has a landscape architecture certificate program that's fully accredited and it's one of only two in the country that doesn't have entrance requirements but just has exit requirements. It's a very valuable program for people who are in San Francisco and mid-career, career changes, or people getting more credentials. It's a serious program. People are adults and serious. I had team-taught a course there while I was at EDAW and that guy was ready to bow out and so I took that over. I spent the summer in Europe photographing for this course. The course was called Gardens, Parks, and Urban Open Spaces, and it's essentially history and theory of landscape architecture and urban design. I just worked really, really hard documenting the important spaces and places. I had previously been to Europe and so I already had a slide collection.

When I started that course, I ultimately taught it for twenty-five years. When I started it was eight, three-hour sessions, and then by popular demand it went to twelve, and then ultimately to twenty-four three-hour sessions. It was like every other semester, every year I got a window of time, for five years, where I took off to Europe.

When I came back from Europe the first year, and I picked up my San Francisco American Institute of Architects newsletter, it said the San Francisco Architectural Foundation was hiring a fellow. So I thought okay. I did that. It was a very, very part-time kind of thing. The foundation did a couple of things. They put on a high school design competition, which they had done for decades. A very successful competition. There were three board members when we started and one of them was an architect by the name of George Rockrise, and George was one of the seminal modern architects in the 1950s and 1960s in California. He formed a major firm called ROMA, of which he was the R. He had worked with Le Corbusier on the UN in New York and was semi-retired at this point. He was just coming in as chairman of that board. He and I built that organization. As we're both planners we tried to pivot its mission from the architectural foundation to the environmental design foundation, to being more planning, more regional planning, because SPUR was the city planning organization, and we thought we could be the regional planning organization. We got some other great board members: John May, who'd been executive director of the San Francisco Foundation; Chris Degenhardt, who was the CEO of EDAW at the time; John Kriken, of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. It turned out it was the wrong mission for architects. Architects like to build buildings and they're happy to build

industrial parks in the central valley farmland, if that's what they get hired for. That never really took off. I did that, I don't know, for a couple of years. It reverted to the Architectural Foundation and they still do the Architects in Schools program or the high school design competition, I mean. But they also have an Architects in Schools program, where they use architecture to teach the usual things that high school students learn. When SPUR bought 654 Mission Street and were designing the building and raising money for the building, we gave the space to the Architectural Foundation for a couple of years and they had their school operating out of here. It's an organization I continue to keep my eye on, I'm on the advisory board. They do really nice work.

I had the luxury of taking French classes and one summer took an intensive class in France. I also went to the Soviet Union with the American Society of Landscape Architects, building a peace park in Tashkent, on the theory that park building is not controversial, that everybody should like it. That was a very interesting experience. It was at the time of perestroika and things were opening up. As I should have known from my experience in Iran, what the American government tells us and what was, was very different. Individuals were extremely nice and welcoming and happy to be a friend of an American. The buildings in the Soviet Union are very interesting. High-rise buildings all have neon lights around the top floor with words around them. Invariably these were slogans about peace, "Peace to the World." Gosh, these warmongering godless communists. What's this about? Well, in fact, people are people. The country is very poor. This country that we're so afraid of was really in many ways a third world country. This park was in Uzbekistan, which is now one of the Central Asian republics, but populated by both Russians and Uzbeks. There are many newspapers published in Russia. It wasn't just *Pravda*. One of the, I think, five freedoms of the Soviet constitution was the freedom for news. There were billboards on the side of buildings and every day the newspapers would get posted and there'd be a group of people standing there reading the newspaper. Modern art, loads of modern art. It wasn't just statues of Lenin, of which there were plenty. There was really good contemporary art. People knew what was going on in the art world.

Interesting technology. We so over-design things in many ways. Remember when Sputnik went up. Scientists in this country were amazed. How could they build a rocket big enough to send this heavy thing into space? We couldn't build a rocket that big. Well, they didn't either. They took three small rockets and tied them together. Very simple. Articulated buses with a hinge. They put a trailer hitch on the back of a bus and a trailer hitch on the front of the bus. When the bus got crowded they hooked up two buses together. The subway in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, was, boy, like all subways in the Soviet Union. If it was two seconds late people would complain. Boy, really good service. A couple of us who were planners went to see the subway operation and to meet with the people who ran it. In their office is the electronic board

with all the lights on it and the routes and where the cars are, that was being used as a planter for philodendron and clearly this did not work. I said, "How do you keep the trains on time?" They said, "Oh, well, we send a guy down on the platform. If the train is late he tells the driver to speed up. If the train is early he tells the driver to slow down." What a concept. I think we've all seen pictures of Coca-Cola type machines with a little lady sitting in this machine pouring it. It just is very low-tech solutions to things. We studied some Russian, not very successfully. But I could use French and German, even Farsi in Uzbekistan. It was not that far from Iran.

I also in these years went to Mexico several times a year, which was purely pleasure. No work there. And then, come five years later, 1990, the AIDS test was available. I went right out and took the AIDS test, and turned out to be HIV negative. Said, "Oh, now I've got to find a job. I'm not dying." I went to EDAW and stopped in to see Dave Blau. He said, "You want a job?" "Sure." In 1990 I went back to EDAW for a second almost five-year stint, until I came to SPUR. I said, "I don't want any corporate role. I just want to do the work." They called me chief environmental planner, and I got to do a lot of major environmental studies, and to use the McHarg method more again. The McHarg method had gotten more elaborate and expensive. After the Denver RTD studies fewer and fewer people wanted to pay for that amount of environmental planning. Well, 1990, computers, and we had a SunSPARC workstation at EDAW that cost, I think, \$350,000, that would do these overlays and you could just do run after run, test after test, change the values of things and get beautiful maps. I also did some landscape design there, some visual studies, some routing studies. So had a really good run. I belonged to the American Planning Association, as I had all the time, and also to the AEP, the Association of Environmental Professionals. And EDAW, at this time had, I don't know, maybe there were fifty people in San Francisco. I don't know. But we had the biggest conference room of any landscape architecture planning firm in the city. We had events and I put the two groups together and we'd do joint events because we'd get twice the audience. And got to meet a lot of people that way.

In 1980, when I was first in town, the national convention of the American Planning Association was in San Francisco. There was a gay guy by the name of Al Baum who had a party in his apartment. Al had been the person who coined the acronym SPUR. He was on SPUR's first board of directors when it reformed as SPUR in 1959 and was appointed to the San Francisco planning commission as the SPUR rep on the planning commission, that there always was in those days. And was a substantial person, and still is, in the community. It was there that ultimately I met Tom Nolan, who was the executive director of SPUR in the 1991-2-3-4, something. Yeah.

After that party at Al Baum's, some of us put together a group called Gays and Lesbians in Planning, and at that time there was an active gay architects group and gay lawyers group. We put together a planner's group. We would

have monthly meetings with guest speakers, and for whatever reason I ended up running this. Somebody has to do it, I think. My mother said you can be the president of any voluntary organization you want to as long as you do the work. [laughter] There's no competition for those jobs. It was a very vibrant group and we'd have thirty people a month show up at these talks. I did that for a number of years until I came to SPUR and then I simply did not have time to do it, and I passed the mantle on to somebody else who did it for a couple of years and then he passed it on to somebody. Eventually it went away, whether from benign neglect or just these kinds of organizations aren't necessary, or as necessary as they once were, as gay people get better integrated.

02-02:02:58

Farrell:

I actually think that this is probably a pretty good transitional point for the next session. But I do have a couple of questions related to your work experience before SPUR. A lot of your work dealt with new towns and planning new towns and I'm wondering how you make new towns attractive to potential residents.

02-02:03:24

Chappell:

It's a real problem, and they have not been particularly successful. Things take time is the truth of it. And you don't get a town out of a rulebook or design standards. We look at this, at Mission Bay in San Francisco today. Stewart Brand, the guy who wrote the *Whole Earth Catalogue*, and who actually has a foundation now called the Long Now Foundation, which is at Fort Mason and they have a wonderful salon there looking far into the future. He wrote a book called *How Buildings Learn* and in it are pictures of buildings and how they've changed over time, the same pictures that appear in some of the historic preservation or architecture books, horror that people would change a building over time, he celebrates because, in fact, buildings do learn. People change buildings to meet their needs, as they must do. There's another great book by Kevin Lynch called *What Time is This Place?* Jane Jacob said way back in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, you need old buildings, you need new buildings. You need spaces that artists can afford. You need places for bank presidents. And you don't get that in a new town. It's just the truth of it. People have to personalize things and make them work for them and build the institutions it takes. So much of our society is institutions and not necessarily government institutions that are promulgated but people putting together something that works, whether it's the Shared Center or SPUR, that these came out of a felt need. That doesn't come out of a can, which is not to say that I don't believe in planning and the promise of new towns.

There were two new towns in the 1960s that were generally successful. One is Reston, Virginia and it was done by Gulf + Western, the Gulf Oil Company initially. It attempted to be an architectural *tour de force* and the first phases of it especially are very good architects and architecture. I think architects

love those early phases more than most other people do. The second one is Columbia, Maryland. I think it's just probably ninety miles from Reston or something. Columbia was part of the Great Society and Lyndon Johnson's new town program, and it's the only one that got very far. It never had pretensions of high design, but it had social ideas. For instance, my college roommate's father, Bill Genné, the minister, was part of the team. They had ministers and social workers and doctors and people on the team, as well as architects and landscape architects. They built in community spaces, that every neighborhood had not just a neighborhood school but a community center and recreation facilities as the center of that neighborhood. The neighborhoods in Reston each center around an open space, some of which are parks, some of which are golf courses, not social spaces at all, some of which are lakes. But in Columbia they really tried to think how people were going to live there.

When Bechtel was doing the new town in Saudi Arabia the question came up, "what is a neighborhood unit in Saudi Arabia?" In this country and in England, the heart of the new towns movement, the social unit was the grammar school. In Saudi Arabia the neighborhood school was not the practice. How do you organize a neighborhood? And, of course, today in this country we don't by and large have neighborhood schools either.

02-02:09:37

Farrell:

Well, I think that's a good place to leave it for today and then when we come back next time we'll talk about your transition into SPUR.

02-02:09:43

Chappell:

Yeah.

02-02:09:43

Farrell:

Thank you.

02-02:09:46

Chappell:

Okay. And I'll send you what I have.

### Interview 3: September 2, 2016

03-00:00:00

Farrell:

Okay. This is Shanna Farrell with Jim Chappell on Friday, September 2, 2016. This is our third interview for his oral history project as part of SPUR and we are at the SPUR headquarters in San Francisco, California. Jim, when we left off last time we were talking about your work before you got to SPUR but you had also mentioned becoming a member in the eighties. I'm wondering if you could tell us a little bit about how you transitioned from being a member to being a staff person in 1994?

03-00:00:37

Chappell:

One of the great things about SPUR is all the educational events that there are here. I would get my monthly newsletter and I'd put all these things in my

calendar and hardly ever get to come. In the spring of 1994 there was a piece of *Chronicle* that Tom Nolan, who was the executive director of SPUR, was leaving to go head up Project Open Hand. I thought, "Gee, I might be able to do that." I went to see Tom. I had known Tom through GALIP, Gays and Lesbians in Planning. And kind of got the lowdown of how he saw the job and then I, of course, had worked with Teresa Rea for many years at SPUR and she was on the SPUR board. We went out and I talked with her and I said, "Boy, this sounds like my dream job." She said, "Well, go for it." And for all the great jobs at EDAW, all my great projects, none of them were in San Francisco. They were other places in the country, other places in the state. And San Francisco is a unique place, I think, in many ways, and I wanted to work in San Francisco. I also knew SPUR is a unique organization, that it is really a citizens planning organization. It's not a business group. Anybody can join and anybody can be a part of it.

I went through the interview process and it came down to two candidates. We both presented before the board and I then went home, and I guess there was a long debate that night. Interestingly, I was the more conservative candidate, but I was the planner with a lot of office experience and had started and run offices by this time. The board was well aware that SPUR needed somebody to really take it in hand.

03-00:02:56

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about why it was your dream job? What about it was very attractive to you?

03-00:03:02

Chappell:

I think two things. One is that it's in the city that I love and that I had lots of ideas about what was going right and what was going wrong, and SPUR has an impressive history of planning in San Francisco and a very impressive group of people. San Francisco then, as today, attracts some of the best people in the world to come live here. That's certainly true of planners and architects. I knew a lot of planners and architects, both through the AIA and through the American Planning Association. It was a subject I was familiar with. And then it's just SPUR, this kind of place where you really can invent the future. I'd worked for the government in the Peace Corps and I knew that wasn't where I wanted to stay. I'd worked for the private sector as a consultant and I'd worked for Bechtel, which was an implementer, an owner/builder as well as a consultant. But I saw this as a way to really get in there and make inputs to the mayor and the department heads and the planning director.

03-00:04:34

Farrell:

You mentioned that you had opinions about what was going right and what was going wrong in San Francisco. Can you tell us a little bit more about that, if you can recall that?

03-00:04:44  
Chappell:

Yeah. I'm going to read you a paragraph that was part of my inaugural talk at Silver SPUR Annual Awards banquet in November of 1994. I'll just read a paragraph that I found recently from my speech that day. I said, "I have a vision of San Francisco in which an informed citizenry understands the interconnections between quality of life, job creation, housing development, and provision of social services, of a citizenry which welcomes quality development tailored to the needs and ethos of our particular populations and does so with the same vigor with which we defend our cultural treasures. I have a vision of a voting public which demands and receives accountability from the private sector, and as a consequence, funds the legitimate needs of the common welfare and elects officials with uncommon vision and leadership. Lastly, I have a vision of a city which goes beyond the romance of Herb Caen's 1940. The residents of this San Francisco would dare to imagine and encourage a vital city at the forefront of emerging technologies and communications and data management, with a bridge to the Pacific Rim, with a visitor and tourist experience tied to our unique populations and outlook and with a population where every race and minority has a place at the table." San Francisco is peculiar in that there are all these future-oriented people here and ideas and promise but also San Francisco, when it comes to city planning, is very conservative and that there are these forces lined up against change. I saw that, what it was very clearly.

At this time the country had just gone through a bad national recession in 1990-91, which hit really two years later in San Francisco. It was really '92-93 and we were still in the recession in 1994. There hadn't been any new public works. The only one that was under construction was the Legion of Honor and there had been a lot of damage to a lot of public buildings in the city in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, and because of the recession, there wasn't any private construction going on either. November 1993 was a public vote to build a new main library and that was 1996 before it was open. When the Legion of Honor opened in 1995, Beverly Mills, who was the immediate past president of the board of SPUR, she organized a party, a civic celebration to celebrate that we're building again in the city. Eventually we spent a billion dollars at the Civic Center alone, redoing those buildings.

As San Franciscans we have a voracious appetite for social services. They have to be paid for one of two ways. You can raise the tax rate or you can build the base. SPUR's focus has always been on building the base and creating the conditions so responsible development can happen.

03-00:08:33  
Farrell:

You mentioned a minute ago that San Francisco was conservative and there were forces stacked against change. Can you explain what you mean by that?

03-00:08:41  
Chappell:

It's often said that San Francisco has some of the best architects in the world and they all do their best work elsewhere. I think that's true. It's also often

said that everyone who moves to San Francisco thinks the city was perfect the day that they came here, and every change is taking away from the city. Today we talk about NIMBYs, not in my backyard. That phrase didn't exist in 1994, but it was certainly very much here, that the city had gone through a series of down-zonings in the 1970s. There were two major down-zonings when Dianne Feinstein was mayor. There was a proposal to zone the whole city to forty-feet in height. Meanwhile, the old economy was going away. The port and the industrial base. What we now call knowledge economy, corporate headquarters at that time were developing here and they take a different kind of building and a different kind of density to make that happen.

03-00:10:06

Farrell:

SPUR was founded in 1910 by Alice Griffith and Dr. Langley Porter and it was originally created to advocate for decent housing conditions. Can you tell us a little bit more about SPUR's background?

03-00:10:25

Chappell:

Sure, sure. So 1906, of course, was the great earthquake when much of the city burned. There was a real shortage of housing. And so people were throwing up substandard tenements. A group of people, Alice Griffith, who came out of the settlement house movement, which was large in the early part of the twentieth century, Dr. Langley Porter, a physician, and a number of other anti-tenement people got together and founded this organization that they called the San Francisco Housing Association. The first report of the Housing Association was in 1910. As a group of citizens, they did what citizens always do, is they studied the issue, they wrote a report, and then they went to the legislature in Sacramento and to the mayor and the Board of Supervisors in San Francisco, got enabling legislation for housing associations, got the San Francisco Housing Authority passed, got building codes, a state housing code passed, were instrumental in the State Tenement Act of 1911. It was a very interesting group of people. Prominent citizens, but I would say not society people. That is still what SPUR is today. These are people who love and care for the city and have their shoulder against the grindstone. They're not the people you read about on the society page. This was all part of the progressive movement that was the first progressive movement, I guess, that was sweeping the country in the early twentieth century. Very interesting how many of them were women. As we've looked at the history of San Francisco and other cities, there are many women who are the leaders in the progressive era and in things like housing and city planning. Women are the nest builders and the people who are holding their family and environment together. But we also see that they're the people who have held cities together. I think that this is a very underappreciated part of American history, of how much of city building has been women.

The organization went on as the San Francisco Housing Association until 1940 when it became the San Francisco Housing and Planning Association, when people realized that this was the only major city in the country that did



not have a professional planning department and a master plan. A group of people got involved, one of them Dorothy Erskine, who is the person we call the founder of SPUR as SPUR. It became the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association in 1942, as opposed to the San Francisco Housing and Planning Association. There were a group of Young Turk architects from Berkeley called Telesis: T.J. Kent, Fran Violich, the Wursters, Garret Eckbo, Mel Scott, all now names famous in the development history of the Bay Area who were the early members of SPUR. If we look at the history of twentieth century architecture, a good part of it has been about affordable housing. Not successfully but it's been a big part of the movement. These were architects who believed in the ability of the physical environment and architecture to create social change.

03-00:14:52

Farrell:

I want to ask a couple of questions before we continue on that. Do you have any idea of why it was that women were especially active or that they had such a place in planning and were accepted at this point?

03-00:15:13

Chappell:

Talking with an older planner once, the idea of Jane Jacobs. And, of course, that was a little later. This was probably fifteen years ago. But he said, "Well, we sure didn't like her at the time. She wasn't a planner. She's just a housewife. But I guess she was okay," he said. So there certainly was prejudice against women. But I think it's this nest building and home building. It's the woman who is—maybe it's an old prejudice, but the one who's holding the family together, and likewise not just creating an environment in their home but creating an environment in the neighborhood, and appreciating that the kids need a good place to live and need a good neighborhood and need good schools, and the whole settlement house movement, working with immigrants as well as children. I guess women were trusted with these "soft" things as opposed to building skyscrapers. It has taken a lot longer for women to be accepted as architects. Some of the best architects in the world are women. It took until last year for the first living women to get the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects, after her husband and equal partner had gotten it twenty years before and she was ignored. The first woman to get the Gold Medal was Julia Morgan from San Francisco and she got it two or three years ago, after she'd been dead for decades.

03-00:17:21

Farrell:

The second question that I have for you—so affordable housing is a very big topic right now. Can you tell me a little bit about what the conditions were that made it an issue then, as well? Was it limited space? Was it the growth of the city, the population boom? If you could just sort of contextualize that a little bit.

03-00:17:54

Chappell:

Yeah. This is a huge topic. I can talk for days on it. Historically, you wanted to build a building, you built a building. Over time, as cities were built, we

realized we needed some building standards. London burned in 1666 and Christopher Wren and other people wrote a planning code and a building code. You had to have brick buildings. Philadelphia in the nineteenth century wrote a building code, you had to have brick buildings. Terrible tenements in New York City, and if you go to the Tenement Museum today you can see these, where there are all these rooms with no windows in them or a window from one room into the next into the next, and out of that evolved the dumbbell shaped building with light courts in it and so on. But all of these things came from social reformers who said this is no way for people to live. The building codes were written. San Francisco did not have a housing code at this time. Didn't have a master plan. It's just a very natural thing. If you're building your single-family house on a hundred acres in the countryside maybe it's not so important. But if you're building in the city and if you're building for other people, if you are the developer who's going to build it and perhaps own it or perhaps not own it, you might not be thinking as much of the people who are going to live there as you need to. So health issues, safety issues. And, of course, in San Francisco, the experience of the earthquake and the fire very much impacted that. We've just seen in the last week with the earthquake in Italy that these are—well, some of them are buildings that are probably 500 years old. They're brick buildings without any reinforcing and they can't stand an earthquake. When that area gets rebuilt it will certainly have earthquake codes.

03-00:20:36

Farrell:

The first wave was reorganized by Dorothy Erskine and then later a second wave of reorganization was led by Aaron Levine, a planner from Philadelphia.

03-00:20:55

Chappell:

Okay. What happened in the 1950s was that the civic leaders of San Francisco saw that San Francisco was going the way of the Rust Belt cities of the East Coast, that the port was dying, manufacturing was dying, and San Francisco had the potential to become a Rust Belt city. There was a group of civic leaders at that time called the Blyth-Zellerbach Committee. Charlie Blyth, I think, an investment banker, and the Zellerbachs, you know, the Zellerbach paper company. These were people who lived here, formed their companies here, were CEOs, had their names on the door, and really cared about the city. One of them was a man by the name of Morse Erskine and his wife Dorothy. In 1959 Dorothy said, "Well, I'm going to look around the country and see what other cities are doing." She got on a train and took a train trip around the country to the major cities to see what they were doing. And in Philadelphia she found an organization called—I think it was the Citizens Council on City Planning, whose executive director was a man named Aaron Levine. What he had done, and they had done in Philadelphia, was had an effective urban renewal program. Urban renewal was a program of the federal government at that time, that was a comprehensive system for economic redevelopment. It was a system that then was funded by the federal government, but you had to have a plan to get the funds. Redevelopment bypassed the planning

department and zoning and focused on a geographic area to prepare that area for a different future.

The Blyth-Zellerbach Committee invited Aaron Levine to come to San Francisco, and he came here for two weeks to investigate what San Francisco needed, and then make a report to the mayor and the Board of Supervisors. He said what San Francisco needs is an effective urban renewal program. There was an urban renewal program in San Francisco but it had gotten, I think, seven million dollars in the year from the federal government, whereas the urban renewal program in Philadelphia had gotten seventy-seven million dollars. I might not be exactly right on those numbers but it's that order of magnitude difference. The difference was having an urban renewal agency that was *independent* and had its own commission and executive director. In San Francisco the urban renewal program at that time was run through the Board of Supervisors, who were more interested in politicizing it, as supervisors are, than actually accomplishing something.

They re-formed San Francisco Planning and Housing Association as San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal, SPUR, the first of the changing acronym of SPUR. San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal. Mayor Christopher officially appointed SPUR as the Workable Program, which was a part of urban renewal to have a citizens committee. The League of Women Voters pushed this forward through city government. So, again, active women in the city. There were people like T.J. Kent, Fran Violich, Mel Scott. There also were the three ladies in Oakland who eventually were responsible for Save The Bay; Kay Kerr, Esther Gulick, and Sylvia McLaughlin. As long as I was at SPUR, Sylvia McLaughlin would come over once a year. The first time she made an appointment I thought, "Uh-oh, what does she want?" All she wanted to know is what's going on. Just right on it until 99 years old. She just, unfortunately, died last year.

The organization looked for an executive director and found a man in 1959 by the name of John Hirten. John had been executive director of the Stockton Urban Renewal Agency. And so with a board of directors from the Blyth-Zellerbach Committee and a man by the name of Jerd Sullivan, another bank president, Al Baum, who was a planner, Joe Bodovitz, who became the deputy director of SPUR, Bill Evers, all people who are prominent people. But when you go through the minutes or the report on their first meeting they said, "This is not a business organization. This is a citizens organization. We have to be based in the citizens or no one will pay any attention to us." From the first meeting they had a public membership that I think was a dollar a year for dues.

I think John Hirten invented a lot of what SPUR is. He had come back to San Francisco after having jobs around the world as a planner, maybe in 1993 or something. I remember him sitting me down the first time and saying, "What we do is research, education, and advocacy. You find out the facts, you get the facts, and then you write a white paper and go around to the department heads

or politicians or whoever and the public and explain the facts and have public presentations and then you go to the politicians and advocate to get things done,” and that’s essentially what SPUR does today. After not too long John Hirten hired John Jacobs, who had been his deputy in Stockton. John Jacobs stayed at SPUR for 13 years. He was from 1960 to the early 1970s. He had a deputy director. When I came to San Francisco in 1977, it was John Jacobs who was the SPUR executive director. Be at every noontime meeting, every presentation. A real civic leader. Then his deputy was a young man by the name of Mike McGill, who was a brilliant policy person. Wrote the best policy papers. Then John Jacobs left he went to be the CEO of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. The SPUR board did not appoint Mike McGill as executive director but they appointed a man by the name of Bill Whalen, who had been head of the National Park Service and very qualified guy. I think he only stayed a year or two. Going from the head of the National Park Service to an office of a handful of people was a big stretch. And the board then hired Mike McGill. So in the eighties Mike McGill was here as ED, until Dianne Feinstein hired him as her chief of staff in Washington. As I say, Mike was a brilliant policy analyst, and still is, and still sends SPUR emails about what we should be doing differently. He’s absolutely terrific. But he didn’t build the organization. I could see that. He sat in his office and wrote policy papers. After he went to Washington, there was a man by the name of Chip Fussell who was ED for a couple of years, and then Tom Nolan. Tom Nolan had been a supervisor in San Mateo County and was “Mr. Transportation” in San Mateo County. He understood planning and was and still is an expert in transportation. He was here a couple of years and then was lured away to be executive director of Project Open Hand. This was at the time when AIDS was really raging and Project Open Hand was the meal service for people with AIDS. Tom now, and has been for a number of years, is also the chairman of the municipal transportation agency that runs Muni, so he’s keeping on with his good transportation work.

I saw Tom and talked with him. I saw Teresa Rea. She said, “Oh, boy, yeah,” and really encouraged me. I went and then I saw a number of prominent board members to talk to them about the organization and what the organization needed. There was a very interesting selection committee from the SPUR board. There was Mort Fleishhacker, who was the chairman of the board of SPUR, and a philanthropist and civic activist. His father, also Mort Fleishhacker, had been one of the founders of SPUR, and his sister, Delia Ehrlich, who just died a couple of weeks ago, was involved. Several generations of the Fleishhacker family. The president of board of SPUR at the time, and on the committee, was Anne Halsted. Anne was and is a civic activist who has over the years been on most commissions in the city and a number of regional bodies. She’s vice chair of BCDC today, which came out of SPUR. I’m her deputy on that. She’s on the MTC, metropolitan transportation commission. She’s been on the port commission, the open space committee, the rec and park commission, the redevelopment commission. She lives in Telegraph Hill and she started out as a neighborhood

activist in Telegraph Hill and soon outgrew the Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Dorothy Erskine recruited her to SPUR. There was Beverly Mills, who was the immediate past president of SPUR, another neighborhood activist. Joan San Juhl, who had been on the housing authority, was a housing activist. A wonderful woman by the name of Evelyn Wilson. Evelyn represented the Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods.

One of the things SPUR had done in the 1970s was it set up the Office of Neighborhood Services, in the Richmond, out on Clement Street. The job of that office was to help groups form neighborhood organizations, to help them develop bylaws and budgeting and get their nonprofit status and so on. And then there is this coalition of those nonprofit groups called the Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods. Evelyn came out of a group called SPEAK, the Sunset Parkside Educational Action Committee—I'm not sure. But one of the best neighborhood organizations in the city and then was a leader of the Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods. I remember at her funeral just a few years ago, I spoke at that and said I think she was the one person in the city who could both be on the SPUR board and the coalition board because the coalition is focused on stopping neighborhood change and SPUR has a more future orientation. She would often take me to the coalition meetings where I would get roundly trounced. And after one of those meetings I remember I said, "Evelyn, some of these people are really self-satisfied. Are we that bad on the SPUR board?" She said, "Oh, yes." Many of the coalition people at her funeral were amazed to know that—they hadn't known that she was on the SPUR board all of these years.

There was Gloria Root, a planner who was a civic leader. She was chairman of the city committee, for many years, doing the planning for Treasure Island as that was being turned over to the city. Bruce Race, an architect planner, who was our liaison with the AIA. I went to see them and many more people to try and really figure out—it was very clear to me, and it had been for years, that SPUR was on rocky grounds. Every month whether or not the newsletter would come out was always a question. You never knew what was going to come.

03-00:37:22

Farrell:

What were some of the early goals and objectives during that period of time? Yeah, some of the early goals and objectives either of those committee people, John Hirten or John Jacobs and SPUR.

03-00:37:40

Chappell:

The concept behind urban renewal was there's a comprehensive program for economic redevelopment. That was clearly an ongoing and still is today thing that is undergirding SPUR's thought process. Housing production has always been high on the list. On the SPUR board, the goal has been to have a third major employers; to have a third community activists, people who are, say, the immediate past presidents of their neighborhood organization; and a third

people who know how to pull the levers of government. Former deputy city attorneys, future deputy city attorneys, former department heads, former controllers and budget directors and so on. Certainly the business community's always been very interested in housing production for their employees and transportation to get them to work. Transportation, housing production, and good government.

My first month here, Anne Halsted and I decided we needed to have a community meeting of major SPUR supporters. These were business people, neighborhood people, government people. We asked, "What do you want us to do? Here's our skill set. Here are the things we know how to do. What are the most important things to you?" The two most important things that they said that they wanted us to do were charter reform and fix Muni. That was our marching orders. There were a number of other things in the works, of course. As I looked at the landscape and saw where San Francisco was and where SPUR was there were really five major city-changing things that were going on that we needed a role in.

One was the Presidio. Well, all the military had gone through the BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) process, the base reuse, in 1994. So just as I was coming onboard, the army transferred the Presidio to the National Park Service. But the army's plan at the time was that they were going to keep some facilities there, and so on, and that it would be a slow orderly transfer over the years. There were a number of SPUR board members/activists who were very concerned that this be done well and also saw the opportunity for this. Chief among them, Amy Meyer, one of the founders of the GGNRA. Amy Meyer from SPUR and Dr. Edgar Wayburn from the Sierra Club were the mother and father of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. This is well documented in Amy's book *New Guardians for the Golden Gate* that came out, I don't know, I suppose ten years ago now. And then Michael Alexander, Toby Rosenblatt, Gloria Root, Redmond Kernan were all very, very involved and working with Nancy Pelosi on this. This was something hugely important for the city and for the National Park Service, and it was something I had hoped I would not have to get involved in, because this blue ribbon group of SPUR board members were working very closely with Nancy Pelosi on this. As it fortunately turned out, that's something I only had to be episodically involved with. But, even today, when Amy Meyer calls, I take the call. Periodically she would call me when things needed done. And when SPUR speaks, and especially when the SPUR executive director speaks, people take notice. Amy would judiciously haul me out when it was needed.

The Port of San Francisco was another thing. Port planning was going on. In 1990 the citizens had passed Proposition H which, among many other things, called for a master plan for the port to be done. A Waterfront Land Use Plan. And it was to be done in six weeks. It took six years to get that done. That was *de facto* staffed by two SPUR board members as volunteers and their committee, the SPUR Waterfront Committee. That was Teresa Rea and

Jeffrey Heller, who's now the CEO of Heller Manus Architects or the chairman of the board, I guess. Anne Halsted was on the Port Commission. That is one that I successfully did not have to get very involved in that often. Periodically the last port director, Monique Moyer, would call me when she needed SPUR to speak at the commission.

The demolition of the Embarcadero Freeway. You remember this was a double-decker freeway along the waterfront that went from the Bay Bridge, it ended at Broadway. We'll talk about this in a future session. But Clark Manus, who is Jeffrey Heller's partner and actually CEO of Heller Manus architects, he was the citizen who led the fight to tear down the Embarcadero Freeway and did all of the work and chaired a committee for years and years. And he really did that as a volunteer and as the AIA more than SPUR. That's something I had to get very involved in pieces of when I was here.

Treasure Island. So, again, the navy had left Treasure Island. Gloria Root, the SPUR board member, was head of the committee doing that planning. In 1994 when I came to SPUR, the plan, the first plan was all done. Construction is going to start this year, 2016, on Treasure Island so its twenty years, plan after plan, committee after committee, group after group! There was such a high level of people from the SPUR board that I could duck that one a little bit.

Just the month before I came to SPUR the plan was approved to take BART to the airport and to bring CalTrain downtown. I shouldn't say the plan was approved. The *concept* was approved. Those are two subjects that, again, I had hoped were done, but that I got very involved in over the years. So those were really five big background things that were going on. SPUR's MO has always been that the board does the work and that the executive director's job is to pull it together to guide the board, to referee the board. If you wanted to make it glamorous you'd say it's to be "orchestra conductor" or you could also say it's to be "traffic cop," because this group of sixty-five board members, there were at that time, all are active people and everybody has got a cause and people are very qualified, and it's to figure out what the organization can do, and what we should do, because obviously there's lots more that you can do or that you are capable of doing than you could or should do. You can't do everything.

I guess my other goal that I had in mind from day one was to have my successor in place. That came out of my experience at the Unitarian Society in Denver. When I started SPUR had maybe 700 members. The annual budget was \$278,000 a year. There was a staff of two. There was the executive director, there was the program director. Since there hadn't been an executive director in six months there was a half-time student from San Francisco State University. That was it. So I came in the office, opened the file drawers. Nothing in the files. Computers were starting to be the thing. The young program director and the student didn't think there was any reason to keep paper files because it was all on a disc, which in those days was a big floppy

disc. It's like you opened the drawer and it's like no work has been done here because you couldn't find it. I started putting together a policy book. There were thirty-five years of policies this organization had that you couldn't find, and building files. I looked at the finances and saw there was two weeks operating cash in the banks. Oops. I didn't know that. Probably 700 members. Beverly Mills told me later, she said, "If we'd ever known there was less than a thousand members we'd have just closed it down." I never told anybody how many members there were. Today it's a six million dollar a year operation with five, six thousand members. But what the organization had was a terrific board of directors.

03-00:50:31

Farrell: I have a few questions about that.

03-00:50:32

Chappell: Sure.

03-00:50:35

Farrell: You said that you always tried to have a third business, a third community, and a third government. Was your early membership demographic reflective of that?

03-00:50:46

Chappell: Well, most members are individuals. If there were 700 members there were twenty business members. Several of the biggest business members were \$5,000 a year. Bank of America, Crocker Bank. It was probably the same money they gave as Blyth-Zellerbach Committee members in 1959. Most of the members were just people. That's the way it is today. Most of the members are just folks who care about the city.

03-00:51:30

Farrell: Was your funding mostly coming from membership at that point?

03-00:51:35

Chappell: SPUR's funding has always mostly come from membership.

03-00:51:41

Farrell: Okay. I didn't know if there were like grants or anything.

03-00:51:44

Chappell: There were zero grants. Gabe [Metcalf] has been very successful in the last few years about getting grants but all while I was here, we never even budgeted for grants. If we got a grant, we'd then spend it. So many other nonprofits are jealous of that because grants are difficult.

03-00:52:13

Farrell: Very.



03-00:52:14  
Chappell:

Membership is, well, membership. In the year 2000 Jim Lazarus on the board, Dianne Feinstein's California chief of staff, former deputy city attorney. He set the goal, he said, "Let's set a goal as a board of 2,000 members in the year 2000." We only got to that by giving a lot of gift memberships. But the month before the Urban Center opened 400 new members joined. Well, I say SPUR's money has always come mostly from members. The problem is you get in 200 members this year and 150 don't renew. So it's very hard. When we talk about the Urban Center we'll talk about one of the motivations for the Urban Center was to do something dramatic. That'll be a later—

03-00:53:24  
Farrell:

Also on that note, it also sounds like the board works a little bit differently than the rest of boards, where boards are often the money people.

03-00:53:35  
Chappell:

That's right.

03-00:53:36  
Farrell:

But in this case, if the board is doing the work—

03-00:53:39  
Chappell:

The board's the only staff there really was. I, for many years, went to every committee meeting. There were half a dozen or more committees. And worked at growing the organization. Worked at producing things. SPUR is a production shop in many ways. There's a monthly newsletter. One of the things the board told me is that the monthly newsletter will be in people's mailbox on the first of the month and just to show we're alive. Until my last couple of years here I was the editor of every newsletter. I was the author of much of it, although not bylined. This was in the rudimentary days of word processing. Things would get typed up and taken initially to a typesetter. Eventually we got an outside word processor and she lived in my neighborhood and we would finish up the raw typing, and take it to her to be poured into a formatting document. I would have proofed every word in the thing. I'd take it to her after work. I'd get it twelve o'clock, midnight, 1:00 in the morning, proof it all again, take it, and then next day physically take it to the printer. SPUR's a purpose driven organization, and it really is applied research, public education, and advocacy. Dianne Feinstein used to say, "When SPUR speaks, city hall listens."

Gavin Newsom, when he was elected, the day after his inauguration he called us in, called Oz Erickson, who was a SPUR board member, still is a SPUR board member, and said, "I've got three things you're going to do." He said, "It's stuff the city can't do. I can't do it. I may even oppose you when you come out and do this." The three things were analyze and recommend reform for the planning department and the building department. Second is develop a capital improvements planning and scheduling program. The third was reform the city purchasing department. We successfully did the first two of those. The

city purchasing department, we did the studies. We were never able to get through the entrenched bureaucracy who did not want reform to happen. The city purchasing is still a terrible problem. I'm on the board of another organization that got awarded a city contract in June, started working in July, never saw a written contract until the following December, never got a written contract until the subsequent February, could not start billing against work that they had done in July until March. Unconscionable. But that's the way it is.

SPUR is really very citizen-driven. It's board-driven. We do what the board wants. Anybody can be a member. When I came here, when SPUR was quoted in the paper, it was always "downtown business group" or "downtown real estate group." I worked for many years to get that narrative changed and now it's "urban affairs think tank." That took a lot of reorienting and there are some people who still don't believe that. There was a board member here called Lou Loewenstein, who was a PhD planner, and he was retired and he had been acting as interim ED when I came in. I said, "Oh, Lou, will you stay?" He said, "I'll stay for three months if you'll give me a parking pass at the parking garage next door." I said, "You've got a deal." Lou came in three days a week for three months. So, again, the staff was doubled. Anne Halsted came in every single day. We'd go through the mail together, talk about policy, and figure out who would go to what events. The SPUR executive director job is a pretty public position. For fifteen years I would sometimes go to three events a night. Since I retired, I first cut that down to two. Now it's very rarely that I will go to two, but I still go to a lot of events. Pretty much I say one a night is enough. Anne was obviously very worried about the organization. She was board president and did not want it to tank on her watch, with good reason. But so gracious. Oh, she is so good at understanding what the board role is and what the staff role is, and very, very careful and solicitous of my opinion. But much more experienced than me. Couldn't have done it without her. She's so respectful one time she said, "Jim, this is really hard, but can I talk to you about the way you dress?" She said, "Could you dress *down* a little?" I said, "No." [laughter] I think I'm still maybe the last person in the city to wear a tie.

03-01:01:16

I was here one week and the other paid staff person, the program director, left. She had another job that she had been obviously working on. I looked around and there was a volunteer sitting there doing something. I said, "How would you like to be the staff person?" Couldn't miss a beat. Couldn't go out and do a search. I was recently looking at some of the old newsletters. There's this big list from this time of "staff and volunteers." Well, they were all volunteers. There's one staff but I was trying to swell the list and make it look like the place was alive. Kept the door open, kept the lights on. I got a volunteer to come in and build files because there just weren't the things.

Oh, and key to this was my domestic partner, Jim Jeong. He was at the time the chief accountant at the San Francisco Foundation and he'd been there for twenty years. He knew lots of things I didn't know, like accounting and bookkeeping. He balances my checkbook till today. He came in and he was our volunteer accountant. He also knew philanthropy, knew philanthropists, knew a lot of the wealthy people in the city. Knew the donors at the San Francisco Foundation and others. He was on the board of AAPIP, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy. And just knew a lot of these people. On New Year's Eve he'd go around to these wealthy people collecting their checks for the year for the San Francisco Foundation. He was the accountant here for probably nine months. By that time we'd generated enough revenue we thought we could hire someone a few hours a week. He put a notice on the bulletin board of one of the Chinese social service agencies and we hired a woman by the name of Terri Chang, who is still SPUR's accountant today. She's the longest employee here, from 1995. And, of course, he was much more, and is much more to me than just the SPUR accountant. He enabled me to work seven days a week, to work nights. Nurtured my soul but also nurtured my body and still does and still thinks about SPUR today and is always coming up with, "SPUR should do this, SPUR should do that. How about that person for a Silver SPUR honoree?" He's also a window into the Chinese community, which I wouldn't otherwise have.

As the traffic cop and setting priorities here, managing the board—I learned as a consultant that you have to manage your client, and managing the board is a big part of the job. Setting up the noontime programs. I did that for many years. I still send suggestions. I try not to make many suggestions here, but I send suggestions. "This might be a program you might want. Do it if you want, don't if you don't want." Because I kind of keep my finger on what's happening in the city and what people should know. I just wanted to open the window and let some fresh air in and get new ideas.

In January 1995, so after I had been here a month, we had a board workshop. It was funded by two board members who hired a fancy facilitator. We had three or four sessions planning the one day event, and then a session or two afterwards. The board really said, "Let's go for it." They had a number of goals, but one of them said, "We're just going to be the best urban affairs group in the country," and really gave me the go-ahead to push, commitment to grow, the commitment to long-term. At the end of the day, the facilitator also said, "Okay, you're board members. You're all volunteers. This should be fun. If it isn't fun you can leave. That's okay. You're not getting paid. There's no reason for you to do this. People's lives change, people's priorities change. People get tired. That's okay. And you can have as much influence on the organization as you want. You want to be board chair? Anybody in this room can be board chair. But what you can't do is come in at the end of something that you haven't worked on and throw cold water on somebody else's project. The time to do that is upfront." After that workshop, some board members left, and I think Anne Halsted talked with—like two or three left and I think she

talked with a couple of people and said, "Gee, it's obvious your life has changed. You haven't been able to come to meetings. Maybe you should move to the advisory board and just come once or twice a year." Boy, that made a huge difference. This is something I said every year, the meeting when we elected new board members, that, "You can be as influential as you want but you can't come in at the end and say no. If you find your life has changed and you can no longer do it, hey, that's okay." I say that now to every other board that I'm on that I have a leadership role in. People are relieved. You know when you're not doing your job and you feel guilty about it. Say, "Oh, God, do I have to go to that meeting?" The best possible thing is give people permission to do what they need to do and don't ever try and convince somebody to not leave. When George Rockrise and I were running the Environmental Design Foundation, I think we talked about it last time, and George got to the point where he was going to get married again, and go off to Sonoma County to be with his new wife, and resign from the board. He'd been chairman of the board and the spiritual leader of it. I knew we weren't ready for that to happen, that there wasn't somebody in line who was going to be as fabulous as he was. But I said, "George, go for it. This is great for you," knowing it wasn't going to be great for us. I've always, I guess, been that way with employees when they leave. As hard as it sometimes is when somebody leaves, the best thing you can do is say, "Congratulations. I'm thrilled for you. I'm sad for us but I'm thrilled for you. Go do it."

The board was sixty-five people at that time and Anne and I said one of the first things we're going to do is make the board smaller. Well, in fact, we made the board bigger because we needed more people, as we were doing more things. It's often said that five people do everything there is to do in the world. There's some truth to that. But as long as everybody has some kind of role, and some people are treating it like a job, and some people are coming to the monthly meetings, and some people are talking up SPUR in their circle of influence. As long as people are doing something there's a role.

So I had to get the newsletter out every month and I was desperate for material because, while there were these ongoing SPUR programs, there wasn't that much. We had to get a number of new projects going and kind of get them scheduled, so every month there's something new to say, something new to do at the board meeting every month, too. So I went to all kinds of friends and got guest editorials. The first one was Joe Brown, who was the CEO of EDAW, and built that into a worldwide powerhouse. And he wrote this editorial about have no small ideas, go for big ideas. Very good and powerful message. He's recently joined me on the board of Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture. "No small ideas. We're going to do big things here." Very important message. So committees. There was: city management and finance, still a big part of the work, good governance; urban development planning; housing; waterfront. There were taskforces, which are things that kind of come and go: Hunters Point, Treasure Island, the Presidio, TransBay, ballot analysis. A huge effort on ballot analysis. I've just done ballot analysis

with SPUR here in the last two months. There are twenty-four San Francisco measures and one regional measure. We did twenty-five measures here. I also went through the same process on the board of the Union Square Business Improvement District, taking positions, and on the Housing Action Coalition. A SPUR board member and I go out on a road show and do presentations of these.

While I was here we would often be asked by political clubs in the city to come to their endorsement meetings. It's shocking how little work and how little time most of the political clubs do. You come in and the "yes" side makes their pitch, the "no" side makes their pitch, it's all over in five minutes. They take a position and print a hundred thousand flyers with their positions on it. Volunteer organizations. The political clubs have no staff and they're all done by volunteers. SPUR, initially it was all done by volunteers but we really organized good committees and now there's staff work. On those twenty-five measures I probably put in fifty hours for SPUR on that and still we don't know everything. The staff does the research, the committee evaluates them, we bring in the "pro" side and the "con" side. The committee debates it and writes up a position and then it goes to the SPUR board for verification or not. I was shocked this year at how many questions the board asked that we couldn't answer. We thought we knew everything about them. It's such a bad government thing. Twenty-five city and regional measures, seventeen state measures. That means anybody who goes into the voting booth to vote on November 8<sup>th</sup>, if they don't know how they vote when they get there, it's going to take forty minutes just to read the title and summary of these measures. Very irresponsible thing but people love it.

You ask about grants. San Francisco in the 1970s, John Jacobs told us he used to get a grant of \$50,000 a year from the San Francisco Foundation, which was a lot of money in the 1970s. And very sensible. The community foundation and San Francisco's community planning group. He said all they had to do is he would meet with John May, the executive director of the San Francisco Foundation, and just discuss what they were going to do with it each year. Somewhere along the way that went away and I have no idea when or how. But in the spring of 1995, Beverly Mills says, "Okay, we're going to go after the San Francisco Foundation and get a capacity building grant to hire a development director. That's what we need, somebody to raise money." She and I wrote a proposal and the committee, staff committee from the San Francisco Foundation, came in to do an inspection one day, and fortunately they said, "We'll be in on Tuesday." I got board members and other volunteers to come in and have someone sitting at every desk in the office. At one time in the seventies, I think, there had been a staff of seven at SPUR and we were down to two. We got people to come in and I said, "Talk to each other on the telephone. I want the phones ringing so it looks like the place is alive," [laughter] because the phone never rang. Sure enough we got \$65,000 from the San Francisco Foundation over three years. Thirty thousand the first year, 20,000 the second year, 15,000 the third year, the idea that this would

hire a half-time development director. We hired a half-time development director, and in six months' time she had earned her salary for the year. From then on we had a full-time development director. Afterwards the program officer for the San Francisco Foundation said, "Boy," she said, "we debated that a long time. We wondered if it was just time to pull the plug and let SPUR die. We said, 'We'll give it one more chance and we'll do this.'" That made all the difference in the world. Sometimes organizations should die. Depends on if you're doing good work or if you have a purpose. I've seen other organizations sit around and say, "What should we do?" If you don't know what you should do, if you don't have a long list, maybe you should merge with someone else or not exist. We would have continued without that money but it gave us a leg up. It jump started things.

03-01:19:26

My first month here, I went through the books and I saw we had two weeks operating cash. I looked to see who was arrears in their dues, and I looked first at the twenty companies, the twenty business members. One of the major companies was a \$5,000 member. I called up the CEO. Guy who just died a couple of months ago. I called up the CEO and I said, "We haven't gotten your membership dues yet." He said, "Yeah, we're not sending it in." It was a natural resource company with operations in small towns in the Pacific Northwest. He said, "For \$5,000 we could support a classroom in a school for a whole year and that's where 90 percent of our employees are. We only have our headquarters staff here. Good luck." Oh, my God. But this was at the time then, that we had this big meeting of supporters and got the word that charter reform and fixing Muni were things that people would really support. The unwritten subtext was, "If you don't do these, that won't be the last company who left," probably. I remember I had to go out to the store, it was a breakfast meeting, and buy orange juice and paper cups and coffee cups to even have a meeting.

Last year Gabe asked me to talk to the SPUR interns. There are now, I don't know, fifteen or twenty interns working here as well as a staff of twenty or something, plus Oakland and San Jose. I kind of talked to these interns about the history of SPUR and how it's changed over the years, and what it's done. The last question, one of the young interns said, "Which great thinker on organizational policy do you subscribe to? Do you think this or do you think this?" I said, "I don't have any idea. I've never read those guys. I'm just a poor dumb planner but I know how to get things done. First is to be honest, to tell everybody the truth, tell everybody the same truth. That's something I learned when I was five years old and I could never keep the story straight when I told a lie. Second is don't attribute motives to people. Anne Halsted taught me that, because you can never know what somebody's motive is, and it's just very unhelpful to say, 'Oh, well, they don't want to do this because—or they're saying this but they're really trying to do that.' Well, there's no way to ever know that and it just is very, very dysfunctional. Don't label people. It's not helpful to call somebody an "enviro" or a "NIMBY" or a "bicycle

nut.” I really believe that most people want good outcomes. You may have a very different outcome in mind than I have in mind, but most people are not evil. They’re doing what they think best for the city, even if we have dramatically different ideas what “best” is. And then who was it—well, many people have said it, but Harry Truman I think of. “It’s amazing what you accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.” I always have credited things to board members and to other staff, whether it’s policy papers that we put a committee’s name on, or the capital campaign. I never took credit for a penny that came in on that. It’s always a board member or a staff member.

I hadn’t realized it until I started raising big capital campaign money, that a lot of these gifts were personal gifts to me. I found that out on the first meeting with a major donor, that one of the board members set up and took me to. The board member provided the entrée and I’m sure some background on the Urban Center and so on, and this was someone who knew the organization. It was the CEO, who was born in San Francisco, and so knew SPUR. He said to me, “Are you going to stay? You’ve got to promise me you’re going to stay until this campaign is done.” I said, “Oh, of course I’m going to stay,” because, of course, I was. But I thought, “Gee, I didn’t know I was that important.” There were people who told me, “This is because of you we’re doing this.” I needed to motivate board members, as any boss needs to motivate staff, and everybody likes to have wins. I still try and do that today.

I’m a physical planner. I think we talked a little how planning has changed over the generations. I really believe that physical change has got to be one of the outputs that we’re going after, and that change is going to happen in any case, so we have to manage change. A big part of planning is managing change. Planning has to be community based. Nothing is done in this country and most other places without the advice and consent and agreement of the public. I think that’s a key lesson for anybody in any public policy position. SPUR’s never going to do anything alone. You’ve got to partner. Whether you’re partnering with other nonprofits or the government or business. In the scheme of things, this is a tiny organization, and there are a lot of other people who can row in the same direction if you help them.

I also think that there aren’t single answers to anything. So many groups get stuck on things, “here’s the way it’s got to be.” My philosophy is you take a run at it, you give it your best shot, and if it doesn’t work you move on. But there have been issues in the city that have been on the ballot three times and then, when you still don’t win, somebody sues. Sue the EIR. I believe, it’s like give it your best shot, and move on.

Planning needs to be based on data. There’ve got to be facts and there’s clearly a lot of people who don’t want to be confused by facts. I think that’s one of the things that distinguishes SPUR, that there’s always good research behind it. It has to be authentic, too. A lot of people talk about authenticity these days. Never build anything for tourists. Build things for San Franciscans

and tourists will come. You can't take anything off the shelf. It has to grow organically from what the place is. I really think the public realm and major private interventions in the city have to be well designed. Vitruvius is "firmness, commodity, and delight," that it really is important, and it makes a difference. We got into this a lot in the Bay Bridge discussions, where you can do a cheap causeway or you can do something that's a signature and is going to announce that this trip to Oakland or to San Francisco is an important thing.

And lastly, things have to be well managed. It's one thing to design a good park or a good plaza or a good transit system. But things have to be well managed. Government has not done well managing things. Government has done well legislating and governing, but the emphasis has not been on management. So SPUR has always put a lot of effort into management.

I was at a meeting with a supervisor the night before last, and she said twice in her talk that, "Everybody comes to me, they want something. I have all of these competing demands." After the meeting I went up to her and reminded her of what I had said to her before, and said to every mayor and every supervisor and every department head. "I'll tell you everything I know on both sides of the issue, and you can do with it what you need to do with it. I'll always tell you if I have a dog in the race. I mostly won't but I'll always tell you. But you do with it what you need to do and I will never embarrass you in public." No one says this to politicians except SPUR. They really appreciate that.

A couple of examples. The *Chronicle* editorial board really likes talking to SPUR because we'll tell them everything we know. There was an issue one year where another organization asked me to go with them while they were pitching, I don't know, either a "yes" or "no" position on a measure. I said, "Well, I can't do that because SPUR's taking the opposite position you are, but I'll go and explain the measure." I went and explained the measure. This got back to a board member who called up furious. "Why are you taking that position? That's not SPUR's position." I said, "I wasn't taking a position. I was explaining that, just explaining what the measure would do. Actually, tomorrow I'm going back to the editorial board and giving them SPUR's position." That's why the *Chronicle* editorial board values SPUR, because we'll tell them everything we know on both sides of the issue.

I said that I've been going for many years, to take this dog and pony show on the road, when we do ballot analysis. I was hopping in a cab to go to a presentation one day. The cab driver was one of these folks who just hangs around city hall a lot, one of these kind of low level want-to-be politicians. I said where I was going. He said, "Oh, what you doing there?" I said, "Well, I'm doing our ballot analysis. We do the "pro" side and we do the "con" side and then give our recommendation." "Why would you do the "pro" side and the "con" side if you have a recommendation?" He said, "Why would you do that? You're shooting yourself in the foot." I kind of went all through it and



said, “That’s the way SPUR works. Voters are supposed to make up their own minds, and while we have a recommendation I would never presume to tell anybody.” I went all through this, and as I was getting out of the cab he said, “Why would you ever tell them both sides?” [laughter] I think that’s the way the political system unfortunately works more and more. I think SPUR is different in that respect.

03-01:34:17

Farrell:

Oh, sorry, did you want to finish that thought?

03-01:34:18

Chappell:

That’s okay.

03-01:34:19

Farrell:

Because I want to talk more about charter reform but that might be a good place for us to start next time because there’s more things to talk about there and with the Brown administration. But, Todd, do you have any questions?

03-01:34:35

Holmes:

Yeah, I had a few. Take off my headphones so I don’t echo in here. Just a few questions, Jim, that I wanted to follow-up on. When we’re thinking of the early history of SPUR, and particularly its involvement in urban renewal—and here when we think of the urban renewal there’s usually kind of two sides to how that played out. Some of the more notorious sides, such as the Fillmore, Yerba Buena, freeway development—now, this was obviously well before your time here at SPUR. But thinking historically, I wanted to get your view and have you reflect a bit on that, how the legacy of community relations and how SPUR was viewed, particularly by some of those communities.

03-01:35:30

Chappell:

Oh, yeah. This is a dark period of history for the planning profession. It’s the one time planners had power, and what did we do with it? Absolutely the wrong thing. Urban renewal was a complete misunderstanding of cities and how cities grow and thrive. It is this top-down Le Corbusier grand plan that was a horrible failure. SPUR is justifiably tarred with that brush. We were part of that movement. This came not out of evil people. It came out of the best architects and the best planners and the best intentioned people in the world, and it’s just that they were absolutely dead wrong. There are any number of books that condemn SPUR for this, and some of the people are still around. It’s a legacy that we have owned up to. We’ve kind of done several rounds of SPUR histories. One was 1999. Gabriel did a very good series of interviews. Did eleven issues of the newsletter, one on each subject, and one of them is urban renewal. He goes into this very explicitly and very clearly, that planners were wrong. There’s no whitewashing that. It’s very well handled again in the opening exhibit of the urban center in 2009 and the catalogue that went with that. When you look at the materials for urban renewal, there were pictures of fallen down very substandard Victorian houses. The poverty and the poor

conditions were real. The solution, however, was wrong. The solution was to wipe it all off, to create these super blocks with these grand buildings.

03-01:38:30

Holmes:

I know you guys have done a lot of outreach, particularly during your period of expanding SPUR. Particularly we were thinking of neighborhoods of color, communities of color, and surely your lower income kind of housing. Could you describe a little bit of doing some of the outreach on that front?

03-01:38:56

Chappell:

The urban renewal agency became the redevelopment agency over time. As long as they existed there was a group of people who were thrown out of the Fillmore and other neighborhoods, who showed up at every single monthly meeting of the redevelopment agency protesting. With their camera filming the whole thing so they could show these “crooks telling lies.” Huge damage was done and there is a toxic legacy of redevelopment in many cities. San Francisco’s not as bad, for instance, as Chicago but they had a much larger program that did much more damage. I have done some work in the Fillmore. The toxic legacy. Everybody is fighting everybody, and nobody trusts anybody. Every minority group. It’s really sad. And one of the ironic things, that the few African Americans that are left in San Francisco include people living in public housing. It’s very ironic that the thing that destroyed the community, for 90 percent of them, is the thing that’s kept the few others here. Just a terrible point in the history of urban planning.

03-01:40:50

Holmes:

Speaking of planning, you came to SPUR as a planner and an architect and then your job role also expanded to, as you were discussing, ballot analysis and policy. Could you just talk maybe a little bit about that kind of learning curve and the preparation that you did to really take that on?

03-01:41:13

Chappell:

Yeah. That’s what I felt least confident about. I knew I could handle the physical planning, but public policy. I learned a lot. I learned from Anne Halsted, I learned from the board, I learned from Mike Wilmar, an attorney, I learned from Jim Lazarus, Peter Henschel, deputy mayor under Dianne, along with Jim Lazarus. I learned to keep my mouth shut when I didn’t know things. My style of leadership has very much been more listening than promulgating. I learned not to talk about things I didn’t know anything about, very quickly.

03-01:42:16

Holmes:

Well, that’s very much to your credit because not many managers often take that—in the sense of realizing limitations and when there’s a period to lead and also then there’s a period to learn. It seems to be very much to your credit then.

03-01:42:29

Chappell:

The organization takes the flavor of the executive director, which is one reason EDs should not stay too long. My sense of where SPUR should be was

60 percent planning and 40 percent public policy and that is clearly because that's where I was coming from. I think today, under Gabe's great leadership, I think it's probably 60 percent public policy and 40 percent planning, and that's kind of the staff he's built and that's okay. You wouldn't want to be ninety/ten in either direction.

03-01:43:18

Holmes:

No, no, no. No, absolutely.

03-01:43:20

Chappell:

I was focused on growing the institution, and a lot of that is who walks in the door. What board members you can find. Finding and nurturing board members is a challenge for every organization. And I had learned at both Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd and at EDAW, to focus up and not focus down, and try to keep the big balls in the air and to do good work. To do good work and to tell people what you're doing is key. Public agencies today, most of them have PR departments. They didn't in 1994 and they've been criticized. "Why would you have a public affairs officer?" Well, it's key in the public sector to tell people what you're doing. You don't want to have a PR department if you're not doing anything or if you're not doing good work, because then it's not authentic. But it has to be honest. Public speaking is something I always have done a lot of and I'm still giving speeches, although I'm turning more of them down because it's harder and harder to keep current. I don't *have* to learn all the new things that I had to learn once. Writing for a blog and writing articles. I'm still background with a lot of reporters. At SPUR, there were two phone calls I always took. One was the chairman of the board, whoever that might be that year, and the other was reporters. There's a new generation of reporters now who are calling me and I try not to get quoted. I did do an editorial recently. People confuse me with SPUR and I don't want that to happen. When people finally figured out I wasn't the head of SPUR, then they started introducing me as the founder of SPUR. I said, "Oh, no, no, no, no, I'm not *that* old." [laughter] I had a monthly column in the *Business Times* for many years, and a TV show, educational TV program. It's interesting. Matier & Ross never calls SPUR because they're looking for zingers. We give information. Phil Matier and Andy Ross come to SPUR once a year and do a very entertaining talk about what's going on in the city. They say that their job is entertainment. Their job is not analysis. Their job is entertainment, which they do a great job at. I meet with a lot of students and job seekers. At least once a week somebody calls me up. I love meeting with young people. So I learn a lot from young students and helping people find a job is really important because everybody is looking for good people. I have this stack of résumés on my desk and when I get a job announcement, as I often do, or somebody calls me up and I have a stack of résumés to look through. That's something else I learned from Anne Halsted, that there are young women all over this city who've been helped by her and that helps them, that helps their employer. When Anne calls and needs something they'll take a phone call. Plus it's fun. I just have a really expansive view of the

world. I don't think it's either-or. It's both-and. SPUR's not in competition with anybody. We need everybody doing it. When we were raising funds for the SPUR Urban Center we were in line to get some funds out of a state program. Ninety-nine percent of the money we raised was private money, but we got a little government money. We went to the hearing in Sacramento and one of the other groups that was in line to get some funds was the Museum of the African Diaspora, across the street. They didn't have anyone at this hearing. The committee said, "Well, if they don't even show up for this meeting, they're out." We immediately stepped out of the meeting and called the chairman of their board and said, "Get in your car and get up here right away." Which was absolutely the right thing to do. This meant there was one more group, then, that got a piece of the money, so we and everybody else got less. It was Diane Filippi and I. We never blinked an eye for a minute that that's what you do.

03-01:49:18

Holmes:

One last question here. Speaking of these kinds of relationships, really is, really what they are. You came in at a time building that relationship of SPUR with the city and its various communities. Business community, residents, activists, right. In thinking of the business community, you also came in at a really tough time of, on one hand, the rising anti-business and anti-development fervor within San Francisco. We see this first with George Moscone and it levels off a little bit but still heightening under Dianne Feinstein and then under Art Agnos, right?

03-01:50:02

Chappell:

Right.

03-01:50:04

Holmes:

During that same period, on one side you also have business, in a lot of ways, making an exodus out of the city. Bechtel may be the only one who, as true San Franciscans, wanted to stay. But also as a private company they were able to make the decision to stay. How did you navigate that? Especially of having business involvement in but also having to navigate these tensions between a city and the business community?

03-01:50:37

Chappell:

Yeah. Part of it is finding the right board members and diversifying. Every organization has a race problem and SPUR always has, although we do much better than most. I go to many organizations where the board is lily white. It's finding people up and down the social scale and that's always been my priority here and on other boards I'm on, too. Like we had the executive director of the Bicycle Coalition on the board. The boards where you have to donate large amounts of money eliminate those people. We said, "Gee, should we have a minimum donation?" We said, "No. But we want all board members to donate an amount that's 'personally significant.'" For some people that's a hundred dollars, that's a big donation. There are a number of those people on the board and people who represent communities of color and

have legs into those communities. There was one woman, a Latina labor advocate, and she said, “Oh, I’d heard about SPUR and when you invited me to come, and I came up—“ this was in our old office—“I came up the elevator and the elevator opened on the fifth floor, and I was afraid. I didn’t know what I’d find.” When we built the new building we gave very few instructions to the architect, which is how you get a good building. We said, “We want it transparent. We want it as open and transparent as planning should be. I don’t ever want anybody afraid to come in here. I want them to be able to look in from the outside and see what’s going on.”

My secret weapon was Gabe Metcalf because he comes from the left, and in fact board members used to joke that Gabe was my “left-hand man.” He had from the beginning credibility in some circles that I didn’t have. And, again, that’s something I learned at Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd, where Dave Wallace said, “I go see the bankers and Ian goes to see the garden clubs.” You need to be able to have a trustworthy face in every camp that you possibly can.

You mentioned urban renewal. And John Elberling, and he’s head of TODCO, Tenants and Owners Development Corporation, that was originally Tenants and Owners Against Urban Renewal or against Redevelopment, was on the SPUR board. After fighting urban renewal all these years, I don’t know quite how it happened, but somebody at SPUR decided to offer an olive branch and get him on the board and get that opinion on the board, which went fine until I was hired and John stood up in the first meeting and said, “Well, if you’ve hired this guy, this organization’s obviously going in the wrong direction. I quit.” Over the years he and I got to be fast friends and worked together very, very well. He’s a very smart and a very capable guy. A lot of things in this world are personal.

03-01:55:20

Holmes: No, that’s great.

03-01:55:22

Farrell: Yeah, yeah. That’s a great place to leave it. Thank you.

03-01:55:24

Chappell: Sure.

Interview 4: September 7, 2016

04-00:00:00

Farrell: This is Shanna Farrell with Jim Chappell on Wednesday, September 7, 2016 and this is our fourth interview session and we’re at the SPUR headquarters in San Francisco, California. Jim, last time we were talking you had mentioned when you joined SPUR there were a few ongoing things that you stepped into in your leadership role. One of the things was the charter reform that SPUR

was tasked with. Can you tell us a little bit about that experience? What needed to be reformed? Why it needed to be reformed?

04-00:00:38  
Chappell:

Sure. The charter is, of course, the constitution of the city. San Francisco's charter, the charter that we were dealing with at the time, started out in the 1880s and got rewritten several times in reaction to corruption in city government. The charter was a formula for stopping corruption, which also meant stopping getting things done. It was very hard to pin any responsibility on either the mayor or the supervisors because of the way it was written. This had been a problem for a long time. In 1980 the city formed the Charter Reform Commission that SPUR was a leader on and that went on literally for over ten years and nothing happened. Then in 1993 there was a big push, charter reform again, and SPUR led that before my time at SPUR, but it was a hot topic at that time. The SPUR system was to hold public hearings all across the city and take testimony, to do research on best practices. SPUR had a big library of charters from around the country. It came down to the wire when the Board of Supervisors needed to vote to put this on the ballot in 1993 and they didn't. It failed by one vote. When in December of 1994, my first month here, we met with community groups and they said, "There are two things we want you to do. Write a new charter and fix Muni." Shortly thereafter I got a call from Barbara Kaufman on the Board of Supervisors and she invited Anne Halsted, the SPUR board president, and me out for a drink. She said, "Okay, what I want you to do is write a charter, a new charter, and this time it's going to pass." I thought, "This is crazy. We just went through this and it didn't pass." Anne and I looked at each other and I could tell she thought it was crazy also. We both said, "Of course. We'll do it." And so off we were again.

The charter at the time was written so the mayor did not have power and the Board of Supervisors did not have power. But there was a position called the Chief Administrative Officer. Initially it had been a lifetime appointment. The controller was also a lifetime appointment. This came out of the era when these kinds of jobs were held by old rich white guys. The thought was that they would not steal money because they already had money and they were the leading citizens. The mayor only really controlled the police department and the fire department and appointed those chiefs. There were commissions over everything else. San Francisco still has this peculiar form of government where almost every department has a citizen commission managing it. The CAO controlled public works and Muni and health and hospitals. The supervisors could not tell the commissions what to do. The commissions made their own choices. It was a weak mayor system without a strong city manager either.

We realized, and Barbara Kaufman realized, that this wasn't going to be the ideal charter. The 1993 charter attempted to be the ideal charter. This is what could get passed. It was largely written by two SPUR board members, the late Peter Henschel and Jim Lazarus. They had been part of the Moscone

administration and then the Feinstein administration. Jim Lazarus is now the vice-president of public policy for the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and I currently work with him on the Fort Mason Center board. Both are two real experts in how government runs. The main objective was to have clear lines of authority. You knew who had the responsibility and you could get to those people at the ballot box and not nameless, faceless appointees. It gave more power to the supervisors and it gave more power to the mayor and less to the CAO, which became a five-year appointed position. The commissions give the mayor a list of three possible department directors and the mayor picks from those three. This was very unusual but something we invented. It seems to have worked pretty well. The mayor only solely appoints the police chief and the fire chief, which is pretty much a mayor's job. And, of course, at this time Frank Jordan was mayor. We also gave the mayor the ability to reorganize his office.

Over the years the old charter had been amended many, many times. It was 300 pages long. How many pages is the Constitution of the United States? A very few. One of our goals was to focus on the "what" and not the "how." We cut 200 pages out of the charter, a hundred sections, and put them either in the circular file or in the administrative code where they could be easily changed because they're things that weren't appropriate for the public to be voting on. We followed this same process of a series of public hearings, and Barbara Kaufman held the hearings, and we would run them. Barbara had a wonderful aide, TJ Anthony, who unfortunately died the following year, but was a terrific co-author of this. We'd go to the meeting at night and the next morning we'd be back at SPUR at 7:30, and what did we learn and that's how it got written.

The new charter, the proposed new charter, was put on the ballot by the supervisors. It was endorsed by the supervisors. It was endorsed by Mayor Jordan. It was endorsed by Willie Brown, who was running for mayor in the same election. All the former living mayors endorsed it. All the former CAOs endorsed it, and it passed in November of 1995. That was the same time that Willie Brown was elected.

We, of course, wrote this charter partially with the fact in mind that Frank Jordan was mayor, and four years of working with Frank. Frank is a very nice man. He's a former police chief and was probably a better police chief than a mayor because he was not a strong leader. Willie, on the other hand, Willie does what Willie does, and he's going to do what he's going to do, and he wouldn't care if there was a charter or not. Act first, maybe ask forgiveness later, or maybe not. Just act. On July 1 or June 30, of 1996, Barbara Kaufman and Willie Brown and I were standing around the paper shredder with all the TV cameras going and Willie's shredding the old charter and all the 200 pages. He didn't have any idea what this was about and what he was doing, and trying to make a photo-op out of it. When we reflect upon Willie, the "class of 2000" supervisors, after four years of Willie being mayor, was elected to

oppose the mayor. That was the Aaron Peskin's and Chris Daly's of the world, because Willie took all the power in the charter and more and ran the city very forcefully.

Ever since the class of 2000 supervisors came in, the supervisors have been writing charter amendments and taking power away from the mayor and giving it to the supervisors, such things as splitting up appointments to the planning commission. For instance, in the 1996 charter all commissions were appointed by the mayor. That's why you elect a mayor, to run the city. The supervisors put a measure on the ballot and it passed, that the mayor appoints four planning commissioners, the Board of Supervisors appoints three planning commissioners, but the Board of Supervisors has approval authority on all seven. So, in fact, the Board of Supervisors appoints the planning commission. And there have been a number of those measures on the ballot. And there, in fact, are four measures on the ballot this November taking power away from the mayor and giving it to the supervisors. The situation today is not that we have a powerful mayor like Willie Brown that the supervisors are trying to counteract, but they sense weakness in the mayor's office and that this is a good chance to flex their muscles. We will see what happens. But Jim Lazarus and I both sit on the SPUR ballot analysis committee, and we kind of looked at each other this year as we were going through the twenty-four city measures and said, "It's probably time to do charter reform again but not us."

04-00:13:20

Farrell:

I have a few questions about that. Why was SPUR tasked with the charter reform?

04-00:13:28

Chappell:

SPUR is San Francisco's good government nonprofit. We're not beholden to the mayor and we're not beholden to the Board of Supervisors. We have a board of directors that is expert in the workings of city government and are nonpartisan. There are Democrats and Republicans and everything on the SPUR board. Dianne Feinstein said, "When SPUR speaks, city hall listens." It's a very valuable function for the city. The chamber of commerce, which is a city-wide organization, can't do it because they're a business organization. Community neighborhood organizations can't do it because they're focused either on single issues or single neighborhoods. This is one of SPUR's roles and historically has been.

04-00:14:56

Farrell:

When you first joined SPUR and you were first thinking about the reform, who were some of the community groups who were saying fix Muni and reform the charter?

04-00:15:11

Chappell:

There was clearly the business community, their representatives. We try on the SPUR board to have a third representatives of major employers in the city;



and a third representatives of community groups, often the former president of a neighborhood association; and then a third the good government experts, the planning experts, the technical experts. It was coming both from major employers and from neighborhoods. I'll just give you one example. That in 1994, 1995, maybe, while we were working on the charter, the Rec and Park Commission gave permission for an event to sell alcohol in Golden Gate Park. The neighborhood groups, the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council and the Haight Ashbury Improvement Association went wild, and they went to the supervisors and said, "Reverse this," and the supervisors said, "We can't. We cannot tell the commission what to do." That became a rallying cry with neighborhood organizations, that they thought they had supervisors who could respond to them but it turns out there are a lot of things they couldn't respond to.

04-00:17:06

Farrell:

You had mentioned that the 1993 charter was ideal. Can you tell me why that was ideal?

04-00:17:19

Chappell:

It started with a clean piece of white paper and it was your graduate thesis in how a city should be run. Everything was balanced without the necessity of looking at how San Francisco had been run. A lot of oxen were gored. The supervisors thought they didn't get enough. The mayor thought he didn't get enough. The commissions thought they didn't get enough. It was too big a leap.

04-00:18:07

Farrell:

That charter was 300 pages and 200 were shredded. Was that from the '93 charter or the one that was already existing and in place?

04-00:18:16

Chappell:

It was from the one that was already in place. The 1993 version was very slim.

04-00:18:27

Farrell:

Okay, thank you. I just wanted to clarify that.

04-00:18:31

Chappell:

And just looking at some of the measures on the ballot. On the ballot this year many of them are charter amendments that wouldn't need to be, and some of them are like twenty-five pages long. If you're making a little tweak and it takes twenty-five pages to explain it, there's probably something wrong.  
[laughter]

04-00:18:57

Farrell:

Another issue that you were involved in when you joined SPUR that we didn't talk about as much last time was the BART expansion to the airport and then also CalTrain to downtown. Can you tell me about what your role was in that, because you were pretty involved in that process?

04-00:19:15  
Chappell:

Okay. I think the month before I started, the decision was made by the BART board to go to the airport. Going back to the original BART vote in the 1960s, it was by county, and so Marin voted “no” and San Clara, San Mateo voted “no.” I think San Mateo was initially in and then later voted themselves out. That’s why we have this system that doesn’t go everywhere. Subsequently then, San Mateo agreed to tax themselves to buy into BART. While they’re not a full member of BART, they have bought into it to get BART to the airport. At that time, the decision had been made to go to the airport and to Millbrae. I think Millbrae was their political sop to the taxpayers, that it isn’t just serving San Francisco’s airport, but it’s going to get you to work in downtown San Francisco. But there was no route chosen. It took several years of back and forth to choose a route. SPUR was very involved in that. Unfortunately, the wrong route was chosen. There was a supervisor and then state legislator by the name of Quentin Kopp, who at age eighty-five has just gotten himself appointed to the San Francisco Ethics Commission. But Quentin considered himself a transit expert and, in fact, he’s not. The correct route for BART would have been further east than it is now. It goes down west of U.S. 101. It should have gone down east of 101 and stopped first at the United Airlines maintenance facility. It was at the time, probably still is, the largest employer in San Mateo County, and everyone has to drive to get there. No brainer. The line should have then gone through the airport and on down to Millbrae or wherever it eventually will end up, in San Jose. Unfortunately the system that Quentin Kopp designed and got passed is what’s called a wye, a W-Y-E in transit parlance. It’s basically a T-intersection. This is a huge operations problem for BART. Wye’s are always difficult, and it’s a problem for the public because you don’t know if the train is going to go to the airport or not. Sometimes some of them go into the airport and then go back out and then go down to Millbrae. Some don’t. Some people ride the train to Millbrae and then ride the train back to the airport trying to game the system. It’s a very bad way to run a railroad. We worked on that for a long time. We’d come in the office in the morning and pick up voice messages and there would be Quentin Kopp ranting and raving. Quentin has a Victorian vocabulary of fancy words, all about how terrible and arrogant we were to question him. And, indeed, he won. Oh, CalTrain to downtown.

04-00:23:50  
Farrell:

Actually, really quickly. What does W-Y-E stand for?

04-00:23:53  
Chappell:

I don’t know. I think it probably comes out of nineteenth century Britain. And it’s a Y intersection. That’s what we would call a wye.

04-00:24:08  
Farrell:

Okay. Thank you. Sorry. Sorry. You were talking about CalTrain or you were about to start talking about CalTrain.

04-00:24:15  
Chappell:

Okay. It had been felt for many decades that CalTrain wasn't serving downtown San Francisco. And, indeed, it wasn't. Probably fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties, there was a fleet of jitney cabs that went from the CalTrain station at Fourth and King to downtown. At last memory they were charging a dollar. It was about the same price as Muni at one point. They'd be a passenger car and they'd jam ten people in these jalopies and they'd run up and down Mission Street and to the station. I believe there still is one operating, or it may have stopped in the last year. I think the guy might have retired. But they got forced out of business because of insurance requirements. Clearly CalTrain stopping six blocks south of downtown has never worked very well.

In 1993, 1994, the Transbay Joint Powers Authority was put together, San Francisco, San Mateo, a couple other jurisdictions, to find a route to downtown. I was following this before I was at SPUR. There were several routes. One of the routes would have come into Market Street at Seventh Street and that would have been a straight shot. It would have been much cheaper. It would have been operationally better for CalTrain because the chosen route has a couple of ninety-degree turns in it. Trains don't do well in ninety degree turns. It would have had other problems, in that if you were at the back of the train, you'd still be four blocks from Market Street, and also Muni Metro and BART are pretty crowded still at Seventh Street. Then there were two alternatives essentially coming down Second Street and one of them, like the Seventh Street one, coming perpendicular into Market Street and then the selected one that turns. We'll talk in a future session about how we got involved in the urban design of that. At the time, we accepted the routes. The city and the JPA had gone through a big process. It isn't SPUR's intent or my intent to ever unglue things that are already decided. Turns out it's coming unglued a little now. Mayor Lee would like to swing the route further east to serve the proposed Warriors arena and Mission Bay. This also gets involved now in more serious talks about a second BART tube under the bay or even taking CalTrain across the bay.

04-00:28:45  
Farrell:

Thank you. Yeah, I guess I'll save some of the questions for when we talk a little bit more about the urban design of that. Another thing that you were involved in when you started was the post to the park and the Presidio. There was base realignment and closure in 1994 when a lot of the army posts and naval posts moved. Can you tell us a little bit about what SPUR's involvement was in the transition from that being an army base to the ownership by the National Parks Service and what your role was, as well.

04-00:29:33  
Chappell:

Yeah. The story of the whole GGNRA, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, is a great story and it's documented in a book, *New Guardians for the Golden Gate* that Amy Meyer published in 2006. The GGNRA came about very largely through the efforts of two individuals and two groups, and they

were Amy Meyer of SPUR and Dr. Edgar Wayburn of the Sierra Club. They started out fighting small rearguard actions against the feds doing the wrong things in the wrong place, and then saw the possibility of putting together this 80,000 acre national park. They did it with bipartisan support and in fact Richard Nixon came out and saw the park and signed the legislation and it was part of his strategy to get votes in California. A key player in the legislation was Phillip Burton. In the legislation he put a little footnote in that saying, in effect, "If the army ever leaves the Presidio, that the Presidio goes to the GGNRA." And lo and behold, the BRAC, Base Realignment and Closure process said they were going to close the Presidio. A puzzling decision in many ways because it was so popular with the military and the military usually takes care of themselves, aside from the fact it had no strategic use. And, in fact, the BRAC process spelled out a long procedure where the army would be there for a long time and gradually parceling it out to the park service.

Well, the army really left in a fit of pique at San Francisco. We kept turning down berthing destroyers here, and anti-war movements, and so on. The initial legislation the federal government allocated \$25 million a year for the Presidio, which was a huge amount of money compared to the National Park Service budget, which is a very underfunded agency considering their responsibility. The military, as they were leaving these bases, had delusions of grandeur that they would be able to sell the bases for a great amount of money because they have all these "valuable" buildings and all this "valuable" infrastructure, which turned out all to be liabilities and not valuable because the military doesn't have to follow any building codes. All of the underground utilities are substandard and not suitable for a real community. This goes back to what I had learned at EDAW when I was working with Teresa Rea on some new town planning connected to bases, and that is the base commander is there for a year and wants to build as many building as possible in a year to get them on his résumé. Not a way to get quality projects. The Presidio has 400 buildings. It's 1,500 acres and 400 buildings.

When Congress, I should say the Republicans in Congress, saw this \$25 million bill every year forever, they said "No way. We're going to sell this to the highest bidder." What a development parcel. Fifteen hundred acres in San Francisco. There was a big battle between the parks people and development interests and between Democrats and Republicans, and Nancy Pelosi took the lead on this. Working with SPUR and a lot of other people, came up with this idea of the Presidio Trust. The trust essentially divided the Presidio, 20 percent of the land to be managed by the National Park Service; 80 percent of the land to be managed by the trust. It's all part of the GGNRA. It's all part of the national park. But the management would be 20 percent by the park service, and that's largely along the northern and western waterfront. The area with the most buildings in it would be managed by the Presidio Trust. This was a totally new thing invented by Nancy Pelosi, by SPUR board members Amy Meyer, Toby Rosenblatt, Michael Alexander, Redmond Kernan, Gloria

Root, who devoted years of their life to the Presidio, and in fact after the Presidio Trust legislation was developed it took four years of continued tweaking—four years to get it passed. There were SPUR board members going back and forth to Washington all the time working on this. I was mercifully able to not get involved in the details of that. Periodically Amy Meyer, who is a force of nature, would call up and say, “Jim, I want you to go to this meeting or that, and say this,” and I would. Amy still does that. And she has made an enormous difference in the West Coast of the United States.

At the time the trust was passed, the park’s advocates said, “Well, we had to do this to save the park—otherwise it would have been sold for development. But this will not be a model. We’ll never stand again to have a national park have to be self-supporting.” Well, fast forward to 2015 and there was a conference of National Park people in Oakland, and the Presidio Trust is now held up as the national model for how things have to be done, because parks are so underfunded to begin with. The National Park Service inherited all of these military bases that are filled with substandard buildings and substandard utilities, and filled with empty buildings. And that public-private partnerships are the way things are going to go, at least until the American public has a different attitude toward taxation. Indeed, we’ll talk in a future session about Yerba Buena Center and Yerba Buena Gardens, which is probably the most successful redevelopment area in the country. It is successful because it is such a public-private partnership. The public provides the cultural and recreation amenities, and the private businesses underwrite them. And it’s interesting. If you read the progressive press, it used to be the *Bay Guardian*, when they weren’t railing against PG&E, they were railing against Nancy Pelosi and the Presidio Trust as this giveaway and “privatization” of the park, but, in fact, it’s what saved the park. They didn’t know any of the history of it. Otherwise it well could have been sold for development. In another community, it might have been.

The seven Presidio trustees are appointed by the president, and Amy Meyer had her two terms on it. It is a push-pull between the park’s interests and development interests and sometimes it’s a creative push/pull and sometimes it’s not so creative. Nancy put her chief of staff, Craig Middleton, in as actually the second executive director of the Presidio Trust and he was there until last year. Starting this week Jean Fraser, a wonderful former SPUR board member, is going to be executive director of the Presidio Trust. So expecting really, really good things.

In the last couple of years they’ve been through these fights about the Fisher Museum and the Lucas Museum, but I think basically the trust has been a great success. They have rehabbed most but not all of the historic buildings. The landscape continues to be rehabilitated and replanted and restored and looks fabulous. The trust legislation started out with the \$25 million a year, and then went down in fifteen years to zero. Well, the trust actually became self-supporting after eight years and it became self-supporting in I don’t know,

2006 or something like that. They were able to do it because of the run-up in real estate values in San Francisco.

When the park service first got hold of the Presidio and Fort Mason they tore down a lot of housing. There were barracks in upper Fort Mason, in what is now Upper Fort Mason park and they tore those down, because the neighbors didn't want the kind of people who would live in wooden barracks in their neighborhood, frankly. There were also 1950s residential buildings along the Pacific coast in the Presidio. There still are quite a few, but the park service tore quite a few of them down, and then they got a lot of criticism, and they lost their nerve. It's the best "mistake" anyone ever made. Last year the housing in the Presidio netted the Presidio Trust \$55 million. Net. That's why the Presidio looks terrific, because they have the money. The housing is privately managed by a real estate management company. They charge market rates. The Presidio is just getting to the point now where they're thinking about programming. They've got the physical stuff taken care of and now there intent is to make it more of a park experience.

Fort Mason went in the other direction. It just started out in the late 1970s with programming, and we're now realizing we need to do much more about the buildings, and where the money's going to come from. We don't know. Fort Mason's lease with the National Park Service limits us to leasing primarily to non-profit entities, which is not economically sustainable. We have the Presidio Trust model. How far we can get in that direction remains to be seen.

04-00:43:27

Farrell:

Around that same time another sort of public-private relationship that was starting was Union Square; that took off in spring of 1995.

04-00:43:41

Chappell:

I want to hold that a minute. There's another Presidio story and that is Doyle Drive. And Doyle Drive is essentially the southern off-ramp from the Golden Gate Bridge. Mile-and-a-half, carries 150,000 cars a day. Was built when the Golden Gate Bridge was built, 1936, 1937, and was built as an elevated highway because it was going through the Presidio, and the army didn't want the public in the Presidio. And, in fact, when I was first in San Francisco you couldn't go in the Presidio. There were guards at the gate. Doyle Drive was 1937 engineering with 1990 traffic, and then the Loma Prieta earthquake hit and it was rated as the fifth most dangerous bridge in the country. The papers referred to it as "Blood Alley" because of the narrow lanes and accidents. In 1992, 1993 the city formed a committee to study Doyle Drive and Michael Alexander, a SPUR board member, was co-chair of that committee. The committee was not going anyplace because Caltrans wanted a freeway, the neighbors and the Marina District didn't want any exits to the Marina. The neighbors in Richardson Drive didn't want any exits there. There have never been any exits into the Presidio but the National Park wanted exits into the

Presidio, and the neighbors wanted all the traffic to go through the Presidio and so on. Michael Alexander tells the story that in this one meeting a landscape architect showed up and unrolled a drawing twenty-feet long. That was a man by the name of Michael Painter. What he unrolled in 1993 opened in 2015. It is a brilliant plan that is not a freeway but is a parkway. We think of a parkway as a road with planting down the middle. That isn't what a parkway is. A parkway is a park and a road combined. The road fits into the topography. The vertical and the horizontal curves are all continuous curves. There are two tunnels where the Presidio goes down to the water's edge over the roadway. These were constructed tunnels. They were made by filling, not by tunneling.

It was obvious to everyone that this was a brilliant plan. But why did it take twenty years to get it built? Caltrans is a terrible agency. They are institutionally tied up in themselves and have a lot of very bad engineers, and everything they do is by the handbook. Every smallest detail is written down in the handbook. So the first thing that people realized, and the leader of this was a man by the name of José Luis Moscovich, who was executive director of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, which is the group that doles out the money. He was able to get legislation that TA, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, be in charge of this project, not Caltrans, because it's essentially a city street. Supervisor Barbara Kaufman carried that legislation. But as a state highway, Caltrans had to do the approvals on things. Their standards said that this would be an eight-lane freeway. The communities said, and Michael Painter's plans, and SPUR said, "No, this is going to be a parkway."

Well, we battled this out for twenty years. When Caltrans put the engineering out to bid, they selected one of the standard big engineering firms, who totally ignored the Painter/SPUR plan and designed an eight-lane freeway. Michael Alexander and I went to see José Luis Moscovitch and we said, "This is not going to happen." And, indeed, José Luis excused the engineering firm from their assignment, and hired a firm that had been working *pro bono* with SPUR on the design called ARUP, a fine engineering firm, very creative, originally based in Europe. Over all of these years, we and ARUP had to get over 500 design exemptions from Caltrans. How wide are the lanes, how wide are the shoulders. Every possible thing. So this was something I spent thousands of hours on.

As it went from the planning to the actual design, we had a team of SPUR architects and engineers, Ephraim Hirsch, a brilliant structural engineer who could just design circles around Caltrans. Peter Winkelstein, a talented architect. Vera Gates, a talented landscape architect. We'd do the work, we'd solve the problem, we'd show it to them. Caltrans would do something completely different. Every time we'd think we'd have it, and then they'd say, "Well, this rule says. This rule says." That's why it took until 2015 to open. It still isn't done. The landscaping is still a lot of work. Michael Boland, who is

a PhD landscape architect at the Presidio Trust, this is a big part of his job, is trying to get it built right.

When I see it today, the plan is beautiful. As you come out of the tunnels heading into the city you come through the tunnel portal and there's the dome of Maybeck's Palace of Fine Arts centered in your viewshed. You come out the tunnel the other way and there's the south tower of the Golden Gate Bridge right in the middle of your view. This is a design that only a landscape architect could do. Yeah. That has been an ongoing thing for SPUR. Even today I look at some of the design details of things that were so small that we never looked at that have been done wrong by Caltrans. It boggles the mind.

I think one of the things that came out of the whole SPUR experience was that the general superintendent of the GGNRA, Brian O'Neill, said, "Gee, I want to be on the SPUR board. I have seen how you guys solved the Presidio Trust problem, how you've been solving Doyle Drive. That's the kind of organization I want to work with and I want to help you raise money." Brian, who unfortunately died very young, was one of the really great park directors in the country. (His twin brother was a general superintendent of another park in the country.) The park service was always trying to send him to other parks and he refused to leave. He was so good because he understood communities and he understood what it means to be a national park in a city, unlike most national parks that traditionally were in undeveloped areas. Okay, now we can go to—

04-00:54:40

Farrell:

Another thing that came up was the redevelopment of Union Square. That's also a landmark retail and visitor center. It had to do with public and private partnerships. One thing that you brought up last time, was build something for the locals and tourists will come. I'm interested in hearing about how that came up, why it was addressed as an issue, what some of the issues were, and then maybe when you were thinking about redesign, how you were trying to build that for locals?

04-00:55:21

Chappell:

Okay. When Frank Jordan was mayor he was quite hands-off. What that means when you have a mayor who's hands-off is the good department heads do really well because nobody's messing with them, and the bad department heads don't do so well. When I look back at the arc of mayors, and Dianne Feinstein is famous for her Monday morning staff meetings, where, boy, you made a commitment what you were going to do this week and the next Monday she'd ask you how it turned out. People were scared to death of her because she's a very good manager and she's very tough. Frank Jordan did not have staff meetings at all.

The then-head of the Redevelopment Agency, Cliff Graves, started holding staff meetings of every department director that had anything to do with the



physical realm, physical construction, development, operations, and I was invited to those meetings. It was incredible because the head of DPW would say, "Well, we're going to start repaving such and such street this month," and the guy from the water department next to him would say, "Well, you can't do that. We're tearing that up for new water pipes next month." These kind of things happened.

One of the things SPUR does is write white papers. There was a white paper in maybe my third or fourth monthly board meeting that was ready for primetime, and it was written jointly with the American Institute of Architects. This was because we had at the time a board member by the name of Bruce Race, who was on the SPUR board and on the AIA board. The AIA has turned out to be a very good partner for SPUR over the years because there's a lot of expertise there, and a lot of people who care about the city. But they can't always say what SPUR can say because all their dues paying members are architects, and the AIA sometimes has to be circumspect.

Union Square was SPUR's neighborhood. It was the AIA's neighborhood. I should say that urban design has always been a big concern of SPUR because cities are physical things. Planners always used to be architects and that changed in the sixties. When I went to grad school in '66 the department chair changed from an architect to a social worker. This was in reaction to a lot of things, not the least of which were the excesses and mistakes of redevelopment agencies across the country. The big bulldozer mentality and not concern for people. As planning departments got taken over by social workers and lawyers and economists there became a lot more community concern. It also came out of the Vietnam War, where government learned it needed to listen to the citizens. But in my experience, a lot of these people who are not rooted in physical design don't get to the last step, which is the actual design. That what you're doing is going to end up in some physical change, and so they get a lot of policy stuff right but they don't take it to that next step. I think the partnership of SPUR and the AIA was one reaction to that.

04-01:00:33

I think when it comes to urban design, I think of the law of generosity, I call it. That every building needs to give back to the city, to the public, to the people. This is what urban design is, it's the congenial use of space, the congenial use of shared space. Be a good neighbor. That buildings should be good neighbors. Public spaces should be good neighbors. The function of public space is to help animate people. Today we know that it's not just design, but then management of the space.

The SPUR-AIA paper was called "Managing San Francisco's Landmark Retail and Visitor District." It had come out of a series of events. While we were working on the paper, we became aware that Union Square Park was leaking into the garage below it, and had been for years. This is part of a

department that wasn't being managed by the mayor. There had been an issue of electronic billboards, that there was a proposal to put electronic billboards around Union Square. Various groups were coming out for and against. But it became apparent that there was no concept for Union Square as a place, and there was no forum to address questions like this. The JCDecaux toilets and kiosks was an issue that was on the horizon. Union Square Park was in terrible shape. There were people living in it, and the landscape design was such that it lent itself to that. Prostitutes stood around the St. Francis Hotel. Shortly after I came here from Denver in the late seventies, I had a friend visit from Denver. She was my age, a thirty-something-year-old, very attractive woman, and was staying in the St. Francis Hotel. I said, "I'll pick you up on the corner." When I picked her up she said, "All these cars have been stopping trying to pick me up." This is Union Square 1980, so not that long ago. Union Square is a big economic generator for the city. It was going unmanaged.

As we looked into this subject, we really became aware of the Business Improvement District movement, something that had started in Canada. Today there are a couple thousand of these around the world. They are public-private partnerships. That's what this paper called for setting up. It's the ultimate in grassroots democracy because property owners, merchants, and in some places residents—there don't happen to be residents in Union Square. But property owners and merchants decide what additional services they want, and how much they're willing to pay, and do a plan for that. They get to vote on it. Once it's passed, everyone is then in. But you know what services to expect and what not to expect. You know who the executive director is, and you've got his or her phone number, and can fire them if they're not doing their job. It gives you a bully pulpit to negotiate with the city. It signs a contract with the city as to what services the city's going to provide, so the city can't weasel out of it as new private services come in. These were happening all over the country and they were not legal in California or San Francisco. So, again, Barbara Kaufman took the lead on this, and an attorney working *pro bono*, Jim Reuben, and the Union Square Association with SPUR and the AIA all holding hands, got San Francisco legislation written and got state legislation written.

The Union Square Association had been moribund for years and they got energized and hired a woman by the name of Linda Mjellem. She'd been Frank Jordan's head of neighborhood services. We had a local conference with national speakers from business improvement districts around the country. Jim Flood of the Flood Building and a few of the neighbors set up an unofficial BID that they funded. Jim Flood's daughter, Karin Flood, ran to just demonstrate to the other merchants that this was going to work. Nobody knew what this was. Willie Brown wasn't very enthused because he supports unionized city workers and he'd rather the money go to union city workers than private workers, some of whom are union, depending on the circumstance. Sue Bierman, liberal supervisor, was the only one who voted "no" on the legislation in the formation of the district. She said, "This is just

an excuse to beat up homeless people,” which, of course, it isn’t and has never happened.

But it was an uphill sell and we went to the vote. The property owners voted it down. They voted it down because people didn’t know what it was, they don’t understand it. The formula we had developed for how people are assessed was extremely fair, therefore it was complicated. It took us another two years, and we went back for another vote with a much simpler formula that is not nearly as sophisticated, but it passed. Since then we’ve gone back. It’s been renewed three times, tripled in size. The budget is now three-and-a-half million dollars. It’s one of a dozen in the city. It’s the largest one. The executive director is Karin Flood. I’ve been on the board of directors for many years. The last couple of years we’ve gotten over a million dollars a year in grants from foundations because it’s recognized as a good organization that can get things done. We have a social worker who works with the indigent population on the street. A good success.

At any rate, we were working with Rec and Park on these leak issues, which the director of the department denied existed. Mayor Brown by this time had a man by the name of Bill Maher, who was his green czar, he called him, to handle parks measures. Bill was a former supervisor. We worked with Bill on some interim landscaping measures and opening up the landscape. I did significant amount of research into birth control for pigeons, which unfortunately Willie never implemented. I’m not sure why. But one day we picked up the paper and Willie announced there was going to be a design competition to redesign Union Square and Civic Center Park. Well, he later forgot about Civic Center. So I called up Bill Maher and said, “How are you going to run the competition?” He said, “Oh, I don’t know. I guess we’ll put an ad in the paper and see what comes in.” I said, “No, no. That’s not the way to run a competition. There’s a long history in competitions. The AIA has a process laid out. There are people who are professional competition advisors and it’s very important to do it right because competitions have a history of going sideways if they’re not done right, and you’re asking professionals to donate significant amounts of free work, and it needs to be done right.” I said, “By the way, we’ve got the mechanism all set up to do this.”

The mechanism was what we called the San Francisco Prize. This had started in an idea from Aaron Betsky, who was then-curator of architecture at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. He’s now dean of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture at Taliesin. The new Museum of Modern Art, new in 1995, opened in 1995, designed by the Italian architect Mario Botta, Aaron felt that the local architecture community resented bringing in an architect from out of town. This was before the era of “Starchitects,” where every museum has some star architect from out of the country designing them. Aaron said, “Let’s have a competition annually to design something that San Francisco could and should have.” It was Aaron Betsky and Margie O’Driscoll, who was head of the AIA, and me. And over time we roped in the

city planning department; California College of Arts, David Meckel, a prominent leader there; the ASLA, and we had this group together and we were looking for projects to do.

The first project we did in 1994, I think, was a new plaza for the federal building. This is the 1950s federal building, a block off of Civic Center on Golden Gate Avenue. That was really easy because the federal buildings are designed and owned by the GSA, the General Services Administration, and they have the Design Excellence Program and they had a young architect on staff. They had been rehabbing the interior of the building and he wanted to do something with the plaza, and he went to Margie at the AIA, and she called Aaron and me and we said, "Yeah, we'll do a San Francisco Prize design competition on this." It was very easy because it was one phone call. They were the client, they owned the building, they had the budget. They paid for the competition. The winning design was built. They just did it. They're the feds. They can just do it.

Back to Union Square. We met with Mayor Brown and said, "Here's how we'll run the competition." He said, "Okay. Go for it." This was a huge challenge because it wasn't like the feds just doing it. We had to find some money to do it, and Macy's stepped up quite generously. There's a process for advertising competitions, and in those days it was printing thousands of posters and mailing them around. This was before the day of the internet. We hired a clerical person just to do this. We got requests from a thousand people for competition packets, and the competition packet included a set of blueprints for Union Square. So this big roll of drawings. We sent a thousand of those around the world to places. Three hundred people actually entered. The entry submission was two thirty inch by forty inch boards. We were in this little tiny office space filled with all of this stuff. At that time Macy's was under construction of their new store on Union Square. The old Emporium Capwell store on Market Street had closed. Macy's leased the Emporium building for some of their departments, and they took the whole first floor and put these 600 boards up. We built 600 easels and had them up there for some amount of time, and thousands of the public came through, which was a very good public participation process. We had three inch by five inch cards that people filled out their comments and voted and so on.

And then the jury met. The jury included some notable local people, some national stars, neighborhood representative, and so on. The jury had been put together really by Aaron Betsky, or at least he picked the stars, because that was the world he operated in. On the jury were Allan Jacobs, who had been San Francisco planning director and developed the much-vaunted San Francisco Urban Design Plan in the early seventies. And Thom Mayne, Los Angeles architect from Morphosis. He was the architect of the subsequent Federal Building on Mission Street in San Francisco. So very far-out kind of design. The jury picked ultimately five finalists, two of which were buildable and doable and three of which were conceptual. But in this process of

selection, Allan Jacobs and Thom Mayne and Aaron Betsky got into it. Allan Jacobs disparaged Thom Mayne's radical style of design and Aaron Betsky essentially told Allan Jacobs he was old and irrelevant. Allan walked out of the jury, went to the phone, called the *Chronicle* and tried to get them involved in this mini-scandal. (They didn't bite.) My take away from that is it's really important how you put your jury together. This was the Young Turk versus the Éminence Grise, and both people with big egos.

We took the jury-selected top twenty-five and we put them on display at SPUR for a month. Our meeting room didn't have any meetings that month, and had them on display, and took more public comment. We went to see Willie to show him the top five. And not literally but almost literally, Willie was rolling on the floor at the more edgy designs. Impractical designs. We had criteria, one of which was creativity, but we also had functionality and connectivity and programmability and financial feasibility. The mayor picked one design and that's the design that largely is what was built, designed by two young landscape architects. It was a blind competition so we didn't know who they were, but turned out they were both people I had worked with at EDAW. I knew they could do the job.

So we, the Union Square Association and SPUR, put together a community committee to take it from a design competition, to working drawings, to a built product. There's a lot of steps and a lot of decisions, a lot of choices on the way. Linda Mjellem from the Union Square Association and I chaired this committee that oversaw the whole design process from there on out. The implementer, the people who had to hire the actual landscape architects, was the city Bureau of Architecture, who had all of their rules and processes and guidelines, none of which allowed for a design competition. They said, "Oh, no. We have to put this out to bid and start all over again." This got solved by a very smart talented architect at the planning department by the name of Evan Rose. He said, "Put in the proposal requirements a strong recommendation that they hire April Phillips and Michael Fotheringham, the competition winners, to be on your team." That's how it worked. And, in fact, only one team that submitted didn't have them on. But everybody else did. So like most architecture jobs today, they're teams of different firms, and different firms with different abilities. The city has minority business enterprise criteria, and every project has a percentage of minority or women or small business, et cetera. This has been a very important thing. It has built firms that would otherwise never have gotten a chance, and it has been very important nationally to do that.

The city, however, ties itself up in knots and does the process backwards. That is, the department that's going to hire the architect, whatever, as the case may be, goes through the selection process and then it gets sent to the equal opportunity office, and the equal opportunity office selects the winner. What should happen is equal opportunity should screen them at the beginning, and if you don't meet their criteria, you're out. You really need the person who's

going to be working with the consultant to do the final selection. It's a very personal relationship. You're getting in bed with these people for a couple of years. To have the same clerk who selects paperclip suppliers select an architect makes no sense. I used to sit on a lot of selection committees in the city for the school district, for Rec and Park, for the Bureau of Architecture, and I finally quit doing it, because you spend a couple of days going through the material, jurying and interviewing these people and then the equal opportunity office would select somebody we'd never even heard of. Just a bad process. Good intentions, bad process.

Linda and I were running this project and having meetings and, of course, lots of people had different opinions of the design. We also had to find the money for it. The money came ultimately from two sources. One was the garage revenues. There is a parking garage under Union Square and normally that goes to the general fund. But we grabbed that for some number of years. Not easy, but this was the mayor's project. The other place we grabbed money from was Open Space Fund. The Open Space Fund was formed in the fifties probably, maybe sixties, to acquire new parks in the city. Well, it used to be used to acquire new parks. It now is used for maintenance. We were able to grab some amount of money from that, and put the project together. But from day one, the Bureau of Architecture just made compromise after compromise on the design. They were far too ready to compromise. The park is not nearly as good as it could have been. That being said, it's a huge success. As it has been studied in the usage and the usage patterns, it's doing everything it's supposed to do. It is truly a public space. It is programmed, because there's this garage money, essentially, that is going there for activation and maintenance. Basically the city's a terrible client. I said, "That's the last one of these competitions we're going to do that is going to actually result in building something. From now on let's do ideas competitions." That's what we have done.

The other very dysfunctional thing I think learned from this project is the way the city does ADA compliance. That's the Americans with Disabilities Act. Again, very important legislation that has had a huge impact, a huge impact. When you look around hilly San Francisco and see all the people in wheelchairs on the sidewalk, all the people on Muni, my bus line sometimes has two and three wheelchairs on it between SPUR and home. It has made an enormous societal difference in allowing people to be independent. But the city has an ADA compliance officer who operates like God and makes all decisions. We took the whole Union Square Park design through ADA and got it approved and 90 percent of the way through the construction, the ADA officer changed his mind and things had to be rebuilt. And ten years after the park opened in 2000, the ADA office, the city ADA office sued the city for Union Square Park not being in compliance. A million dollars was spent to make changes to what they had approved twice. So, again, the city just ties itself in knots.

04-01:30:43

Farrell: What was the basis of that lawsuit?

04-01:30:44

Chappell:

Unequal access. San Francisco is the only place I know that interprets ADA that says everyone has to have not only “equal” access but “the same identical” access, and therefore, if a handicapped person cannot do it, a non-handicapped person can’t do it either. Case in point is *Cupid’s Span*, the bow and arrow sculpture on the waterfront. The sculpture sits on a little rise in Folsom Park and the idea was that this would be a paved plaza around the base. And people like to touch sculpture. That’s really important to sculptures, unlike in days past, that was not allowed. Today, it’s heavily landscaped around it so no one can get to it, because if everyone can’t get to it, no one can get to it. There’s a wonderful new sculpture garden in Seattle, Olympic Sculpture Park. Well, I suppose it’s five years or more old now, ten years old probably. There’s nothing about it that could be built in San Francisco, because while there is a wheelchair accessible route to everything, there are other routes that aren’t. If you go to the Contemporary Jewish Museum here in San Francisco you will see that the main sidewalk coming out, ends in the grass, used to connect to the Mission Street sidewalk. It was approved and built that way. It’s maybe a sidewalk twelve feet wide that has some stairs and stepping stones through a pool. Twenty-feet away there’s a thirty-five foot-wide sloping ramp that is the natural place for anyone to go in, but that wasn’t good enough for the ADA compliance officer. He said because not everyone can use this other sidewalk it can’t be a sidewalk, therefore they had to tear part of it out. You come walking down to it and you’re standing in the mud.

04-01:33:30

Farrell: But the plans for Union Square went through ADA compliance and then the city was sued?

04-01:33:36

Chappell: Oh, yeah.

04-01:33:38

Farrell: What was the validity of that lawsuit and the outcome?

04-01:33:42

Chappell: Only in crazy San Francisco, I guess. Well, ADA, it was written by lawyers, for sure. It’s a criminal offense to not meet ADA. They have a really big club.

04-01:34:06

Farrell: If a million dollars was spent on that, I’m also wondering how that affected the budget. You had the revenue from the garage and the Open Space Fund but how did that sap the budget and then the implementation of those plans?

04-01:34:19

Chappell: Yeah. I think San Francisco has a \$9.6 billion budget, and somebody could find a million dollars. These are the things that “make Republicans,” make people unhappy with government, because it doesn’t make sense.

04-01:34:51

Farrell: So that million didn't come out of the garage revenue or the open space?

04-01:34:59

Chappell: It might have come out of the garage revenue. I don't know.

04-01:35:02

Farrell: Okay, okay. I'm also wondering how the plans that you chose addressed how to make the space usable for residents.

04-01:35:19

Chappell: Okay. The prior design was built in 1942, or when the garage was built. It was a formal Beaux-Arts design. Looked great for pigeons. Was a nice pattern on the land. It had no usable space in it. It had an x-pattern of walks from the four corners that were ten, twelve feet wide, fairly narrow, and granite retaining walls on either side where people could sit. What would happen is indigents would sit there and panhandle; guys would sit there and ogle the women who'd walk by, so therefore people wouldn't walk by. People would walk *around* the park instead of going into it, and behind the granite walls were hedges. Maybe when they were small it was okay, but when they got big you couldn't see into them. There was no place to easily put a stage or the ice skating rink because there were these eighteen-inch granite walls. Everything had to be up in the air. The Union Square Association did, as they still do, an ice skating rink the December holiday season. But it was so high you couldn't see the skater's feet when you're standing around it, which is all the fun, right. It just didn't work. In the programming phase, we said we want a plaza, not a park. We want a place where things can happen and a stage so you can show movies, so the symphony can play there, so Macy's can have a fashion show. I was frankly worried that it would be Macy's fashion shows all the time. I don't know if they've ever done one there. So there are lots of events that happen there. That was the main criteria.

04-01:38:16

Farrell: There were some urban design challenges in these plans with sort of landscape and urban form, traffic disbursement, and what makes this neighborhood unique from others, because I think there is a lot of uniqueness in Union Square, sort of where it's situated. There's the magic of the grid. Can you talk a little bit or elaborate a little bit on those urban design challenges and how those were addressed?

04-01:38:51

Chappell: Yeah. As I said, urban design is really important to SPUR, and it's fairly important to all of us. SPUR likes to look at the bigger things and not the smaller things, but some things come screaming at you. One of them was a proposal for public toilets. The city had gone through bus shelter selection once before, and somewhere along the line, I don't remember what happened, but all the bids were thrown out, and so there was another five years lost with no bus shelters. The next round of bidding, there came a proposal from a Paris company called JCDecaux, who make beautiful street furniture in, I don't



know, a hundred cities around the world. Every city gets its own design that relates to the city, they like to think, and it's a family of street furniture. It's light posts, way-finding signs, bus shelters, at one time public telephones, toilets, street lights, trash receptacles, kiosks to sell newspapers at one time. If you go to Paris or Stockholm or London there's this whole suite of street furniture. Different in every city.

When Willie became mayor and they were taking a second try at going out for bids on this, Willie divided it up into a series of different contracts to give it to different vendors, which was unfortunate because there's never been coordination. We've never done light poles and benches. We've just done two things. There's one contract that's toilets and kiosks, and the purpose of the kiosks is really advertising, and then bus shelters. If it were all done in one contract there's enough revenue from the bus shelters that would pay for everything else. We wouldn't need the kiosks that are just advertising. However, in my mind, the kiosks are some of the best looking things on the street we have. Ads can be well-designed. But this became hugely controversial, that there are going to be these things blocking the sidewalks. The toilets became controversial because each one is ADA accessible, in a wheelchair, which means they're big enough to have a party in, and people do. Whereas, typically in Europe, most of them are not accessible. They're barely big enough for a person to get in and don't create social problems. Here there are serious social problems, prostitution, drugs going on in them. Hard to know what the right answer is. SPUR came out and said, "Yes, public toilets are a good thing and, no, these kiosk are not going to be the end of the world." Sure enough, does anybody even notice them today? I don't know.

Bigger problem may be the newspaper racks, something SPUR and the Union Square Association, a lot of people worked on for decades. Because there used to be all these individual racks chained together, and falling over, and the kiosks or the newspaper racks all got installed just about the time newspapers were dying. Now they're largely empty and the newspaper purveyors feel they have a real estate right to these by contract, and they won't give them up, even though they're not using them, because somebody somebody's going to figure out how to put a video screen in them, and they'll be blaring moving advertisements or something.

The Department of Electricity, oh, boy, again, very old-fashioned, and they want every street light in the city to be the same. Naturally. Then they only have to have one bulb and one box of parts. Trying to get street lights in the Union Square neighborhood, the "Golden Triangle," they're a historic design, repaired. Cars hit them, they're never repaired. They're so old they're literally rotting away. When we did Union Square Park they took down the historic streetlights and couldn't reuse them because they were un-reusable. They put in cobra heads, just the standard design, around the outside of the park. But we had special bases made so we have bases under those cobra heads that will

take the historic light fixtures if somebody ever figures out how to finance new "historic" fixtures

But these are all important things. The devil's in the details. But there's a bigger urban design question in the city. When Willie was elected, at his inauguration he announced new commissioners, including the Planning Commission. One of his commissioners was a woman by the name of Beverly Mills, who was the immediate past president of the SPUR board. Very interestingly, she'd never met Willie, he'd never met her. But he appointed her on the recommendation of Rudy Nothenberg, who had been the CAO, and on the SPUR board, and was Willie's Chief of Staff. Rudy knew Beverly from SPUR. And Beverly ultimately became president of the Planning Commission and she said it was so frustrating because people would come to the commission, and criticize the commissioners for making *ad hoc* decisions, saying, "You don't have a plan. There's no plan. You're just doing things *ad hoc*." She said, "Yes, we do have a plan." Well, the problem was, by this time, like the city charter, the *General Plan* was hundreds of pages of legalese and fifty zoning categories where ten would have been fine. No coordinated maps, no drawings, nothing accessible to the public. Again, this was before the internet, before everything was online. She said, "Can't we make something that I can just hand out to people from the dais and say, "Here it is. It's in the plan. Here's what the plan says. Here's why." We said, "Gosh, yeah. We can do that."

We went looking for money. A man by the name of Al Baum stepped up. Al had been the first chairman of SPUR's city planning committee in 1959. Because of that was appointed to the City Planning Commission. He's actually the guy who coined the acronym SPUR, and is still involved here. And so he gave us seed money and with his seed money we then went out to several foundations and got some more seed money. At this time, Gabe Metcalf was working here, and he took leadership of this and assembled a group of architects. Peter Winkelstein, Rod Freebairn-Smith, Paul Sedway, an eminent planner in the city. Jerry Goldberg, David Robinson, both architects. This became an opportunity not only to do public education but to really think about the *General Plan* and what is behind it. Gabe came up with the idea that we could explain the DNA of the city and then therefore be able to explain the DNA of the *General Plan* and why it was a good plan and why it made sense.

A book resulted. It's sixty pages, not 600. It's called *Vision of a Place*. It really is about the idea of San Francisco. It was a very creative process developing it, because, I mean, what is the DNA of the city? Its natural features, its edges, the street grid, the block pattern, the buildings around the outside of the block, an open space in the middle of the block. Neighborhood commercial streets as the center of neighborhoods. In some cities, parks are the center of neighborhoods. Here, it really is the commercial streets. And then our high-density, our high-accessibility, our diversity, and so on. We went into each of those in some depth and really examined the grid pattern,

and what we called the “magic of the grid,” that it really does provide equal accessibility and spreads traffic out equally throughout the city, since everybody has their favorite route, and no two people’s favorite routes are the same. Everybody knows they have the “best way” to get there, and traffic spreads itself out equally. The block pattern, until we got to some 1950s subdivisions, the block pattern is pretty rigorous in the city. The idea that the buildings all go to the edge of the sidewalk, and that the center of the block is open. While it’s maybe divided into private yards, that’s where light and air is coming from. This still has to be explained to people today. Every time there’s a proposal for a major new building, somebody shows up at the planning department, says, “This should be set back from the street. There should be landscaping between the building and the street.” Well, that’s a suburb, that’s not a city, and that’s not the DNA of San Francisco. We also used this as an opportunity to explain the Transit First policy, which we’ll talk about when we talk about Muni. But that’s something that continually needs explanation to people.

It was also an opportunity to talk about not only diversity of people, but diversity of building types. There has been a movement in the last several decades called “contextualism,” wanting buildings to be contextual, which some people over-define as being “the same.” That if one building is this height, everything has to be that height. Or one building is one style, everything should be that style. Where, in fact, part of the magic of San Francisco is its higgledy-piggledyness. When I think of contextual, I think of Paris and the great boulevards and the uniform Haussmannian buildings. But some years ago when we were at the Arsenal, which is the Paris urban center, and one of the models for the SPUR Urban Center, they had an exhibit of photographs of Parisian streets. I don’t know how many streets. Twenty streets. These photographs were six feet high and fifty feet long, maybe. They hung them in two different ways. One was just the way they appear as you’re going down the street. Then they cut them up and hung them according to building styles. The lesson was there’s a huge amount of diversity in Paris. But it’s that the buildings are polite to each other. There are certain things that they respect. But it isn’t sameness. It just feels congenial.

We went through a series of maps, and we looked at different neighborhoods. Or we looked at different characteristics first. Like density versus auto ownership, very important. The densest neighborhoods in the city are Nob Hill, Russian Hill, North Beach. They also have the lowest auto ownership. Surprise, surprise. The least dense neighborhood in the city, Bayview Hunters Point, has the highest auto ownership in the city. The people least able to afford relying on an automobile are forced to. Important thoughts. We’d talk about demography and “why change?” and how the city has changed, and how families have changed, and are changing and so on. We’d go through a series of neighborhoods, starting with North Beach, the most iconic and the one that fits the basic DNA of the city probably best, and then SoMa, not so much, and Western Addition where a lot of the original DNA was destroyed

in urban renewal and replaced with something that's more like SoMa than San Francisco. Just four or five pages at the end that are a summary of the *General Plan*. And, I don't know, this probably took a couple of years of really working out, because we didn't know what this thing was going to be and figured it out.

We finally got it done and Gabe and I said, "How many of these should we print?" "I don't know. Let's print 5,000." We sent them to our funders, we sent them to people who funded this, we sent them to all the major SPUR funders. That was a hundred people. That was a hundred books. [laughter] So we sent them to all SPUR members and to community organizations, the city government people and anybody we thought would find them useful, have a need to know. We still had a couple thousand of these left. We had a dog and pony show and I would go around to bookstores, neighborhood groups, community groups for a couple of years doing that, and trying to sell these in bookstores. For a couple of years every weekend I would go to a dozen different bookstores in the city and they'd take two or three books at a time—you know the publishing business. When there's nothing on the shelf, nobody can see it, and so nobody knows to order it, and so it's going back time and time again. It was only later when I talked to the Book Club of California, on the same floor as SPUR in the World Affairs Center, and I asked the executive director—and they publish fine books, fine print, fine binding. I said, "When you print a book, how many books do you print?" She said, "Oh, if we think it's going to be a really big seller, 300." [laughter] We should have talked with her first. But at any rate, somewhere there are 5,000 of these, hopefully out in the city. I don't know how much good it has really done because the same issues keep coming up, and keep coming up. And, of course, the population of the city changes so much. Things that you thought were settled, the next day, the next person gets off the plane at the airport, and it's all new to them.

04-01:59:39

Farrell: I think a good place to leave it for today and then next time we'll start with fixing Muni because I think that's a big conversation and deserves—

04-01:59:53

Chappell: It sure is.

04-01:59:53

Farrell: —much more than five minutes. So thank you and, yeah, we'll talk more about sort of redesign of the city next time.

04-02:00:02

Chappell: Okay.

Interview 5: September 23, 2016

05-00:00:00

Farrell:

This is Shanna Farrell with Jim Chappell on Friday, September 23, 2016 and this is our fifth interview. We are at the SPUR headquarters in San Francisco, California. Jim, last time we were talking we were talking about some of the issues that you were tasked with working on or fixing, especially during Willie Brown's tenure. He wanted to fix Muni in a hundred days. Can you tell us a little bit about what the issues were with Muni? Let's start there. What were some of the issues with Muni?

05-00:00:41

Chappell:

Okay. Of everything that SPUR does, probably the two most consistent year-in and year-out topics are transportation and housing production. When I say transportation, probably 90 percent of that is Muni, the San Francisco transit system. Muni is really a very remarkable system, and up until recently, San Francisco was the only city west of Chicago that has really tried to provide a complete transportation system. Muni does two things for us. One is accessibility, and the other is social equity. That everyone takes Muni and there are a mixing of all kinds of people who wouldn't mix in other places. That's an equally important component of the city, and one of the things that makes this a city. Muni carries 800,000 people a day, and that is as much as BART, AC Transit, Santa Clara Transit, Golden Gate Transit combined. So it's a lot of people. And the Muni system, of course, used to be bigger. The rail system used to be bigger. There were rail lines on every-other street through the city, and they were owned privately by different private companies. When the bridges opened in 1937, that allowed a lot more people to come in by private automobile, and Muni successively got funded less and less. The companies were going bankrupt by the time World War II started, and the city bought up the various private bus companies, and kind of cobbled them together. And, of course, there wasn't any investment during the Second World War. After the war, the capital flight from cities, the building of BART, which SPUR was very involved in. Population growth was happening in the suburbs, not in San Francisco, and things continued to lag.

In 1973 SPUR did the first landmark Muni study, and it was headed by a member named John Kirkwood, who was a recent college graduate at that time. I should also say that the first time Gabe Metcalf came to SPUR was in June of 1996, and we were showing a movie here called *Taken For a Ride*. It's also called *Red Car Mysteries*. This was the story of how General Motors and Firestone Tire bankrupted the Los Angeles transit system, and of course, almost every transit system in the country, except in the biggest cities. By 1973 Muni was at a real low point. They were missing 25 percent of their runs. There actually was no printed schedule. There was no telephone information line. There was no customer service. About forty SPUR volunteers got together and did a very detailed study of Muni operations. There were volunteers out on the street corner logging every bus as it goes by. They went through the Muni headquarters and documented conditions, and through the repair shops and so on and so forth. It was a very detailed inventory of what

wasn't working and how to get it working again. It got the attention of the supervisors and it got the attention of the mayor. For a while, then, Muni was much better funded.

It also established the Transit-First Policy in San Francisco. That came out of that report in 1972, and the next year, '73, Transit-First became the law of the city. What Transit-First means is that in making investments, in making regulations, when the choice comes between the single passenger automobile, and transit, that transit gets preference. That's the principle and that's the policy. We don't always implement it very consistently. So from 1973 on, there were a number of very good years for Muni. But over time, as it happens in any bureaucracy, the city lost its focus on Muni. At that time, Muni was a part of the Public Utilities Commission. It wasn't a standalone department, as part of the PUC. They were operating water, they were operating sewers, they were operating the electrical system. (Part of San Francisco's electrical system is city-owned.) They were operating Muni. So Muni was only one piece of their portfolio.

When I came on board in 1994, of course, Frank Jordan was mayor. Willie Brown was elected in November 1995 and became mayor in January 1996. He said, "If elected, I'll fix Muni in a hundred days." And that, of course, came back to haunt him. By 1999, four years later, Willie said, "It's time to accept the fact that Muni will never run on time. Spend enough to keep the system from collapsing." He had given up. He just washed his hands of it, that it was unfixable. We didn't believe that. And so we decided that we were going to do another Muni study, and this time not concentrate on the operations, but concentrate on the management, and how Muni sits within the city family. I went to see Madeleine Haas Russell, and she generously gave us \$5,000, the princely sum of \$5,000, and we embarked on a three-year process of public workshops. Part of the intent there, it goes back to the social purpose of Muni. Not only is it important as a place for people to mix, it was also the road into the middle class for the African American population in the city. At that time, all of the drivers and mechanics, virtually all of them were African Americans. This was a very important function of Muni. We knew that anything we would do needed to honor the workers, and needed to be respectful of them. We had some very capable transportation people on the board. Steve Taber, who is an attorney, but a Muni devotee. Another attorney, Mike Wilmar. And, again, these are high paid private attorneys who ride Muni every day. We had a transportation planner by the name of Dick Swanson who had studied Muni for years. Jim Lazarus, he worked in the Moscone administration and then ultimately became Dianne Feinstein's California chief of staff. We had people who understood the system, people who had broad transportation background, and then people who knew how to pull the levers of government.

At our first workshop, the presenters were largely Muni people and Transport Workers Union people, and they were testifying. And it was very interesting because the union showed up with a number of psychiatrists and psychologists

who had been helping their workers. The psychiatrist stood up and documented what a difficult job it is being a bus driver, and it really is. They're on the front line of all the crazies that there are. Anybody can walk on the bus and do anything, and they pretty much do. But that's where the psychologist then got off track, because their response to this being a difficult job was to get written, into the labor agreement, a provision that any driver could not show up for work six days a year *without calling in*. You just wake up in the morning and say, "I can't face it today," roll over, go to sleep. What happened was, of course, Muni had no idea how many drivers they would have on any given day. Suppose a hundred drivers don't show up today. That's a hundred buses that don't go out of the lot, and that's four or five hundred runs that don't get made that day. Well, to say the least, you can't run a railroad like that.

When we found this out, and when we publicized this, the public was outraged, as well they should be. Muni service was continuing to decline. One of the things two of us did, is we got all of the union agreements. There's a master agreement and then there are what are called "side letters." The side letters are agreements that happen over time between management and the union. There was a pile of side letters three feet high. There are two people in the city who read every one of those and I was one of them. Muni management didn't negotiate the union agreements, city hall did. So people with other goals other than just transportation management.

We put together over a three-year period and three workshops, each with a different focus, a series of recommendations that established Muni as a freestanding department, and named it the Municipal Transportation Agency, and that would have a budget set-aside. It would have its own source of revenue. Muni was the only major transportation property in the country that didn't have an independent source of funding. BART has a half-cent sales tax. Marin County has the bridge revenues, and so on. We set this up, that the mayor would appoint seven commissioners and the commissioners would hire the director. Prior to that, city hall had hired the director. So not transportation people at all making the appointments. We setup some standards of service, and called for the merger of Muni and the department of parking and traffic, which operates the streets, and set up a provision for the ultimate merger into that of the taxi commission. At that time the taxi commission was operated by the police. It wasn't operated as an integral part of the transportation system. We also set it up so that the director of Muni could hire 1.5 percent of the staff without going through civil service, and that Muni would do all their own hiring. Previously, everyone who was hired for Muni had to be hired by the city personnel department. The same person who's hiring nurses one day is hiring senior transportation planners the next day. Doesn't work very well that way.

We also said we need a group of storm troopers, of riders who are going to be out there fighting for political change. Two groups were starting to form at the

time, and we met with both of those. Steve Taber actually picked this group called Rescue Muni. Our intent was that they would be the people laying down in the street in front of the buses when things weren't working, and modeled on a group called the Strap Hangers in New York City. Well, of course, what we did is we picked people just like ourselves, a bunch of policy wonks. But I have to say, Rescue Muni is remarkable. They are the people who, twenty years later, are still staffing those various citizen advisory committees to Muni and a bunch of very dedicated people.

In May of 1997 we published a report with these recommendations in it, and called on the city to implement it. Nothing happened. We'd take it to the supervisors. We took it to Willie Brown. We and Rescue Muni tried to get attention. We took it around to the business community who has an interest in getting their workers to work. Nothing happened. Nobody would touch it. We said, "Well, we'll write the legislation." Normally a supervisor would do this, and hand it to the city attorney to turn recommendations into actual legislation. So Mike Wilmar and Jim Lazarus wrote a measure, and we took that around to the community. That measure went through forty-two drafts.

05-00:17:46

Farrell:

Wow.

05-00:17:48

Chappell:

This is one way that SPUR really does things; so much legislation is two guys in a back room and a bottle of wine. We don't do it that way. Because everything has unintended consequences. Different people know different things, and it just makes it so much better. There was a young guy called Gavin Newsom, who Willie Brown had appointed to the Rec and Park Commission, and then a vacancy came up on the Board of Supervisors. The mayor was hard-pressed to find a straight white male. There were none on the Board of Supervisors at that time. He put Gavin on the board, and Gavin was a very smart policy wonk. A guy that we related to, and related to us probably better than almost any other supervisor. Certainly better than any other mayor since Dianne Feinstein.

In the summer of 1998, there was what was known as the "Muni meltdown." Muni Metro, the subway system in the city, essentially stopped working. Just stopped working. There were just days when it didn't run. The public was, of course, furious. The mayor and the supervisors did nothing. They were afraid of the union, they were afraid of racial implications. We realized that the best thing for the workers was to reform the system. The Muni drivers were the most unpopular people in the city. People wanted to beat them up, because they were being let down. Ultimately Gavin said, "Boy, this legislation is terrific. I'm going to introduce it at the Board of Supervisors. But no one else on the Board of Supervisors will touch it. It won't go anyplace. So Monday afternoon at one o'clock, I'm introducing this at the board, and at the same time, at one o'clock on Monday afternoon, you guys have a press conference



on the steps of city hall, that you're going to collect signatures to put this on the ballot." We collected a little money from the business community to go through the process to make this an official initiative. We went out with our clipboards, a very small group of SPUR and Rescue Muni, and people were chasing us down the street to sign the initiative. We would get mobbed in the Muni station. Clearly we had a big winner on our hands. Willie got very nervous about this, because he could see he wasn't in control. He established another committee to come up with another proposal, and it was a slightly watered down version of what we had. They just made it different for the sake of being different, but only in the details.

And then Willie said, "Okay. We got to get together and just have one measure on the ballot." The mayor's office conducted negotiations between SPUR and the union. When you go in the mayor's reception room, there's a meeting room on one side and meeting rooms on the other side. Day after day, Gabriel Metcalf and I were in one room and the union was in the other room, and Steve Kawa, the mayor's chief of staff, would go back and forth between the two of us. "Will you accept this?" Sentence by sentence negotiating things out. Gabe and I were really going out on a limb, because the SPUR board had an official policy and had an official measure, but we were negotiating for the best deal we could get. The union started out extremely arrogant and disdainful of us, but in the end we got almost everything that we needed to get. This became Proposition E on the 1999 ballot, and passed with a landslide. The mayor got to appoint seven commissioners. The commissioners got to hire an executive director. Rescue Muni had developed a series of performance standards. SPUR wouldn't have done that, because it's not that simple. And, in fact, in the intervening twenty years, Muni's never met the service standards once. But it does provide a benchmark. As you see, some years are getting a little closer, some years not so close. We also, as part of that, strengthened the Transit-First policy. Not only just favoring transit over the individual automobile, but favoring pedestrians and bicycles also, the focus being moving people, not moving vehicles.

It's important to know, Muni and the city have binding arbitration. That Muni, the police, fire cannot go on strike. There has to be binding arbitration. But the Muni binding arbitration said that you could not consider economics or you could not consider the interests of the riders. All's you could consider was the interest of the drivers. That's not much of an arbitration. Prop E changed this. Another thing that the measure did away with was there was a provision that Muni drivers' pay had to be the average of the two highest transit systems in the country, which essentially meant it's the highest pay in the country. Nothing wrong with being the highest pay in the country. This is a very expensive city to live in, and I think all San Franciscans value labor and value public employees. We don't want anybody working for free. But once you give that away before you negotiate anything else, you've given away your biggest chip. The legislation took that out. Now when you're negotiating the union contract, salary is one of the things you're negotiating as well as work

rules, as well as vacation, as well as health, and they're all in the mix. You put more in the salary, you take something out. So that was really new. The measure passed in a landslide. It's been a long haul.

Since Prop E passed, there have been several Muni general managers, but they have all been transit professionals and they've all been on the job a number of years. The pattern before that, was they would appoint someone who had worked for Muni and was about to retire and they'd spend the last two years as the general manager and get their pension up, but not really do anything. There have been some very good managers since then.

It took a while to truly merge the Department of Parking and Traffic and Muni. They were merged but they were two separate silos for more than ten years and now they're finally merged and there are a lot of traffic operations things happening. The painting of bus lanes red and lots of no left turn lanes that there used to be, and so on. Ultimately just as the taxi industry was going away, the taxis did get folded into the MTA also. For many years the chairman of the MTA commission has been Tom Nolan, who was my predecessor as the executive director of SPUR and is and was a transit expert, and he actually just got a national award last night from the American Transit Association for his leadership.

Muni continues to get better. We've put two subsequent measures on the ballot to increase funding for Muni. There is another one on the ballot this November that is not going to pass, which is a disappointment, but that's what happens. There are four new tax measures and four set-asides on the November ballot, which is not a winning formula.

05-00:28:26

Farrell:

I have a number of follow-up questions on what you just discussed. So, first, I wanted to ask you about who some of the stakeholders are in Muni. I know that you mentioned the union and the riders and the people who were involved, the attorneys, the transportation experts, the political folks. Who else were the stakeholders?

05-00:29:00

Chappell:

Elderly. Handicapped. Youth. Transportation is an attractive topic for people. There are lots of transit nuts. There are train nuts. I put myself in that category. I'm a transit nut and a train nut. There are lots of us out there. At this time we developed a close relationship with the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce on transportation issues. This chamber of commerce is not your grandfather's chamber of commerce. At this time, Roberta Achtenberg was head of public policy at the chamber. She had been a supervisor. She had been a deputy director of HUD and had run for mayor against Willie Brown. But a very progressive community activist. San Francisco Tomorrow, a citizen's group in the city. The League of Women Voters. The Sierra Club. People for Open Space, now called Green Belt Alliance, founded by the same person who

founded SPUR in 1959. SPUR takes care of the center and Green Belt Alliance takes care of the periphery. There were lots of organized groups.

05-00:30:52

Farrell:

When you were putting together those public workshops where Muni and the union were there, the psychologists showed up, were any of those other stakeholders involved in the public meetings?

05-00:31:02

Chappell:

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yeah. The first one where we let the union and Muni management take the lead, and then afterwards we took the lead.

05-00:31:15

Farrell:

I see. Okay. How did you balance the competing interests of all the different stakeholders, especially when you were putting together your series of recommendations?

05-00:31:26

Chappell:

Yeah. Well, when push came to shove, we did the recommendations. We took testimony from everyone, but it was clear you could not get a group consensus. When you have a dozen different interest groups—the last step we took alone.

05-00:31:50

Farrell:

Were there any stakeholders who had really askew interests? If it was an environmental group, where they were like, “Just abolish all the cars.” That’s extreme but I don’t know if there was an example of something that was more extreme.

05-00:32:05

Chappell:

Muni’s long-term policy at the time had been no one in the city has to walk more than one block to the bus, which meant a line on every other street. In addition to that, every bus stop in the city has a constituency. So whenever Muni ever tried to move a bus stop, people would go to their supervisor and the supervisors got to control where the bus stops were and so nothing ever could happen. One of the early-on items is what has now been called the Transit Effectiveness Project, is a streamlining of the system. Best practices around the world now are to consolidate lines and to have streets that are mostly transit streets and other streets that are mostly car streets. East of Van Ness, Market Street now is 90 percent transit. Cars are directed off of Market Street. There are mandatory right turns and they’re directed to Mission Street. Market Street is becoming more and more bus, tram, bicycle—

05-00:33:45

Farrell:

Bikes.

05-00:33:46

Chappell:

—and pedestrian. Mission Street, west of South Van Ness, just in the last few months, they’ve taken one lane in each direction, out of two lanes in each direction, and it’s Muni only. They’ve painted the street red. And, again, there are mandatory turn-offs for cars every few blocks. They’re saying Mission

Street is not a car street. Valencia Street is a car and bike street. Guerrero Street is a car street. This means that people do have to walk farther. Bus stops, they're consolidating bus stops. It is so much better. I ride the 14 Muni. Before that there was a bus on Valencia and that's gone away, but there are twice as many now on Mission Street, and now every other stop essentially has been taken out, and it is so much faster coming downtown. Maybe you save three minutes from the Mission District to downtown. People say, "Well, that isn't important." Well, it is important because those three minutes add up, and if the bus saves three minutes going this way and three minutes going that way, by the end of the day, you're getting in a whole other run. Plus it becomes much more attractive. It becomes a more attractive alternative to the single passenger automobile if it's faster.

Muni had last rejiggered the routes in 1978. Toronto adjusts theirs every six months. Every six months and according to demand. We went thirty-five years without any adjustments to the routes. It is hugely controversial and the MTA commission had to respond to neighbors and back down on some things. But it's speeding up the system. Bus rapid transit, the signs went up this week that construction is starting on Van Ness for bus rapid transit. We'll see. Last November there was a measure on the ballot to kill Transit-First. It had been the city policy since 1973. There's a group of people who are enamored with their cars that have never liked Transit-First. This was defeated in a huge landslide. How anybody thought they were going to get rid of Transit-First—it's the last dying gasp of the dinosaurs. There's another measure on the ballot this November that will do two things to Muni. One is it will give the supervisors the ability to appoint three out of the seven commissioners and have approval over all seven. It essentially means the supervisors would appoint all of the commissioners. It would also give the supervisors the ability to meddle in Muni budget. I don't know whether it will pass or not. That would roll back two of the most important reforms that we made in 1999. It shows the necessity of constant reform in the system and that you have to keep going back.

05-00:38:19

Farrell:

Well, on that note, when you said that you were doing the stakeholders workshop and you wanted to do reforms, you didn't want to concentrate on operations but management. Can you tell me a little bit about why you were focusing on management and what you hoped that would do?

05-00:38:39

Chappell:

Yeah. Okay. The 1972-73 reform was technical fixes to operations. In the intervening years many things got fixed in the operational setup, and that there were professionals in Muni running some of those things. Clearly the problem was that the Board of Supervisors was running Muni and there had not been for years a professional general manager there, a transit expert from Chicago or New York or wherever. The problems were institutional problems. They weren't technical so much. When we talked to John Kirkwood, he said that in

1973 they got so far, and they got the operations, and they didn't mess around with management. That's what they could take on at that time. It was just time to take the next step.

05-00:40:08

Farrell: Oh, one question I do have. It's just brief, to clarify. When the psychologists were asking for six days a year where Muni drivers could call in because they couldn't face it—

05-00:40:29

Chappell: Not call in. Just not show up.

05-00:40:30

Farrell: Just not show up. Oh, without calling.

05-00:40:32

Chappell: Yeah.

05-00:40:33

Farrell: Was that ever implemented?

05-00:40:34

Chappell: Oh, yes. Yeah. That was the system.

05-00:40:37

Farrell: How long was that in effect for?

05-00:40:41

Chappell: Many years. Don't ask me how many, many is. But that was the system.

05-00:40:44

Farrell: Is that what contributed to the Muni meltdown?

05-00:40:49

Chappell: That contributed to missed runs. When I was first here in 1977 I lived on a bus route that always had missed runs. I talked to a Muni commissioner, a PUC commissioner at the time, and she gave me the general manager's phone number of Muni, and I gave it to everybody else at my bus stop. Every day when the bus missed its run, we'd all call the general manager. He soon learned not to take buses off that, but to take them off somebody else's. [laughter] What does transit have to be? It needs to be reliable, it needs to be fast, and it needs to be dignified. Those are the things you need for people to take transit. For a working person, reliability is key. When you never knew if the bus was going to come—today, we, of course, pull out our phone and it tells you in real time when the next bus is coming, which has really made a huge difference, so you can adjust if the bus isn't there. You can walk to another stop. You can do something different.

05-00:42:29

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about why the Muni meltdown did happen?

05-00:42:36

Chappell:

Oh, boy. The computer system was not correctly designed. There was a company that built the system and it never quite worked. When it was finally turned on, it died after two days. (At some point they went out of business.) You just can't do it all by hand and Muni then had to operate the trains by hand. The week that it happened the general manager was on vacation. There's nobody to ask.

05-00:43:40

Farrell:

Was that meltdown just for a week when things—

05-00:43:44

Chappell:

It was a week that the trains just didn't move. Little by little they patched it back together.

05-00:44:01

Farrell:

Can you explain what side letters are and what their function are?

05-00:44:07

Chappell:

Yeah. Who knew? When you read about labor negotiations, it's salaries and health benefits, vacations, those kind of things. Well, as important, or more important in many cases than those, are work rules. We've all heard the stories of feather bedding on the railroad, when they went from coal trains to diesel engines they still had to have a fireman to shovel the coal that wasn't there. Those kind of job-creating things. In a complicated operation, things happen that need to be decided. Muni management, any management with any union operation, just can't promulgate rules. They have to have what's called "meet and confer" with the union. Something would happen and they would need a new rule for it. They'd meet and confer, and write a rule, and it's what's called a "side letter." Those never saw the light of day. Now the union agreements are all public. All of this stuff, anybody can go in and look at it. The public never knew what these things were. How the six day thing ever happened, there was probably something else that made life harder for the workers. They gave up something, so they asked for something.

05-00:46:14

Farrell:

You had mentioned that the city administration had written a watered down version of your series of recommendations. What were the differences between SPUR's and theirs or what actually got implemented?

05-00:46:29

Chappell:

It was mostly face-saving on Willie's part. He wanted to be able to say he was in control. The differences were minor.

05-00:46:55

Farrell:

Okay, okay. I'm also wondering, because around that time Rescue Muni came into operation. What makes them a strong operation, that they've stayed around and been able to operate for the past twenty years?

05-00:47:10

Chappell: Yeah. It's a small, dedicated group of "Muni nuts," transit activists. I say this in admiration. I was at a meeting of one of the Muni citizen advisory committees a month ago, working on the extension of the F-line with Rick Laubscher, and walk into the room and two-thirds of the citizen advisory committee are the same people that were working on Rescue Muni side-by-side with us in 1996. So it's that stick-togetherness; people who just know the system inside and out.

05-00:48:02

Farrell: And are clearly dedicated to change. Yeah. You had mentioned that they developed performance standards. Can you tell me what those are?

05-00:48:11

Chappell: Oh, I can't tell you what they are, but it's what percentage of trains arrive on time, or what percentage of buses arrive on—it's mostly that.

05-00:48:22

Farrell: Operational. Okay. I don't know if this relates to the binding arbitration but I'm assuming that there was union involvement in that, and you said that the union was disdainful. Can you tell me why they were disdainful, what some of the issues were?

05-00:48:42

Chappell: Yeah. The Transportation Workers Union is a very powerful group of people, and they were used to getting what they wanted from the mayors, mayor after mayor. When the city has tried to clamp down on some things, the TWU rears its head, and the city backs down. Well, we didn't back down. I remember one of the negotiators, just looking down the end of her nose at us, and just sort of clucking that they didn't even have to listen to us, because they knew they had the power. Well, they didn't. Muni reform was better for the drivers because the drivers went from being disdained, because they were the face of a system that didn't work. It wasn't their fault that it didn't work. But they were who you saw. When the bus shows up ten minutes late, who are you going to holler at? I had the phone of the general manager, but most people didn't. [laughter] You holler at the driver. You and I have been through enough classes in college and shrinks and marriage counselors and all these things, that we know that when somebody goes off on us, it doesn't mean that I'm a bad person. They're crazy. Well, if you haven't had that training, and the typical Muni driver has not, somebody comes on the bus and acts crazy and they take it personally. I just saw this yesterday on a bus. The driver and a middle-class, not crazy passenger, but who had done something wrong, got into a disagreement. The passenger was actually embarrassed and tried to make things right, and the driver wouldn't let it go. He's arguing with this guy for three blocks going down the street and sort of shouting at him.

05-00:51:16

Farrell: Creates tension, yeah, negative perception. Yeah. How would your perfect system work for Muni?

05-00:51:29  
Chappell:

In terms of?

05-00:51:32  
Farrell:

I mean, what would your perfect Muni operation look like?

05-00:51:36  
Chappell:

Okay. The biggest problem with any transit system, that's buses running on the street, is that they are mixed in with traffic and they can't go any faster than the traffic is going. Why the underground works is there's nothing else on the track. That's why Muni is now painting lanes red. That's why bus rapid transit is being implemented now, first on Van Ness and second on Geary. This idea of bus rapid transit started in Curitiba, Brazil, and a guy by the name of Jaime Lerner, who was three times mayor of Curitiba and two times governor of the state. He is a very smart guy and we've had him at SPUR several times talking. He figured out how to do things on the cheap, essentially. Bus rapid transit is one/one-hundredth of the cost of subways. It's one-tenth the cost of trolley cars, one/one-hundredth of the cost of subways. It's a dedicated lane for transit. There are bus stations, where you pay at the station before you get on the bus, where it's a level floor between the platform and the bus. The bus pulls in, people get off, people get on, and it goes on its way. It functions very much like a subway, but it's much cheaper, if you have a road that's wide enough, and we have some, like Geary and Van Ness. In Curitiba there were six different sizes of buses depending on the route, including a 300-passenger articulated freeway bus. That's a BART Train, 300-people. BART is what Muni is trying to do and that's how you can build a rapid system that is affordable. Unfortunately subway construction has gotten so expensive that we don't do very much in this country. China has built more subways in the last ten years than exist in the rest of the world. They just spend the money and do it. It is fabulous.

Transportation is really changing in ways we don't quite understand today. One of the things has been Uber and Lyft. We're going to talk about City CarShare. We wouldn't start City CarShare today, because it has been eclipsed by Uber. And, of course, Uber is going to eclipse itself with self-driving cars in a very few years. While I have a Muni pass, there are places I take Uber. There's Chariot now, the private bus system that now has fourteen different routes in the city. You can get your neighbors together and set up a route. You get a bunch of people together, set up a route. You have a company, you can set up a route to pick up your employees. Muni is very smartly cooperating with this, unlike most of the cab companies, which are fighting Uber. The best cab company in the city changed to the Uber model and repainted their cabs, and it's all now on your phone and an integrated system of self-driving vehicles.

Muni is doing a study, the MTA is doing a study now what to do with their parking lots and parking garages when they're no longer needed. I was talking to a parking lot operator that I'm on a board with, and he said the other day he



was in his downtown lot, half-empty. The economy's never been better. His Union Square parking lot, half-empty. He went on his phone, said there were forty-two Ubers circling the neighborhood. He said, "I'm fifty years old. I'm glad I'm not any younger because by the time I retire, there aren't going to be parking lots."

Talking with another woman who owns many apartment houses in the city, and they are preparing to go to the planning commission to repurpose the parking garages in their buildings, because they can't rent the spaces. The millennials don't want cars. My nieces and nephews have not gotten their driving licenses until they go away to college, when we couldn't wait until you were fifteen-and-a-half and get your driver's license. We're going to have all this open space on our streets that we're not going to need. Self-driving cars. You get a lot more of them in a lot less space. Parking garages, they'll be parked an inch away from the car next door. There's no opening doors because you get out of them and then they go park themselves. Nobody knows how this is going to turn out, but it's happening very quickly. This week I saw a test of a self-driving car on a San Francisco street.

05-00:58:22

Farrell:

One of my questions is how San Francisco poses unique challenges and I feel like the presence of tech here makes San Francisco sort of the test city for a lot of others. Can you talk about—

05-00:58:38

Chappell:

Yeah. Although I'm interested that Uber is testing their self-driving cars in Pittsburgh. Richard Florida's city. The new creative class. I thought that was very interesting. Uber started here because there were three guys who came to a convention and couldn't get a cab. I was at a meeting just before this today with a guy, and he's just a guy, who has done this incredible study, a longitudinal study of rents in San Francisco and comparing rents to housing production. I said, "What do you do in your spare time?" He said, "Well, this is what I do in my spare time, of course." He works for a computer company and found incredible amounts of data and knew how to manipulate them and came to some fact-based conclusions. Guess what. Supply and demand does work.

Airbnb. I love seeing tourists in my residential neighborhood. There are all these languages being spoken, and people who are learning what the real San Francisco is, not what the Hilton Hotel is. And, boy, that's terrific, and staying with families, and making those connections. This era of big data is astounding.

05-01:00:46

Farrell:

I guess moving on to the effects of Prop E passing, was the formation of the MTA. Can you talk a little bit about how that was put together and maybe how Muni impacted that?

05-01:01:05  
Chappell:

As we were going into the election for that, Michael Burns, professional general manager, was hired, and this was the first professional general manager in many years. The handwriting was on the wall. This was going to pass and this guy came in. As he was casing out the job, he came nervously to us, because he heard there were these crazy citizens changing the system. We got on like a house on fire, because here was a group of allies. The first MTA commission that Willie appointed had some good people and it had some political people on it. It has gotten much better subsequently. It both has to do with who Willie is and what the old system had been. We are seen as an ally by the general manager of the MTA. We wrote the subsequent two funding measures to get Muni more money. Gabriel chaired the committee that has recently done the twenty-year funding plan for Muni. He's chairing this ballot measure that's unfortunately going to lose this November. More of our work since 1973 has been at the management and funding side than the technical side because Muni has enough money and enough independence now to hire good technical people.

05-01:03:26  
Farrell:

And then the transit effectiveness project began in 2005.

05-01:03:34  
Chappell:

Going back to 1992 or '93, when I was a SPUR member but before I was ED, I came to a SPUR noontime forum that was put on by SPUR board member Steve Taber and a transportation planner by the name of Andy Nash, who subsequently went on to be executive director of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority and a SPUR board member. It was what they called the Three Corridors Plan for long-range transit improvements and it called for three new subway lines, one from the county line up Third Street to Fisherman's Wharf. The first one, Geary Street, a subway from downtown to Van Ness and then running on the surface on tracks to the beach; and the third one, Van Ness from the northern waterfront to Market Street. That plan was done by SPUR and ultimately adopted by the city. The first line was to be Geary, and the city started public hearings on Geary, and the merchants said, "We don't want this. We want parking spaces. This will take away parking." Very typical merchant response. In the meantime, the African American community in the Bayview saw that transit was a vehicle for economic development for them. I remember one of the community representatives coming to me here and saying, "Wow. We saw what happened to Castro Street in the 1970s and '80s when Muni Metro opened a subway to Castro Street. We want the same thing in the Bayview." And I thought, "Well, there were some other things going on in Castro Street in the 1970s and '80s, but okay." Geary didn't want it. Muni flipped to Third Street and a route study was begun of the land between Third Street and the CalTrain right-of-way, which was variously a block to four or five blocks wide. The community said, "No, it's got to go down the middle of Third Street because this is for economic development." Muni said okay. Muni should have pressed back on that, because Third Street is not wide enough in some places. It's an awkward

fit and, in fact, the merchants lost parking. But that's what's built. Muni did not do a good job of managing that project in terms of managing cost, controlling cost.

Remember, this was supposed to go from the county line on the south to the bay on the north. Well, the first phase went from the county line on the south to the Giants ballpark, six blocks south of Market. They had this much money, and they put a string down, and that's where it ran out. The second phase is now under construction, called the central subway, going from the ballpark, dipping down as a subway under Fourth Street and Stockton St., and ending at Stockton and Clay Street, the middle of Chinatown. Again, they had that much money, and they laid out the string, and that's where it stopped. It's called the "subway to nowhere" because Muni is not going to be able to get rid of the number 30 Stockton bus because this only goes on half the route. SPUR only supported it on the proviso that the planning start for extending it to the bay. The planning is going on now for the extension. When and where the money will come, I don't know.

So in the meantime, the MTA began to appreciate Jaime Lerner's bus rapid transit. In the plan, Van Ness and Geary have been flipped from rail to bus rapid transit. They're both very wide streets. It's not as good as underground train, but darn near. In the space of three automobiles carrying a total of three people, you can have a bus carrying ninety people. They had forgotten that there's signal preemption on the T-line going down Third Street and it hadn't been operating for all of these several years, and it's just been turned on, the switch. The light turns green for the train when the train comes along, speeds it up. It took the mayor's transportation policy aide to discover this.

05-01:09:46

Farrell:

Going back to what we were talking about before, with sort of the shares, there was the City CarShare. Can you tell me a little about the genesis of that program?

05-01:10:02

Chappell:

Yeah. One day Gabe Metcalf came to me and said, "Elizabeth," his partner, "and I have this idea," and explained to me what's essentially—it's a timeshare for cars, right. Rent by the minute. It was one of those things I thought, "Wow, what a brilliant idea. It'll never work." But what I said to Gabe is, "What a brilliant idea. Let's do it." It was too good an idea not to try. I thought it wouldn't work because why do people have cars, or why do people have \$50,000 cars? It's not for transportation. It's meeting some other psychological need, the sex appeal or the self-image. I thought it's going to be hard to get past that. Well, fortunately I was wrong. We set up a desk at SPUR for Gabe's partner Elizabeth, and Kate White, their best friend, and they became co-executive directors of City CarShare. I went out and I raised the money for it.

Car sharing started in Europe and is very big in Switzerland, but it was all sort of hand done, and City CarShare figured out, working with some technology people, reserving online and when you join you get a fob. The fob opens the car door. The key is in the car and a credit card for gas is in the car. So all very high-tech. They were in the process of getting their non-profit status and something went off-track. When something goes off-track in government, it took years to get it back on track. So here SPUR was in the auto rental business with huge liabilities on our insurance. But, boy, it worked great, and it started out with twelve green Volkswagen Beetles. And the next thing we knew, General Motors was threatening to sue. Three kids and a slightly older guy, twelve green Beetles, and General Motors tried to sue because they saw what this was going to mean.

Cal has done a number of studies on City CarShare. It's essentially twenty people share one car, is what the math works out to be. In the first four years, a million gallons of gasoline were saved. Privately owned cars are parked ninety-five percent of the time. Extremely inefficient. Amusingly, General Motors has just put \$500 million into Lyft.

05-01:14:18

Farrell:

Interesting.

05-01:14:20

Chappell:

The car share model has gotten eclipsed by Uber and Lyft because then it's not just renting a car but you're renting a driver, and that will soon get eclipsed by driverless Ubers and Lyfts. Gabe actually said yesterday he was meeting with the founder of Lyft who said, "Uber and Lyft will never make money." Uber's, what, now the biggest corporation in the world, but losing money. It will never make money until they're driverless, but they're willing to lose money in the meantime to build up their market share and then when it goes driverless, they'll be the biggest corporation in the world and making money instead of losing money.

Where I was able to raise money was from developers, who got it right away, that by putting car share pods in their buildings they could build less parking. Therefore they could build more apartments or office space or whatever it is. They got it right away. As I was going around to the Board of Supervisors and it was time to see supervisor Barbara Kaufman, who we had worked closely with on many things, including charter reform. But I knew Barbara well enough to know she drove her car and she did not take Muni. I thought, "Oh, Barbara, she'll never get this." So I go and I explain it to her and she said, "Do you mean I'll never have to argue with my car mechanic again, that I don't have to deal with this person charging me too much money?" I said, "Yeah." "I'm in," she said. "What a great idea." It has exceeded everyone's expectations. San Francisco, starting in the 1950s or sixties, had a one-to-one parking requirement; that is, you build one housing unit you have to have a parking space. You'd have an apartment house with a hundred units, you have

to have a hundred parking spaces. Well, now there are parts of the city where it's one to four. You have four apartments, one parking space. Last year I was at an event where Oz Erickson, the Emerald Fund, biggest housing developer in the city, was speaking. He said, "Five years ago everything had to be one-to-one parking." He said, "Now I have no trouble building one to four."

One of the other things we got developers to do was start doing flat floors in parking garages, so they could be reused for something else. And, indeed, this apartment house owner I was talking to, they're going to start renting these out as storage spaces, and to delivery companies. All of the apartment and condo buildings, the big buildings in the city, are having to build new storage rooms for UPS packages because they get hundreds of packages a day. It's a big issue for the scavenger company. All of this cardboard. They have had to buy new equipment to recycle the cardboard and separate it from white paper. It is so much more cardboard than they ever had before. Huge issue at the Union Square BID. As rents have gone up on commercial space, people don't have inside storage space for their boxes. The boxes go out in the alley or on the street. I don't know how that's going to work out.

05-01:19:20

Farrell:

It's pretty remarkable, that sea change. So speaking of cars, I wanted to briefly talk about the Embarcadero Freeway.

05-01:19:33

Chappell:

Yeah. Can we hold that a minute?

05-01:19:35

Farrell:

Yeah.

05-01:19:38

Chappell:

You asked me what my ideal transit system would look like. In the year 2000, the US Department of Transportation had a national transportation conference here, and I was the keynote speaker at that. I tried to articulate principles for transportation and one of them, as I said, was an exclusive right of way, whether it's rail or bus rapid transit. Another one is that you need to keep track of the movement of people, not the movement of vehicles. And for many decades in this country, the measurement of traffic operations is what's called "level of service." And level of service is counted by how many vehicles go through an intersection by minute or how long vehicles have to wait to get through that intersection. This has a perverse effect because what it means is as you densify, as you in-fill in cities, the level of service goes down, because there are more people there, regardless of whether they're driving. Every time there's an in-fill project in San Francisco, and a transportation study has to be done for CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act, in-fill projects end up showing a negative transportation impact. This is the wrong measurement. We thought we had gotten this changed from level of service, that you just don't count this for in-fill projects. And it's been harder than we thought. A

law got passed, the regulation got passed. It still has not been implemented. It is discouraging.

Limiting parking is very important. Well, you have a car, you're going to drive it. That's why City CarShare is a good thing. You have a parking space, you're going to put a car in it. One of the things that is now the law in San Francisco, is that in new residential buildings, parking spaces have to be disaggregated from housing units. You go to a new building that has parking in it, whether it's one-to-one or one-to-four. There's one price for the unit and there's another price for the parking space. And, in fact, more and more people are not buying parking spaces. You're looking—

05-01:23:08

Farrell: That's the law?

05-01:23:10

Chappell: Yeah. It's part of the zoning code now. In new buildings—

05-01:23:19

Farrell: Oh, in new buildings. Okay.

05-01:23:20

Chappell: Yeah.

05-01:23:21

Farrell: I was wondering what the compliance rate was with that. Yeah, okay.

05-01:23:24

Chappell: Yeah, right. Because 40 percent of the householders here don't have a car. If you had to buy a space, you're probably not going to leave it empty. Parking spaces easily go for \$100,000 in an ordinary neighborhood. So that's a different person who can buy a \$900,000 unit versus an \$800,000 unit. It's a different person. Bike parking. Bike parking is required in every new building in the city. There's bike sharing and there are kind of two systems of bike sharing in the city. Scooters. Electric scooter sharing. These aren't unique to San Francisco. It's happening everywhere. But what we have tried to do is to give people choices. If you want to drive, it's better for you to have people on Muni, to have people on bikes and not clogging up the streets.

We have tried to get transportation funding to be based on performance measures rather than just flat funding. We're always trying to increase the modal split and get more people out of their single occupancy cars. San Francisco, we're second only to New York on these things. Air quality, a big thing. San Francisco has quite good air quality because our pollution blows to Oakland. We have a responsibility for that, too. In the last several years, state legislation has been passed that rewards smart land use, transit oriented development. You build next to a BART station and you can build more density.

Despite the fact that we have had decades of disinvestment in transit, and Muni isn't nearly funded the way transit is in a European city, we're doing better than many cities. Other cities in the west, however, are spending more than we are. I guess it was in the seventies, that San Diego built the "Tijuana Trolley," it was called at first, one of the first lines. They paid for it themselves without federal money. They bought off-the-shelf cars and just did it. That has turned out to be a very smart investment for them. Every transit vehicle in San Francisco is custom designed for San Francisco. Muni thinks we're unique and can't have the same—a bus is a million dollars these days. I think there probably are some savings there.

I don't think there's any other city in this country that has a formal Transit First policy. That being said, Los Angeles is investing in transit much more than we are. It's astounding every time I go down there. They've gone from zero to a lot. The transit system I helped design in Denver in the seventies continues to grow. If ever there was a car-oriented Los Angeles-type town, it was Denver. But people are changing.

One of the great things about San Francisco, that has now gone away is our compact downtown. I used to be able to walk out of the SPUR office on Sutter Street for lunch and see three or four SPUR members on the sidewalk and conduct business. We are now turning into a multi-hub city with other smaller downtowns. But we do better than most places on using our streets for more than just transportation. And that is the public realm. Certainly that was the idea on Market Street with the wide sidewalks, and it's worked downtown. It isn't working so well yet in mid-Market. Folsom Street, as ugly a traffic sewer as there ever was, has from Second to the water now twenty-five foot sidewalks on the sunny side, and lots of benches and water gardens and street trees. So hopefully we're getting back to treating our sidewalks as part of social space. When you think of European cities and old ladies taking their chair out and sitting on the sidewalk and watching the traffic go by. So the subject was? The next subject?

05-01:31:05

Farrell:

The Embarcadero Freeway.

05-01:31:08

Chappell:

Oh, yeah.

05-01:31:09

Farrell:

Yeah.

05-01:31:10

Chappell:

San Francisco has reinvented itself many times since the Gold Rush. It's always been a boom and bust city. The population peaked around 1950 at 775,000 and went down in the fifties and sixties with capital flight, with BART, with cheap FHA mortgages for new houses in the suburbs. This is not unique to San Francisco. Happened in most cities in the country. Part of that

movement was freeway building, that the city became someplace to get away from or to go through fast. It took until 2010 for the population of the city to hit 800,000 and we're now 850,000. The Caltrans plan was to connect the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge with a double-deck freeway all along the waterfront. It was essentially what the freeway planners saw as free land. It had been the port, belonged to the port. There was a railroad along there and they could just build the freeway above. The first piece opened, I think it was, in 1959 and went from the Bay Bridge with a bunch of spaghetti coming off the bridge, double-decker along the waterfront, in front of the Ferry Building, essentially to Broadway. When people saw it, it got stopped. There was a plan published by the city, a freeway plan for the city, with freeways all over the city, through Golden Gate Park, through the Panhandle, along the entire waterfront, many of the major streets in the city. We were stuck with this Embarcadero Freeway. In 1985 the supervisors voted to tear it down. In 1987 a measure was put on the ballot to not tear it down, and that won, and so the plan was to not tear it down. Chief amongst the proponents of keeping the freeway were Chinatown merchants who said then, as they say now, "Nobody can find us. No one will be able to find Chinatown if there's no freeway." Total nonsense.

When the Loma Prieta earthquake hit in 1989, the principal damage throughout the Bay Area was to Caltrans's facilities. The Bay Bridge, the freeway in Oakland fell down and killed a bunch of people, both I-80 and U.S. 101 in San Francisco, this half-mile thing called the Embarcadero Freeway and what was called the "terminal separator," all the spaghetti coming off the Bay Bridge. The question was whether or not to rebuild the Embarcadero Freeway. At I-280 through the southern part of the city, Caltrans just propped it up. They put steel jackets around the columns, they put big capitals on top of the columns because they knew the handwriting was on the wall. If they ever tore it down they would never get to be able to rebuild it again. The public kind of ignored that. I had wished we had the bandwidth—and, indeed, today's SPUR's leading tearing down the next five blocks of it.

There's an architect in the city called Clark Manus. The firm's Heller Manus. His partner's Jeffrey Heller, who co-lead all the waterfront work for SPUR. Clark did a plan. He did the drawings, maybe even made a model, did the drawings, anyway, of what the waterfront would be like without the Embarcadero Freeway. People loved it. The mayor, who was Art Agnos at the time, appointed Clark as the head of a huge citizens committee to study tearing down the freeway. It went to the Board of Supervisors in 1990 and they voted six-to-five to tear it down. So it was very controversial. The people who love cars, plus the Chinatown merchants. I remember one letter to the editor saying, "The views from the Embarcadero Freeway are so beautiful. We'll lose those views if it's torn down." Clark did all these demonstration plans. There were these meetings of hundreds of people every month, I think. The problem, of course, is every month it would be a different hundred people



there. But Clark really ran this process for several years. Ultimately it did get torn down.

The question is what gets to replace it. Federal money was only authorized to replace what was there. There was seemingly no way to get that to pay for a different roadway. Federal legislation had to be written, it was called the I-280 Transfer Study, that allowed the transfer of the money to build a surface street. Then, in tearing down of the terminal separator, the plan was made to sell that land to the city of San Francisco for a dollar or something. All of a sudden, here's a hundred or more acres of developable land south of Market. Sasaki Associates, very good landscape architecture firm, was ultimately hired to develop the boulevard. But the piece in front of the Ferry Building was a question. For years there had been plans to reconfigure the Ferry Building. Since the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge were built, it went from one of the busiest ferry terminals in the country to nothing. Every plan had failed because the bankers who had to finance this said, "Nobody's going to walk under the Embarcadero Freeway in this no-man's land and go to this building." All of a sudden there is the Ferry Building in all its glory. There was a design competition. Four firms competed and brought all their drawings to SPUR. In our old office I think the ceiling must have been nine or ten feet in the meeting room and the drawings were taller than the ceilings were. And, of course, a great plan was selected. Simon Martin-Vegue Winklestein and Morris were the architects. Diane Filippi, who then became head of the SPUR Urban Center afterwards, was a partner in that firm.

But the question was what to do in front of the Ferry Building. At one time, historically, there had been an underpass in front of the Ferry Building because the trolley cars—there was a trolley car turnaround on the surface, so the only way you could get cars passed that was a tunnel. One of the alternatives was can we rebuild that tunnel. The problem was since then standards had changed on how steep the road could be. So it would have opened up a pit in front of the Ferry Building longer than the Ferry Building. But there were many competing designs for what to do with that space. I remember one meeting at SPUR that went on until ten o'clock at night with architect after architect showing their competing plans. Two of the most enthusiastic presenters, I'd say, were Vernon DeMars, who had been an architecture professor at Cal, and Mario Ciampi, the architect of the now old Berkeley Art Museum. Everybody was there with their models and drawings, and neighbors. Ultimately it was decided to build a plaza in front of the Ferry Building attached to the Ferry Building and that the road would curve around this grand civic plaza. And that was what was approved and designed. The ROMA Design Group, very good landscape architecture firm, designed it.

And then Sue Bierman, a supervisor who had come into prominence in the freeway fights, in fighting the freeway through Golden Gate Park and the Panhandle, looked at the plan and said, "This roadway is too wide. Old people aren't going to be able to cross the street in front of it. Put the plaza in the

middle of the street and have the split street along both sides.” This was clearly a terrible idea and that’s what ultimately happened. It’s a terrible idea because no one has psychological ownership of the space. It doesn’t belong to the Hyatt Hotel on the land side, it doesn’t belong to the Ferry Building. No one maintains it. It’s a skateboard park. It’s a real social problem for the people and businesses in the neighborhood.

Meanwhile, as this grand boulevard opens, there are all of these new parcels with waterfront views, and taking down that freeway has generated hundreds of millions of dollars in new development along the waterfront, and turning this industrial backwater now to our front door. There are still a number of development opportunities on piers. There are still a lot of liabilities there. There’s a seawall. Some places it’s waterside of the road, some places it’s landside of the road. But the port is doing studies of what sea level rise is going to do to that, and there’s going to be a big bill for that, a big bill for many of the piers that are going to have to be rebuilt. We don’t know where that money is going to come from.

05-01:46:40

Farrell:

Did you want to say anything more about the Embarcadero Freeway?

05-01:46:48

Chappell:

It is interesting that this became a cause célèbre in the Chinese community. Rose Pak, who just died this week, a Chinatown leader, was very clear in saying tearing down the freeway was racism. I guess this is an indication of one of the things that’s terrible about racism, is it poisons people’s mind to see everything in those terms, because it had nothing to do with Chinatown. It had nothing to do with race. Amongst Rose’s demands, one of which turned out to be the central subway, which she got, was directional signs to Chinatown. The city has put tourist signs, good thing to do, Chinatown, Fisherman’s Wharf, Union Square. She had one other demand, and that is, that one of the off-ramps from the Bay Bridge that connected to Second Street, she said, “People are not going to be able to find Chinatown.” That ramp can’t connect to Second Street, it needs to connect to the corner of Second and Folsom so it’s pointing people toward the Embarcadero Boulevard.” This never made any sense from any point of view that I could ever see, but SPUR was the only group that opposed that route. We opposed it because it took a whole city block and cut it in two across the diagonal. This was to be a new neighborhood. Michael Alexander and I went to hearing after hearing and opposed this, but it got built. Fast forward to 2015. The Successor Agency to the Redevelopment Agency sold that block, tore down Rose Pak’s ramp, rebuilt it, you and I, the taxpayers, rebuilt it the way it should have been built to begin with, which is teeing into Second Street. No one is not finding Chinatown because of it. Rose Pak, who lived in the neighborhood, never even noticed it was torn down. Meanwhile she was changing her efforts to oppose pedestrianizing two blocks of Stockton Street because people would

not be able to get to Chinatown despite the fact that Stockton Street is one-way *away* from Chinatown and would have no effect on it at all.

05-01:50:16

Farrell:

Right. Well, I think that might be a good place to leave it for today and then next time we'll pick up with the Market Street Railway, if that works for you.

05-01:50:30

Chappell:

Okay, and TransBay.

05-01:50:32

Farrell:

Well, yeah. We can chat about that in a second.

## Interview 6: September 30, 2016

06-00:00:09

Holmes: Well, this is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley and I'm sitting down today once again with Jim Chappell for our sixth session in his oral history. Today is September 30, 2016 and we are at SPUR headquarters here in beautiful San Francisco. Jim, thanks for sitting down with us once again.

06-00:00:30

Chappell: Of course.

06-00:00:31

Holmes: In our last session we covered a lot of areas in regard to transportation and redoing transportation and that kind of planning in San Francisco. One of the topics I wanted to start off with today is the Market Street Railway. This was a new form of transportation, of bringing back vintage transportation to San Francisco. Can you talk a little bit about that?

06-00:00:58

Chappell: Sure. I know you're doing an oral history with Rick Laubscher and, boy, he's almost solely responsible for that success story. Well, the modern story starts in 1961 when the plans for BART were being done and SPUR did a report on what to do about Market Street, because the plan had been to put Market Street back just the way it was, except now there would be two levels of trains under it, one for BART and one for Muni Metro. And the idea then was to take the tracks off of Market Street, and take the trains off of Market Street. And this was part of the "modernity." Trolleys are "old-fashioned," the wires are ugly, and there's always this misguided talk about Market Street being the Champs-Élysées of San Francisco. Not hardly. It has a very different function and role in the city. And so Muni Metro was opening in stages in the late 1970s, and it came time to take the tracks off of Market Street. And people figured out that was a mistake, that the underground Muni Metro was very popular, and someday would reach overcapacity, and we needed both systems. And so the Market Street Railway was founded in, I think, 1976. And when Rick Laubscher came on the scene, he really upped the game, and had a trolley festival of historic trolleys in 1983. And Dianne Feinstein was thrilled by it, as was the tourist industry, and Dianne asked that the trolley festival go on every summer. In fact, last weekend they were on display—there's now an annual Market Street Railway Trolley event, running the historic cars. It was a glorious weekend.

In 1995 Rick was able to get the Market Street Railway running on the surface of Market Street full-time, and in 2000 that was extended to the F-line on the Embarcadero to Fisherman's Wharf. Fisherman's Wharf had fought transit for a long time. The merchants fought the rail because they were afraid of losing parking spaces. I quit going to talk to them because they were so impossible. A bunch of old Italian fishermen families, all of whom couldn't get along with

each other. And then a new face came along, and that was Rodney Fong, and Rodney's family owned the wax museum, amongst many other real estate ventures in the city. He was able to get a new generation of Fisherman's Wharf merchants organized. And he asked me to come to them to do a presentation about all the things that were happening in the city, and how Fisherman's Wharf was being left behind. Rodney was able to turn that group around. They supported a new streetscape plan, the first version of which EDAW did pro bono, and then he got them to support the trolley.

So the F-line runs from Castro Street down Market Street and then out to Fisherman's Wharf. The E-line runs at present from down south to Fisherman's Wharf, all along the waterfront, and probably—

06-00:05:54

Holmes:

Does the E-line start right around the Ferry Building?

06-00:05:57

Chappell:

Pardon?

06-00:05:58

Holmes:

Does the E-line start around the Ferry Building? Is that where it begins?

06-00:06:01

Chappell:

No. I think it runs down to the county line actually. So this was a fully twenty years ago, around the time I started at SPUR. I remember the announcement that SPUR and Market Street Railway had finally succeeded in getting the Muni plan to include the E-line along the waterfront. And it took until 2016 to start running the E-line and Muni is running it now very erratically. There are no signs. They're not keeping to a schedule. The operations people at Muni have fought the Market Street Railway, fought the historic cars from the beginning. Part of it is the engineering mentality. They just want all one kind of car and that's easier. And then there's the modernity idea, that they don't want "old-fashioned" things, they want new, shiny modern things. And, of course, the Market Street Railway historic cars are the most popular cars in the system. Every advertisement Muni does, that's what they show in the advertisement. The public loves it. The operations people at Muni hate it, because it is more difficult operationally. They have to train drivers to operate different kinds of cars, so the drivers don't like it. So it's pushing a rock uphill, but Rick has done that very, very successfully for a long time. And, of course, as part of the Embarcadero rehabilitation and landscaping—the trolleys go right down the middle of the street and is a beautiful tourist ride as well as real transportation for locals. When the Embarcadero Freeway was torn down and the boulevard and the track went in, property values immediately jumped 300 percent and now I'm sure it's many thousands of percent of what it was. Ironically, in some ways, along the waterfront, we have too much open space, which is a funny thing for a park planner to say.

Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1870s wrote the précis for what would be the National Parks Movement and this became the Organic Act of 1916 that formed the National Park Service. And for national parks, the idea was these were places that should be preserved for eternity, for posterity, for people from all over the world. It was important enough just to know they existed and it didn't really matter if people went to visit them. But that was the national parks. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. wrote the précis for state parks. And among his criteria was that these are things that are to be accessible to the public and developed, not pristine. One of his criteria is that there ought to be enough state parks but *not too many*. Open space, like anything else, needs to be occupied and used by people doing socially accepted things, so that strangers will come together. It is just like a restaurant. If you go to a restaurant, nobody's in it, you don't go there. You find the restaurant that's crowded. It's the same with open space, and there are many essentially abandoned open spaces in American cities, the middle class people don't use them and they've been abandoned to indigents. So you need to have things that attract people to these spaces. And, of course, the Bay is the big attraction. Everyone wants to be as close to the water as they can get. Especially at the foot of Market Street, all of those open spaces are filled with indigents today and it's not nice. And it's because the development is too far away. There could be a whole other row of buildings along the landside of the Embarcadero.

This goes back to a very bad project that happened in 1962, which is the Fontana Towers. The Fontana Towers are two seventeen-story slabs at the foot of Van Ness and Polk Street. They're called towers but that's a real misnomer. A point building is a tower. The Fontana buildings are slabs. They are mid-rise, seventeen stories, single-loaded corridors so everybody gets a view of the Bay, but that makes the buildings twice as wide. And they're right at the foot of Russian Hill, where there are existing houses and many wealthy people. They do the maximum possible to block views. Not surprisingly, there was a revolt against this kind of building, as there well should have been. But everything along the waterfront was down-zoned to forty feet. Why forty, not fifty or thirty? But forty feet. And so, in fact, we keep the maximum number of people from where they most want to be, which is on the waterfront. I compare this to the Gold Coast in Chicago, where there are 1920s apartment houses that are twenty stories tall, and right next to them are Victorian mansions on the streets that are perpendicular to the water, just as our streets are perpendicular to the water. The towers have the same setbacks as those mansions have. So the people in those mansions have the same view of the water that they always had, which is out their front window, down the street to the water. Of course, the ground is flat. Different story at the foot of Russian Hill and at the foot of Telegraph Hill. They should be low. But you start getting downtown and South of Market and there is no hill immediately behind them, and there could be a lot more denser development and putting a lot more people where they most want to be, actively using the open spaces. The city has built a number of open spaces at Hunters Point over the years and they are all very misused because there's no housing right near them.

06-00:14:07

Holmes: In regards to the open space issue, in our last conversation you were talking about the area on Embarcadero, across from the Ferry Building, how that space became used last time, as well. Is that also another example of that?

06-00:14:20

Chappell: It is.

06-00:14:21

Holmes: Just bad planning?

06-00:14:22

Chappell: Yeah, yeah. When the Embarcadero Freeway came down there were a lot of uses that were only there because it was this elevated freeway, no man's land, industrial kind of zone. One of those was the Muni turnaround at the foot of Mission Street. This was a large half-block of semi-paved bus layover yard. And so one of the things we started working on was to get that developed, leased by Muni, and a development then paying Muni substantial rent. Well, there was a whole group of transit advocates in the city who tried to stop this. First of all, "it's privatizing public land," they said, and also "Muni needs this lot." We said, "No, Muni doesn't need the lot. No one's destination is that lot. People only go there because that's where the buses sit. The buses can sit along the street, along the curb for their layovers." So eventually that's what happened. Muni leased the property to what is now the Hotel Vitale. Muni's getting tens of millions of dollars in rent on that land for sixty-six years. The buses are parked along the side of the hotel, and along the Embarcadero in front of the Ferry Building, which is where people want to go anyway. Nobody's destination was the bus parking lot. There are many of these kinds of properties in the city. Muni properties, school district properties, PUC properties, often sitting essentially unused and in neighborhoods that were once industrial that now are developing. Periodically the supervisors call for a study of these lands and the report comes out and shows all the lands. There was just one done again last year and the departments that are holding those always insist that they can't possibly be surplus. There are other huge Muni yards in the city that could be developed, keeping the bus, particularly the electric buses, there on the ground floor and building above them. The drivers would have to learn not to drive into columns. So this subject keeps coming up and hopefully it will continue because the model is there. It helps fund Muni at no cost to the taxpayers.

The E-line or F-line, depending on how you want to call it, wasn't supposed to stop at Fisherman's Wharf. It was supposed to go on to Fort Mason. But like many Muni projects, the string ran out and they ran out of money and stopped it at Fisherman's Wharf. Dianne Feinstein got an earmark for the National Park Service to do an environmental impact statement and preliminary design of the E-line/F-line to Fort Mason. There's a tunnel under Fort Mason that belongs to the National Park Service and that EIS was done and certified by the MTA, the city, and the National Park Service three years ago. Muni and

Fort Mason Center prepared an application for some federal funding. There's federal funding for transportation projects in parks, and 50 percent of this route is on National Park Service land. First, then-Supervisor Alioto-Pier put in a measure that said that Muni couldn't spend any money on this project until it was fully funded, which is one way to essentially kill the project. Nothing's ever fully funded at the start. You do it in increments and steal a little from here and there to get the pot together. Then when Supervisor Mark Farrell came into office, he also would not initially allow that funding application to be sent in. There are residents in the Marina who don't want transit there. Fort Mason has essentially no Muni service. It has no Muni service from downtown, only from the western part of the city. And I think there are some people who just don't want anyone who would ride transit in their neighborhood. There are other people who are afraid of the line being extended along Marina Boulevard and having the catenary wires in their viewpoint. But that won't happen in your lifetime or mine. If, in fact, you extended the trolley line to the Presidio, just because of topography and where it would enter the Presidio, you would probably want the transit line to go down Chestnut Street anyway, and serve all those Chestnut Street merchants. But, at any rate, nothing's happened for the last three years and now that I am chairman of Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture, I'm trying to organize the Presidio, the Presidio Trust, Rec and Park, Crissy Field, Fort Mason, the National Maritime Historic Museum, to put some steam behind this. There's five million dollars in 1993's Prop K to extend the line to Fort Mason. Five million would get a good bit of engineering done for it. The total estimate three years ago was fifty million dollars. It's by far the cheapest capital expenditure in Muni's rail plan. So I'm cautiously optimistic that before I die, I want to get that done.

06-00:21:46

Holmes:

I wanted to ask you really quick if you could touch on a little bit of the maneuvering that both SPUR and Market Street Railway had to undertake to deal with the different stakeholders and interest groups to get these vintage streetcars back on the road and in full-time operation. Not just your merchants but also Muni and various parts of the city government, although many segments of the city were very supportive of it, particularly Mayor Dianne Feinstein. In 1983 when it began, that actually allowed the city to repair the aging cable cars, right, at that time?

06-00:22:36

Chappell:

A lot of tourists don't know the difference between the cable cars and the historic F-line trolleys because they're not used to transit. American tourists from most places aren't used to transit so it takes some of the burden off the cable cars. It brings prosperity to Castro Street merchants, bring tourists out there. But yeah. There are so many different constituencies in this city. I'm reminded of a development project in my neighborhood on Nineteenth Street in the Mission, and the architect and his little girl walked to the community meeting and he said, "We just live on Twenty-First Street." "Twenty-First



Street, that's not our neighborhood. This is Nineteenth Street." This tiny little city that we have eleven supervisorial districts, you only get to vote for the one in your district, and "your neighborhood is nothing like my neighborhood. They're totally different." And the other thing is timing. You go through an elaborate public participation process and by the time you're through the process there are new people in the neighborhood. And somebody who got off the plane yesterday looks at this and says, "You're rushing this through." SPUR's been working on bus rapid transit on Geary and Van Ness for at least fifteen years. There was a group of merchants who fought it on Geary for many years. They fought the subway going out there. It would have gone out there before it went down Third Street. And then there was a group of them who'd been fighting bus rapid transit. They have kind of gone away and now there's someone else who's come in, a person with some experience and some money, but just woke up after fifteen years of public participation, and he's trying to kill the project.

With the historic cars there was a group of people, and maybe there still are, who saw this as old-fashioned. There's certainly a group of people who don't like overhead wires. While overhead wires can be ugly they're also a commitment to a level-of-service. Where there are tracks and wires you know where the train is going to go. I was on a bus last night, on a route that makes a funny jog. The bus jogged and somebody ran up to the driver, "Where are we going?" And of course, rail transit can be much more comfortable than road transit. Steady acceleration, smooth grades, hopefully smooth track, and hopefully round wheels. But yeah. It's said that every bus stop in the city has a constituency.

06-00:26:14

Holmes:

Yeah, you mentioned that.

06-00:26:15

Chappell:

Yeah. One of the things in our Muni reform was to get this out of the Board of Supervisors because no change can happen if everyone has to approve everything.

06-00:26:31

Holmes:

As one who has studied and worked in urban planning for a number of decades, I was interested in your view of using vintage streetcars, trying to use that back to a historic city in lieu of, say, buses. I think one of Rick Laubscher's mottos is "Without us it would be a bus," right.

06-00:27:00

Chappell:

That's right.

06-00:27:01

Holmes:

One of his many kind of PR slogans that he put out. What is your thought on not just the future of this for San Francisco but also thinking broadly for some of the other more densely populated historic cities?

06-00:27:13  
Chappell:

I don't know how many vintage streetcars there are. I'm sure Rick Laubscher knows every one in the world and will try and buy them. They're so much classier, whether it's the Lisbon or Milan cars with their beautiful varnished wood interiors or even the PCC cars, the torpedo cars from the 1940s. They're comfortable, padded seats in many cases, beautiful in their own way, and some of them are actually very beautiful, the ones with the wooden interiors. It's a lot more fun to ride these than it is to ride the usual light rail vehicle. And also, being on the street instead of in the subway. If you're a tourist and if you have time, it certainly is a lot nicer to be on the street. In places like mid-Market, that has been on the skids for fifty years, you want people on the street. You want eyes on the street. It helps the safety and perception. When you look at the plans, the old maps of where rail lines used to go in this city, and other cities, it's unbelievable that we ever tore them out. Now, things have gotten so expensive. Rail and bus rapid transit both promise nearly the same level of service in terms of speed and frequency. But bus transit does not provide the same class and dignity that a streetcar does.

06-00:29:38  
Holmes:

Rick Laubscher is a member of SPUR. He has been on the board. Since 1995 or a little before, SPUR has worked almost in tandem in trying to advance the use of these historical streetcars. Have both worked almost in a complete partnership with Market Street Railway?

06-00:30:07  
Chappell:

So we have always been on the same page. We probably have not worked on it as much as we should. We've got fifty topics and Rick has one. But when the Prop K plan was being done, Gabe Metcalf was on the committee that allocated the money and wrote Prop K and that's why the five million dollars is in there for the extension to Fort Mason and there are other monies to upgrade the system and frequency.

06-00:30:54  
Holmes:

Because we know there's the F-line, which is mostly Market, the E-line, which runs along the Embarcadero. But are there other parts of the city that these lines are also going out to?

06-00:31:17  
Chappell:

There's nothing big in the works. There are some little operational track changes that may happen. Muni's having trouble running the E-line and the F-line at the end of the line, at Fisherman's Wharf, because they come in at different times and leave at different times. There needs to be a layover track there. Of course, if we extend it to Fort Mason, that problem will go away.

06-00:31:51  
Holmes:

Wow. That's another boon for the extension. Sticking with transportation, another project that SPUR undertook, or at least played a significant role in, was redoing the Transbay Terminal. Can you tell us a little bit about that, starting with the history of that terminal for our readers.

06-00:32:12  
Chappell:

I'll tell you a lot about it. More than you want to know, probably. [laughter]

06-00:32:16  
Holmes:

[laughter] You go right ahead.

06-00:32:17  
Chappell:

When the Bay Bridge was built in 1937, there was now the ability to bring the Key System over from the East Bay, which went all over Berkeley and Oakland. Unbelievable system that came over on the lower deck of the Bay Bridge. And so there needed to be a terminal on this side and the Transbay Terminal opened in 1939, designed by Timothy Pflueger, a noted art deco architect. It wasn't Timothy Pflueger's best work. One of the things about bus terminals and train terminals is that they have real technical requirements. Trains don't go uphill very well. And the ceilings in the Transbay Terminal, the ground floor ceiling, was very low and it was kind of a mean space, and it's not a space that you and I would go hang out in. The terminal was mostly used at the morning rush hour and the afternoon rush hour and so if you and I aren't hanging out there, who is hanging out there? People who don't have a choice. And this has happened with many transit stations, bus stations, train stations in America.

After World War II, as more and more people drove, and fewer and fewer people took the train, the Key System closed down in 1958 and AC Transit started serving the terminal. Muni, the city of San Francisco, put a requirement on AC Transit that they could not drive on San Francisco streets. The reason for this was that Muni was afraid of competition and they were looking out for their fare box. Well, when we did Proposition E in 1999, we obviated that problem, because we gave Muni a dedicated source of money. But AC very much liked being on these elevated bus ramps. They didn't have to fool around in traffic. But moreover, it was a free place for AC buses to park. Otherwise the buses probably would have gone back empty, deadheaded it's called, to Oakland. Bring people into the city in the morning and then sit the day out in a lot in Oakland or perhaps a lot South of Market. But at any rate, they'd have had to pay for a lot. This way they had free parking. And when the old Transbay Terminal was up and running there were hundreds of AC buses all on those ramps and the drivers sitting in them, loafing for the day. But, again, like the Muni turnaround at the foot of Mission Street, the terminal was nobody's destination. Most destinations were jobs mostly north of Market. In 1974 the BART Transbay Tube opened, and in 1994 a route to extend CalTrain from their terminal at Fourth Street downtown was selected. A big transportation study went on and they selected the Second and Mission site. So that was 1994.

I started at SPUR in the fall of 1994. I had been at EDAW prior to that. And EDAW had a wonderful program, their Summer Student Program that each year they would bring twelve students from different cities around the world to one of their offices to do a project. So 1995 was San Francisco's turn. And

so as I'm coming out the door of EDAW to SPUR, EDAW said, "What projects are happening in San Francisco, and what can we put the students on?" So the Transbay Terminal was a pretty easy choice because we saw it, as did anybody who was a planner, saw it not just as a terminal but as a huge generator of people and an anchor for a new neighborhood. The downtown plan had been done in 1985 and one of SPUR's many contributions to that was to have the highest zoning in the city at First and Howard. So twelve students came, two from Europe, one from Australia, one from Puerto Rico, and eight from various places around the country, and the drill was they'd spend half the summer all together in San Francisco working on a project. Then the second half of the summer they'd go out to different EDAW offices around the world and have a month or two experience working in an office.

So I said, "Here's the project and SPUR will be the client," because the city couldn't be a client. The city's a terrible client, especially for student work. They have rules and regulations. You'd have to have 500 public meetings before you could have an idea and all of this stuff. And we had six weeks and we're going to do a plan. SPUR board member Michael Alexander, who is a very active land use/transportation guy, took charge of this for SPUR and I rustled up department heads, planning studies, everything that had been done. We turned the SPUR meeting room into a library and workroom for half the summer. And the big idea that the students came up with was—they did a whole neighborhood plan from Market Street to south of the Bay Bridge and west to Moscone Center. Had a new arena, a new de Young Museum, which was going through its own traumas at that time and looking to relocate. And a new mixed use high-rise neighborhood. They put a park on the roof of the terminal, and in this park was this great vortex of a light well going down into the terminal. And the terminal being this great source of energy for the neighborhood, and taking people down to the trains.

So fast-forward a number of years when the terminal design competition occurred, the winning design, what does it have? It has a park on the roof and a light well that looks just like the vortex going down into the terminal. Now not to say that the architects copied anything. People are always saying, "Oh, some architect copied—" Architects don't do that. But I'm sure in the hundred reports they looked at when they were doing the design they saw this report and it's one of those subconscious things. The idea was so powerful and so right. That's what is happening. So that was 1995.

The next year, the city and other parties formed the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board and it's a joint powers board between San Francisco, Santa Clara Valley Transit, the VTA (Valley Transportation Authority), and SamTrans. And the joint powers authority's job was to bring CalTrain to downtown and to this location. And while it's those three entities, AC Transit really drove the program and they insisted they needed elevated bus ramps, and that the buses come into the terminal on an elevated level, because they wanted the free parking. How San Francisco rolled over, I don't know.

Somebody else was just smarter and more aggressive. At the present time, the ramp is being built, but because the future train tracks will be under it, there's an eighty million dollar cable-stayed bridge going a few hundred feet over the rail right-of-way.

06-00:43:19

Holmes: Oh, wow.

06-00:43:20

Chappell: Oh, wow. Yeah. Eighty million dollars. In 1999 there was a public vote to actually construct this terminal. And incidentally, there is a temporary bus terminal South of Market that is a city block with some little metal buildings in it. The buses are all outside. The Muni buses are along the street around it. Casual carpool pickup is along the street around it. And it works just fine.

06-00:44:00

Holmes: Without the eighty million dollar bridge.

06-00:44:04

Chappell: And without the three billion dollar terminal.

06-00:44:07

Holmes: Yes.

06-00:44:09

Chappell: But the terminal has other purposes. So we vote to have the terminal and one day a young woman by the name of Maria Ayerdi walks into my office and said, "I've just been hired by the mayor to be executive director of this new terminal." I said, "And *who* are you?" This is a multibillion dollar transportation, engineering, architecture—

06-00:44:57

Holmes: Landscape architecture, yeah.

06-00:44:59

Chappell: —really big project. And Maria said, "Oh, well, I was out to the movies with Willie Brown and he asked me if I'd like this job." Now, she was a lawyer. Very smart. She lasted eighteen years in the job. I gave her six months. She lasted eighteen years. She did a lot of things right. Not everything is right and the project is in the stage now that every project is going through, that it's way over budget. She got eased out this year. But in her severance package was the conditions that there will be a plaque in the building crediting her, a plaque "in a prominent location," not just a plaque, and that she would sit on the dais at the ribbon cutting and give a speech. Now, who do you think negotiated that? It was widely assumed that Willie has run this project from day one. But SPUR's always been committed to the project and I did everything I could to help her. I helped her set up the design competition, got the right design competition advisor hired, which is key because getting the right person to run it—this was a very expensive competition and you wanted the best architects

in the world. And as we learned in the design competition for Union Square, you have to have the right jury and the right mix of people.

Initially the list of proposers, there were four teams of architects and finance packages and developers. And then one of them dropped out and so there were three. So the committee made the selection and they selected a team with Hines the developer, Texas developer, César Pelli the architect, and Peter Walker Partners, the landscape architect. And the price that they agreed to pay the Transbay Joint Powers Authority for the development rights was about 75 percent more than either of the other two proposers. Now, had I been Hines at that time, I would have sure gone through the numbers and say, “Did we make a mistake? Can I withdraw from this?” because two other equally high-level professional firms figured they could not pay anything like Hines was going to pay. The reason that Hines obviously was selected was because of the money. And that’s the way of these things. There’s always the architect. But it’s the money. And, indeed, you’re the city or you’re the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, that’s all you can responsibly do. You’ve got to get the best financial deal.

06-00:49:13

Holmes:

And just to clarify. So when you say they were 75 percent more, meaning—

06-00:49:18

Chappell:

That they were going to pay for the land, buying the land—

06-00:49:22

Holmes:

Oh, wow. Okay. So their budget—

06-00:49:23

Chappell:

That is essentially what it is. It was just astounding. Well, fast-forward a couple of years and the old terminal was demolished in 2011.

06-00:49:38

Holmes:

The old terminal. Right.

06-00:49:41

Chappell:

Yeah.

06-00:49:42

Holmes:

Was there a homeless problem with that older terminal, too?

06-00:49:46

Chappell:

Very much so. Very much so. And yeah. Now those people have scattered out all over the city. It was immediately obvious when that terminal was torn down. So 2011, we’re in the Great Recession. The recession, at least for the San Francisco real estate market, peaked in December of 2011. That was the bottom of the market, at which point Hines negotiated the final contract with the city and dropped their price down to just slightly more than the other two developers. And the city did not attempt to renegotiate it with the other two developers. They just signed it. The city majorly got screwed on this. And I

talked with the guy who did the contract. He said, "Oh, we just didn't want to go through it again." Well, hundreds of millions of dollars were left lying on the table. The whole thing was kind of unbelievable. First they offered ridiculously too much money for it, and then they didn't.

06-00:51:25

Holmes:

And for a bureaucracy, if we think of the city that way, that seems to have tons of red tape in one area, this seems to be an example of the exact opposite.

06-00:51:37

Chappell:

Right. And what the backroom discussions were and who was involved in that, I don't know. But we will never know. Along the way, Hines couldn't afford to do the project anyway, and they partnered with Boston Properties. And Boston Properties is really the developer now. Hines maybe has a couple percent or something.

I want to digress because there's another important story that goes along here called 80 Natoma. 80 Natoma was a proposed condominium tower. Now, if you look at the street pattern of San Francisco there's Market Street, Mission Street, Howard Street. Between Mission and Howard there are two alleys. The first one, on the north, is Natoma, and then the next one, south, is Minna. That's where the terminal is, between Natoma and Minna. And, in fact, one of those, Natoma, is going to be where the Muni buses pull up and Minna is going to be cafes and pedestrian space. The terminal is four blocks long and these are 350-foot South of Market blocks. Three hundred and fifty feet in the long direction. So the terminal is 1400 feet long. And the terminal was designed to be located starting on the east side of Beale Street and bridging Beale, Fremont, and First, and ending just on the west side of First Street. Just off the west end of the terminal was this project called 80 Natoma. The project had been proposed a number of years before and had gone silent. It was not very believable. It was a fifty-story condo with 400 units in a neighborhood that was then terrible. The old bus ramps were called the "ring of death" by developers. You would never build anything inside of that ring because it was as bad a piece of land as you could get. Now, the developer could have been very smart and very prescient, had they imagined what this was going to be when the terminal was done. But he's selling condos with fifteen years of heavy construction going right around them. So how serious the proposal was this?...in some people's minds a question.

Meanwhile, the EIR/EIS on the terminal is being done. The developer never showed up at any of the public hearings, never said anything about it. The assumption was the project was dead, as many projects are proposed that aren't built. And in 2004 the terminal EIR/EIS comes out. The terminal had been moved a half a block west. It no longer started east of Beale. It started on the west side of Beale and it no longer went a just quarter of the way west of First, it went three-quarters of the way west of First, almost to Second, ending right on the 80 Natoma site. The developer then fences the site, moves in a

bulldozer, has guys working around there, and says he's ready to construct it tomorrow, or starting today. "We've already started construction." And so all this time while the EIR/EIS for the terminal had been going on, he'd been doing his plans. It was a full set of architectural plans. It was a real project by this time. Who moved the terminal so it would impinge on this property? Who thought this was not a train wreck? Excuse my—

06-00:56:27

Holmes: Pardon the pun.

06-00:56:28

Chappell:

The design of the building was on friction piles, which are either concrete or steel or wood piles that go into the ground but don't go down to bedrock. They were to go down something like seventy feet. And so initially the TJPA said, oh, well, the train tunnel will just go under this when we build it. Well, totally impossible without pre-designing for that, and the condo tower wasn't designed for that. I mean, there are high-rise buildings with trains under them in New York and other cities. It can be done, but has to be designed for that. Here's your tunnel and here's this fifty-story very heavy building on piles down there. Someday, the tracks are going to tunnel under these friction piles. Totally not possible. So there were three choices. The TJPA could abandon the project and not do the terminal; or they could pay part of the condo foundation costs and compel the developer to do piles down to bedrock and designed so that the train tunnel routes are left; or they could buy the property and the condo building would not be built. Well, they bought the property. It had been appraised for thirty-two million dollars as a piece of dirt. The developer certainly had a lot of money into it. He had several years of financing, full architecture/engineering plans, legal/environmental documents. Maybe he had ten million dollars into it. I don't know. Well, that gets us up to forty million dollars. He asked for 175 million, which included his imputed profit on the completed building. Well, of course, the building wasn't completed. It was a pile of blueprints. And the TJPA paid him eighty million dollars. Maybe something like forty million dollars of actual cost (if he actually had paid cash for the land, not likely) and forty million dollars for his time and trouble.

06-00:58:52

Holmes: Wow.

06-00:58:54

Chappell:

And then the question comes up, why was the terminal moved? Why, when they did that, was there no discussion of the proposed 80 Natoma project there?

06-00:59:11

Holmes: And to clarify, for that terminal to be moved, there would have to be an approval within the city to move that, is that correct?



06-00:59:18  
Chappell:

Well, the city is part of the TJPA. They're on the board. The city has two out of the five seats or whatever there. Yeah. This has never seen the light of day. It has never been in the paper discussed. And once in a while I'd say, "Am I imagining this? Am I crazy? Did this really happen? Was this a dream?" And then fast-forward to 2014 and I'm working to form the Community Benefit District that now includes the terminal site. And at some point the OCII, the Office of Community Infrastructure and Investment, the Successor Agency to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, shows up with this beautiful new rendered plan of the Transbay neighborhood, with every proposed building on it, the statistics, and so on, and they proudly bring this out in this meeting. And I look at it and I said, "You have the train terminal in the wrong location." It was back at the original location. These are some of the same people. The staff of OCII are just recycled from the Redevelopment Agency. Somebody who worked on it originally just pulled out the original plan and that's how they did it. So I said, "No, I didn't imagine this." [laughter]

06-01:00:57  
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

06-01:01:00  
Chappell:

So the next meeting they come out with a new rendering and I said, "Oh, you've moved the terminal." "Yeah, we've moved the terminal." No explanation. We'll come back to some more things.

06-01:01:16  
Holmes:

Yeah, that's amazing.

06-01:01:21  
Chappell:

So in 1996 the California High-Speed Rail Authority was formed. High-speed rail's been around a long time. I rode the Shinkansen in Japan forty-eight years ago. We've all traveled on high-speed rail in Europe. It's a no brainer.

06-01:01:48  
Holmes:

Particularly for a state like California.

06-01:01:51  
Chappell:

Yes. The airports are congested. The highways are congested. The plane flight from here to LA is horrible, and there are people who commute that every week. There have been many false starts over the years, going back many decades. There have been plans for high-speed rail. And, in fact, when I was working in Denver on their rail transit plan in the 1970s, one of the alternatives on the table was a high-speed rail connecting cities up and down the Colorado Front Range. And so finally the California High-Speed Rail Authority was formed in 1996. The destination, the assumption was San Diego to San Francisco and maybe a branch to Sacramento. There's certainly an affinity between these places. It would, my gosh, really change our lives. Friday night you leave work an hour early, get on the train, have dinner in Los Angeles, go to a show. Two hours and twenty minutes, center city to center

city. Four hundred and seventy miles, 220 miles an hour, I think it is. In 2008 we had a vote on bonds and the authority to issue \$68 billion in bonds and construction actually started in 2015. And the initial piece—I say the initial piece but it is San Francisco through the Central Valley to LA to Anaheim, south, and then—

06-01:04:10

Holmes: The phase one, as they call it.

06-01:04:10

Chappell: —San Diego. Yeah. The middle projection is seventy-five million riders a year. It's going to change the state. And while \$68 billion, and I'm sure it will be more, is a lot of money, in a way it's cheap at half the price because the cost of upgrading the airports and the highways to meet the 2025 demand is \$120 billion versus \$68 billion. It's very affordable. That being said, it has been hugely controversial. People have tried to knock it off track—excuse me—many times. There's a measure on this November's state ballot that would knock this and the delta tunnels off track, and say that there would have to be another vote before any bonds were sold. The anti-tax people hate high-speed rail. The anti-transit people hate it. The airlines and all the different highway lobbies hate it. And so do the anti-government people. The same way we abandoned transit in the city, we abandoned passenger railway stuff around the country. The car is "modern." Trains are "old-fashioned." Workers go on strike. We have to subsidize these things, as though we're not subsidizing the automobile, highway construction and everything else.

So SPUR was a prominent supporter of this and we went to hearings around the state and so on. Our real value-added was in two things. One was to try and get the route to go through the center of the towns in the Central Valley, where a whole new route was going to be picked. And not to go five miles out of town where the land was cheaper, which would have just induced sprawl and destroyed the center of those towns. The other thing we worked on is how to get the train from the Central Valley to the peninsula. There were some good and some bad choices there. And, of course—

06-01:07:06

Holmes: And that's no easy route either.

06-01:07:07

Chappell: No, it isn't. And San Jose very much, of course, wants the train to stop in San Jose. Just like when the railroads were built in the nineteenth century. If your town got missed by the railroad, that was the end of the town.

06-01:07:24

Holmes: Very much so.

06-01:07:26

Chappell: It's difficult getting high-speed rail from San Jose to San Francisco because it's very developed. It's going to be the CalTrain route and they're going to be

sharing track. Moreover, all those suburban towns on the peninsula developed around the CalTrain stations. They have nice little downtowns and the station is right there. And then suburbia spread out from there. The rail line goes through the backyards of some very expensive houses in San Mateo County. And, of course, those people don't want high-speed rail going through there.

San Francisco has been unbelievably quiet on this. The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco Travel, have said very little about this. Meanwhile, San Jose is working around the clock to try and get it to stop there. Oakland, of course, would like it to go up the other side of the peninsula to Oakland. On the maps they draw one branch into San Francisco and another branch to Oakland and then that branch taking off to Sacramento. That's definitely not in my lifetime. I've been thinking about this so long, imagining how easy it's going to be to get to LA. The Anaheim to San Francisco route will be completed in 2029 if it stays on schedule, at which time I will be eighty-six, so I won't be taking this train. [laughter] It sure is a game-changer.

06-01:09:30

Holmes:

And that route, to clarify, the route into San Francisco, maybe this might be part of why San Francisco seems a bit silent, because it would end at the new Transbay Terminal, correct?

06-01:09:41

Chappell:

Right. That's the terminus of it.

06-01:09:43

Holmes:

That's where it's coming in.

06-01:09:44

Chappell:

So it's not just moving CalTrain from Fourth Street now but it's high-speed rail.

06-01:09:51

Holmes:

Really quick, before we go back to high-speed rail, because that reminded me I wanted to just clarify on one aspect—so the final plan for that terminal is going to include high-speed rail. It's bringing in CalTrain and high-speed rail.

06-01:10:03

Chappell:

The tunnels are built under the terminal. They're there. The tunnels are underground; the rail passenger concourse and retail and Muni buses on the ground floor. Then there's an AC Transit concourse floor and then there's AC Transit buses and then a park on the roof.

06-01:10:26

Holmes:

A park on the roof.

06-01:10:26

Chappell:

The total terminal budget is \$2.6 billion, not including extending the train from the existing CalTrain terminal to the new Transbay Terminal, which is another \$5 billion, which there's no source for that money yet. San Francisco

just “loaned” the Transbay Joint Powers Authority \$260 million for the terminal that was supposed to go toward this, toward extending the track. And they’ve loaned it to the building because they’re short, and they’ll be short a lot more than \$260 million by the time it’s done. San Francisco has a \$9.6 billion budget this year, but there are many unfunded projects.

06-01:11:21

Holmes: There’s a lot of hands out, sure.

06-01:11:22

Chappell: During the period this is just a bus terminal, how are they going to rent all these retail spaces? How many shoppers are there going to be?

06-01:11:35

Holmes: Could you provide the readers kind of a layout of this terminal, to get a picture of all this? You described the number of levels for transit. We have a park on the roof, which would account for the public space. But there’s also residential towers? Am I correct on that? And some business space, as well?

06-01:11:55

Chappell: Okay. There was a lot of land where the former bus ramps were and the former spaghetti off the Bay Bridge into the Embarcadero Freeway. Caltrans transferred those to the city. The city has now sold all of those to private developers in order to fund the terminal. This was the rendered plan, I was speaking about—

06-01:12:37

Holmes: Exactly, yeah.

06-01:12:37

Chappell: Some of them are residential, some of them are office. One of them is retail in there. Six million square feet of office. Twenty-five thousand permanent jobs in those six million square feet. Forty-four hundred residential units, 27 percent of which, or 1200 of them, are affordable housing, permanently affordable. Hundred thousand square feet of retail. Eleven acres of parks. The park on the roof that is 5.4 acres and then another 6 acres of other parks in the neighborhood. New landscaping. Everything new. Roads, sidewalks, light fixtures, parklets, street trees, and so on. This is financed two ways. The terminal is financed by the sale of those properties. But a hundred percent of the money from the sale of those properties goes to the terminal. One hundred percent. So how do you pay for all this other stuff? Two ways. One is tax increment financing, which is the important redevelopment tool, even though the redevelopment agency is now gone. We can still do tax increment financing in the Transbay. Say you have a piece of property and it pays \$1 in tax today. When fully developed it’s going to pay \$10 in tax. You can bond against that \$10 in future taxes and bond against it for thirty years because it’s a guaranteed source of revenue. So then you get the money right away. But then you can spend that money in this redevelopment area instead of sending it to city hall. So all of that money goes for improvements in the neighborhood.

The other funding source is a Mello-Roos district, which is a benefit-assessment district where the property owners vote to assess themselves for improvements in the neighborhood. So the city drew this boundary of the Transbay district. But then the city also owned these Caltrans parcels. So the way the Mello-Roos district is set up is that if it's one of these city properties, it's in the district automatically because the city voted it in. The city was the only "person" who voted in the district because they only did that for their properties. When they sold these properties the Mello-Roos assessment went along with the property. But if you're any of the other properties in the neighborhood you, get a density bonus *if* you sign into the district and everybody's doing it. In the bad old days of redevelopment, in the 1960s and 1970s, there was massive federal money. So that's slum clearance. And now there's no federal money for anything. So it all has to be self-financed.

The route of high-speed rail and CalTrain that was picked in 1994, I have always thought it was the wrong route. It has three ninety degree turns in it. Trains don't make ninety degree turns very well at all.

06-01:16:46

Holmes:

No. Particularly at those speeds.

06-01:16:50

Chappell:

Yeah, right. They'll be going very, very slowly. And, of course, you can't do a broad arc because you're in the heart of the city, so the curves are going to be much tighter. So speed, wear and tear on the tracks, wear and tear on the wheels, noise, heat, not good. So Mayor Lee has a new plan that's being studied. There are various alternatives where the route peels off. But around Mission Bay, with a stop at the Warriors arena site and a stop at the ballpark, where it merges back into Third Street and continues. What we do with all the retail space before the train terminal comes, I don't know. And retail space in terminals is not always that successful, because people are in a hurry. You get a cup of coffee, you get a newspaper. Newspaper. There won't be newspapers by then. But it's hard to make a terminal a retail destination. Will the park ever get built is another question. If you were in charge of this development and you were hundreds of millions of dollars short, what's the easiest thing to cut?

06-01:18:40

Holmes:

Sure. Speaking of priorities and where it's going, how did that fit with, say, the priorities that SPUR was putting on the table?

06-01:18:58

Chappell:

Yeah. Well, good because it is intended to be a "complete" new neighborhood. That the economy has changed so much, it is being a success even without the terminal. We have a shortage of office space, we have a shortage of residential space. This was underutilized land. The fact that it's a series of discrete urban infill buildings is great because this is what a real neighborhood is. You don't

get a real neighborhood by wiping the slate clean the way redevelopment once operated. The heights are high, which is good.

06-01:20:03

Holmes:

Were there some further negotiations on that? We think of the slow growth and anti-growth movements, particularly here in this city. And even forcing Dianne Feinstein with the downtown plan during the 1980s, of capping those heights.

06-01:20:22

Chappell:

Yeah. Yeah. All while the anti-high-rise movement was going on in the 1980s, it happened. Downtown office space doubled in the 1980s, with no increase in parking. All of those buildings have no parking. And at the groundbreaking for One Rincon Hill, which is the tallest building on Rincon Hill, right on the edge of the bridge. Gavin Newsom is going there with his shovel digging and he said, "Boy, wait until the public finds out what's happening here. They're going to hate this." Well, not many people hate it. There's a new population here of younger people who have moved here because it's a city and they aren't afraid of cities. They want density. They don't want cars.

06-01:21:35

Holmes:

No. Yeah.

06-01:21:40

Chappell:

I think the neighborhood is generally turning out well. There are three buildings with bridges into the park and assuming the park gets built, they're the principal beneficiaries probably of that park. The park is seventy-five feet in the air. It's hard to get the public to go up. Vertical shopping centers, very hard to get people to go up, which is the reason Nordstrom's is on the top floor here, the top floors of that vertical shopping center, because you have to have a destination. In the expansion of that shopping center by Bloomingdales, the movie theaters are on the top floor. But the Crocker Galleria here has been a failure, and it's been redone, I think, three times and is about to get redone again to try and get people up to a third floor. You're going to have to make a deliberate decision to go to the park. If you're going up from the street, there's a funicular from the street, which means you and I are going to have to make a decision to get in a car with someone we don't know, with no driver in this car. Will people do that? The primary beneficiaries of the park are the people in the Salesforce tower, the Hines/Boston Properties Tower, a thousand feet tall. For a short time, the tallest building west of Chicago. Because their office workers are going to be up there and they're going to be looking down on the park. They go down in the elevator and there will be an elevator landing at the park level. And other people from buildings that aren't attached to the park will have to go down to the ground floor and go to the funicular or an elevator and then go up. So it's not clear how much the general public will use this.

Let's go back to the financing of this. And the deal as it was portrayed in the press, as the public understood it, as I understood it when that project was

selected, not only was Hines, the development company, going to pay nearly twice as much, three-quarters more than anybody else was paying for it—and that’s a “subtlety” the public wasn’t particularly interested in. But the popular selling point was that there was a park on the roof, that we were getting a free public park, and that the developer was going to build this and maintain it. And that’s absolutely how it was portrayed to the public. Well, as part of the final negotiation, the developer is not going to pay to build the park. You and I are paying to build the park. It was portrayed that the developer was going to maintain the park. However, when you actually go into the legal documents, they say that the developer will take the lead in forming a community benefit district to maintain the park. A Community Benefit District is the San Francisco name for a Business Improvement District. But since “business” is a dirty word in San Francisco we call them Community Benefit Districts.

And so fast-forward to 2012, ’13, ’14. I got hired, after I’d left SPUR, to form a Community Benefit District there. I had done Union Square and Yerba Buena when I was at SPUR, and then I’ve done several others since then. There are now a dozen in the city and more coming. And so we’re having community meetings and the developers and property owners show up. They’re interested in this. And Hines shows up, says, “We’re not going to pay for that. We’re not going to pay into it.” So not only did they not build the park, not only did they not take the lead in forming the Community Benefit District, they actively fought forming the district for two years, and kept the community from having a Community Benefit District that they really need in that neighborhood. It delayed them for two years.

The reason I have worked on Community Benefit Districts so much is this is the way cities are going to be managed in the twenty-first century. It’s the ultimate in grassroots democracy. The neighbors get together, property owners and business owners, condo owners if there are condos, and determine if they want a district, where they want it to be, what services they want, and how much they’re willing to pay. So there’s a long period of figuring this out, and community participation, and then there’s an election, and it’s an election campaign like any election campaign. And people vote. And if they vote “yes” it happens. And then everyone within the boundary gets swept in with it, whether they voted “yes” or “no.” But you have to get the votes. And then you form a board of directors, you form a nonprofit corporation, you hire an executive director. You know who the executive director is. You have her phone number. If she’s not doing her job you fire her. So while people vote “no” on new taxes, they almost always vote “yes” on these districts. And then the districts have a timeframe on them and now we’re trying to do them for fifteen years. Started out five years and that was not long enough. And they virtually always are very easy to renew because after people have had the services, they love them. And the services generally are three things. Clean. So there are street sweepers out there, people emptying the trash, power washing sidewalks, and so on. Safe. There are community guides, they’re called different names in different places. In Union Square it’s helping tourists

find things, but it's also helping the street population, and trying to get them into social services. Many of the workers have been formerly homeless people themselves. And it's very tough to get people into services, but that's one of the things they try. And then they're the eyes and ears of the police, too, and can call the police when there's an actual police matter. Marketing is the third typical service. Neighborhood identity. The board of realtors call the areas that are Rincon Hill and Transbay, they call it Mission Bay. It's a long way and very different from Mission Bay. So it's trying to create an identity for the neighborhood. That was very important in Yerba Buena in that CBD, because nobody knew what Yerba Buena was.

06-01:30:35

Holmes:

Yeah. It was a term used in the nineteenth century heavily and then even early twentieth century but then it just stops.

06-01:30:44

Chappell:

Yeah, yeah. Other cities do much more in their benefit districts. In Philadelphia, the transit district pays the BID to build new terminals, new bus shelters and so on. In Rincon Hill, the CBD is doing park maintenance and all the street tree maintenance because the city gave up maintaining street trees.

06-01:31:19

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

06-01:31:20

Chappell:

There's a measure on the November San Francisco ballot to get the city to take it back because it was so unpopular. But the district there—

06-01:31:27

Holmes:

That's a lot.

06-01:31:28

Chappell:

—will do it. Dealing with Hines and Boston Properties has been very disappointing. They're out-of-town developers and they have acted like they're on their way *out* of town. You don't do this if you're going to be around. But they are going to be around because they're doing other projects. They're extremely unpopular with the other developers because most of the big developers here are really responsible. And you have to be. You're dealing in a city. There are just some extraordinary people. Oz Erickson was chairman of the SPUR board when we built the Urban Center, and raised most of the money for it. Extremely generous. He was doing a project. He did several projects in Rincon Hill. But he was doing one that, on the map, the Planning Department had done a plan some years before and they'd colored his lot "green" for a park. And he said, "Well, the people are really expecting the park there. I'll just build on half of this and I'll build the park." He built the park. The Rec and Park Department wouldn't accept it because they said, "We can't afford new parks. We don't have any money for maintenance." So he has given the park, Emerald Park, to the Parks Alliance, non-profit group, and is paying to maintain it in perpetuity. He said, "Those people in the



neighborhood, they were promised a park by the Planning Department. I'm going to do this for them."

06-01:33:34

Holmes:

Well, as one who has sat on a number of boards over the decades, and selection committees, or at least helping advise the selection of good plans, did the Transbay experience raise the question of—it's not just about selecting the best plan but also maybe a company that's actually here in town, so that there's some local accountability?

06-01:34:07

Chappell:

We have made it so hard to develop in San Francisco that only the biggest, wealthiest developers can operate here. Otherwise you get killed. And even Hines, one of the biggest in the country, or the world probably, couldn't pull off the Transbay, as it lagged for years and years and years, and they had to get in a bigger partner. It's the same thing with the Bloomingdale's shopping mall. It started out Forest City, and they could not hold on through the ten years of lawsuits and everything, and had to get another developer in on that. Developers from out of town can't believe what they have to go through here. There was just a recent case where a developer who actually lives here, but most of his stuff was in the suburbs, proposed a housing development in the Mission and said, "Well, I'm not going to use union labor." A complete non-starter. There's no way that the Board of Supervisors would ever permit a project that didn't use union labor. He learned. And other people learn, too. The responsible developers are disgusted, and have said so in the paper, about the conduct of Hines and Boston Properties.

I've worked on another CBD, that hasn't formed yet, that Boston Properties strung us along for years and then said, "No, we won't be in it." And developers in general have a bad name. There's a lot of misunderstanding. There are good developers and there are bad developers, the ones who do great projects, the ones who don't do great projects. There are ones who are civically responsible. There are ones that aren't. But by and large the ones in San Francisco are very responsible. You have to be to do business. I was in a meeting with developers the other day and there's one amateur, the rest are all pros. And this is a guy who just happens to own a piece of land he wants to develop. We were talking about some of the policies and what he would have to do. He said, "Why would I ever do that?" And one of the biggest developers in the city says, "Because that's what you do in San Francisco. This is the place you're operating in, and this is what you do." That guy was so eloquent about his commitment to affordable housing and it absolutely was legit. All a developer is, is a middle man. A developer is an assembler. They see a piece of land, they see a demand, a market for something. They assemble the land, the architect, the engineer, the environmental consultants, the attorneys, and the money. The money does not come from developers. The money comes from—

06-01:38:17

Holmes: Finance.

06-01:38:18

Chappell: —financiers. And they are mostly, in this country, insurance companies and union pension funds, because that's who's sitting on money that they have to invest and make some interest on it. So the developer has a fiduciary responsibility to their financier and the financiers have a fiduciary responsibility to their constituents, whether it's their people who buy insurance policies from them, or retired schoolteachers. There's this myth in America. "The log cabin and the family farm." In fact, that's a myth. People lived in log cabins for a very short period of time and very few people. But there have always been developers. You look at ruins in ancient Rome, and there are apartment houses built by developers. There are some few people, always, who build their own house or cause their own house to be built. But, by and large, someone else is doing that, and it takes a huge imagination, a huge tolerance for risk. Most developers go bankrupt at least once in their lifetime, if not many times. Donald Trump goes bankrupt every time it's convenient, apparently.

06-01:40:04

Holmes: [laughter] Yes.

06-01:40:05

Chappell: And you look at everything that's built in San Francisco, with the exception of public projects, of which we have some great ones, but these have all been built by a developer. People talk about "greedy developers" wanting more housing units on the site. Well, the developer's not going to live in those housing units. They only have the same baby making equipment anyone else has. They are built to fill a demand. If the demand isn't there, the developer goes bankrupt. These are for other people who want them. I mentioned Oz Erickson. He has done so much for the city. This park was one thing. We'll talk about later what he's done for affordable housing in the city. When somebody in San Francisco says "Oz," they're talking about Oz Erickson. And I remember the first time I was in a Board of Supervisors hearing and the subject was something about housing, and Tom Ammiano, who is this left-wing anti-developer kind of progressive supervisor, he's up there on the dais saying, "Well, Oz says this," and "Oz says that." He's teaching his other supervisors about housing that he's learned from Oz, and that he trusts because he's a guy who's absolutely straight-arrow.

06-01:42:03

Holmes: I know that we've touched on a number of points in regard to neighborhood planning, which I think we should go to next. But before we completely leave the Transbay, I can't help, but of course, ask about the sinking tower. When we think of a new development such as the Transbay—if that's not just the icing on the cake of a project that has so many twists and turns and then now one of the towers is sinking and tilting.

06-01:42:40  
Chappell:

So there are several ways to build on squishy soil.

06-01:42:51  
Holmes:

Which San Francisco has a lot of.

06-01:42:52  
Chappell:

Yes. This building, the SPUR Urban Center, is on a concrete mat and it's ten or fifteen feet thick, and that's it. We're sitting there. The Ferry Building, by contrast, is on a concrete mat that I think is—I forget, but I think it's a hundred feet thick, and then it has piles going down into the muck. Not going to bedrock. And that's been there for a hundred years, right. Hundred and ten years or more. It was before the 1906 earthquake. Eighteen nineties, I guess. So a little light building like SPUR, you can be on a mat. The heavier buildings, including right across the street, thirty-some-story St. Regis Hotel, is on a concrete mat with piles that are going down seventy feet, ninety feet, something. Friction piles that hold it up by the mud around it. And that building has no problems. The soil here is better. This was the beach. The Millennium Tower was the bay. So the soil is better here. There's plenty of water under here. Moscone Center underground is a concrete boat. The pumps are running twenty-four seven on that, pumping the water out. Another method is you can put pilings down to bedrock. Most buildings are friction piles not to bedrock. That's the standard. Now, there are several things different about the Millennium Tower. One is it's definitely on former bay land. The second is it's a very tall building. It's about fifty-eight stories or something. This one across the street is thirty-five or something like that. And the third thing is, it's a reinforced concrete building, which is many, many times heavier than a steel building. So those three things alone might have been the perfect storm. And they are a good, responsible developer, they had good architects, good engineers. People say, "Oh, they were trying to do it on the cheap." Not true. Everything, in every building, you scrutinize the cost of everything and pick what is going to be—there's some combination of the best to meet the needs of the building and the right price. And clearly it was a wrong decision.

Now, let's go back to the 80 Natoma story. The architect of 80 Natoma said they were well aware that they were next to the Transbay Terminal, where the trains are going to be underground, before they moved the terminal onto the site, before that they were next to it. And he said they fully anticipated walling it off so when they dewatered the site for the terminal they would not be dewatering under 80 Natoma. So when the Millennium developer says the sinking is being caused by the dewatering under the site by the Transbay Terminal, there's maybe something to that. How well has the Transbay Terminal protected the adjoining properties? And we don't know that yet. Astoundingly, Supervisor Aaron Peskin, who likes to get in the muck, if I may, has suggested that the city is at fault for the building department not properly supervising this, which is an astounding thing for a city supervisor to say because he has now opened up the city to liability. What is the remedy? Don't

know if there is a remedy. Now, on a small building when there are foundation problems, they can inject some combination of mud and cement or concrete under the building and try and get it leveled. I don't think you do that with a fifty-eight story building. There may be no remedy, or, if they stop construction on the Transbay Terminal and figure out the dewatering and protect the building, the sinking may stop. I don't think anybody knows. I don't think anybody knows what the remedy is. I was talking to another developer the other day who said, "Oh, boy, now's the time to buy in the Millennium. If you're an all cash buyer and it's your last house, there's blood in the water, and those are going to go cheap."

06-01:49:32

Holmes: That's probably true. Yeah.

06-01:49:35

Chappell: But you have to be willing to take some risk to do that. In the meantime, you can't finance a unit there. Serious problem.

06-01:49:48

Holmes: Yeah, especially for the developer of that building. That's a very serious problem.

06-01:49:53

Chappell: The same architect who is the architect of the 80 Natoma project on friction piles is now doing another building adjoining the Transbay Terminal, and going down to bedrock. This is all in hindsight to the Millennium issue, which has been known for some amount of time.

06-01:50:23

Holmes: We have a little bit of time left. I wanted to—

06-01:50:28

Chappell: Oh, I have lots of things I could talk about.

06-01:50:30

Holmes: Yeah. I wanted to talk a little bit and touch on our conversations, which stem from, of course, the Transbay, of neighborhood planning. I know you've been touching on a little bit of that. How have SPUR's priorities and viewpoint really changed? If we think of neighborhood development, going back a number of decades, when we're thinking of redevelopment, slum clearance, right, that's a dark spot, I think, in the history particularly of the city and others. How have the priorities and vision of neighborhood planning really developed since, just even recently during your tenure here at SPUR?

06-01:51:15

Chappell: Well, certainly we're today a follower of Jane Jacobs, not of Le Corbusier, and that cities change. They're a living organism, but they change in organic, small-scale ways. That urban infill is selective. Infill is what we need to do. We need to be building transportation as we're building other things. The port lands along the southeast part of San Francisco, as they are developing rapidly,

the city has funded hundreds of millions of dollars of transportation improvements that will be happening in the next five years, and will actually be in there before many of these developments open. Certainly public participation is key. You don't do anything without the advice and consent of the neighbors, as it should be. One of the problems in San Francisco is that this takes so long, and that by the time the project then is actually getting built, it's a new set of neighbors.

06-01:53:14

Holmes: You were mentioning that, yeah.

06-01:53:15

Chappell: I'm looking to new technology tools to allow people to participate. If you were at the Planning Commission last night, the people there do not look like you and me. They are people who can come there at 12:00 noon every Thursday and stay there until eight, nine, ten o'clock at night. And the vast majority of the public doesn't participate. The city has a lot of sunshine rules and conflict of interest rules that really misunderstand what a conflict of interest is. It used to be that the president of the Planning Commission came from SPUR and was often the chairman of SPUR. Now, if a SPUR board member's appointed to the Planning Commission they have to go off the SPUR board.

06-01:54:43

Holmes: Interesting.

06-01:54:45

Chappell: The city's idea of conflict of interest is that anyone who knows anything is disqualified, and only people who don't know anything can participate. The Planning Commission used to, and should, go around and see projects together. You don't read an EIR and understand the neighborhood, and understand how this is. Now no more than three commissioners can even discuss the project off-line. So this is reality TV happening, and nobody knows where anybody else is on the project, and they've not been able to see it. The Board of Supervisors used to go out for drinks and dinner in the middle of every supervisory meeting and the city attorney would go with them just to make sure everything was okay. They never talk to each other anymore. It's quite unfortunate.

06-01:56:10

Holmes: And also, it seems, as one who has studied a lot in history about how discussions take place, how, dare I say deals, but negotiations develop. Common ground is met. It seems like those kind of rules not only undercut that process but it's also undercutting a sense of community for those who are in those seats of governance, as well.

06-01:56:34

Chappell: Right. Yeah. Every year the SPUR board goes on a trip to a different city and when we were in Vancouver—and, of course, Canadian culture is very

different from ours. Our constitution says “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Theirs is “peace, tranquility, and good governance.” Very different. Very different. And we were meeting with the planning director and talking about the planning process. They don’t have a planning commission. When you study planning history, when zoning and planning were first being developed, at the last minute this idea of a commission got invented, to have citizens providing a check and balance on government. In Vancouver, three individuals sit together and make the decisions. The planning director, the public works director, somebody else, I’m not sure. And there’s a committee of five citizens who are invited, and the same five knowledgeable citizens who are invited to these meetings can comment. Three professionals are making professional decisions about development. One of our SPUR board members said, “Well, what happens if the mayor calls up?” And the planning director said, “Why, that would be rude, wouldn’t it?” [laughter]

06-01:58:42

Holmes: No, certainly—

06-01:58:44

Chappell: The worst thing about everything being so political in San Francisco is that it does cut out the common man. As I said, it’s only the biggest, wealthiest developers who can develop here. In our effort to be democratic we’ve become less democratic. Can we have a way to participate online in a public hearing? I don’t know. At the last election, a professor on the planning faculty at San Francisco State, his students wrote a measure, that they actually got on the ballot, that would have required all meetings to take place online, as well as live. And it would have been unworkable because one of the things was that everyone who sent in a question online during the meeting had to be answered. Where are they? Are they in San Francisco or are they in Texas?

06-02:00:11

Holmes: Yeah, that’s a problem.

06-02:00:12

Chappell: So there are things that weren’t worked out. But someday those will get worked out. Because it’s a very small group of people who participate and they’re invariably one-issue people or one-neighborhood.

06-02:00:39

Holmes: And these are issues that, then again, affect the entire public at large.

06-02:00:44

Chappell: Right.

06-02:00:45

Holmes: Which, I think, that’s where we’ll hit on a little bit next time. That might be a good place to stop for today.

06-02:00:50

Chappell: Okay.

06-02:00:51

Holmes: All right. Thanks, Jim.

Interview 7: October 12, 2016

07-00:00:06

Holmes: This is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today is October 12, 2016 and we are sitting down for our seventh session with Jim Chappell here at SPUR headquarters in beautiful San Francisco. Jim, thanks for sitting down with us once again.

07-00:00:23

Chappell: Sure.

07-00:00:25

Holmes: In our last session we were finishing up talking about transportation and its role in city and neighborhood planning. I thought we should finish up discussing that topic by talking about the Central Freeway in San Francisco, because I know during your time at SPUR, there was a lot of replanning and dealing with that aspect.

07-00:00:51

Chappell: There sure was. And it goes back to 1948 when Caltrans did a freeway plan that had freeways all over San Francisco. And this is where the Embarcadero Freeway came from, and the Central Freeway was another one of those that took off from U.S. 101, I-80 at Mission Street, and was to go north up the Franklin-Gough corridor. And it got built about a mile to Fell Street, and that's when people saw how terrible these were. The Embarcadero Freeway was a double-deck freeway. And it stopped. It opened in 1959, and the freeway revolt started in 1959, and so this Central Freeway stub was left. And it really divided neighborhoods. It divided the Civic Center neighborhood from what's now called Hayes Valley, although it was the Western Addition. Racially it divided the city. And none of the prosperity from the east went past the Central Freeway. In fact, it was a site of crime, prostitution, noisy, ugly, dangerous. It made no sense. But nothing really happened until the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989, when it was seriously damaged.

In 1992 Caltrans started to demolish the upper deck, and demolished more a couple of years later. And when people saw the possibility of this, it was very exciting. Interestingly, I-280, all the way down to San Mateo County, was also badly damaged but Caltrans knew what would happen if they ever tore it down. They wouldn't be able to build it back. So they retrofitted it in place. When you look at the structure, it's a Band-Aid job. But they weren't going to risk not having their freeway.

People started to imagine the possibility for the Hayes Valley neighborhood of not having the Central Freeway there. However, there was also a group in the western part of the city, in Richmond and the Sunset, called the San Francisco

Neighborhood Association, although it did not represent the Hayes Valley neighborhood. And this was two Chinese immigrant women, and not the old Cantonese Chinese from Chinatown, but this is a new group of recent immigrants, and they had a radio show in Chinese. So other people didn't really realize what was happening with this group. They called for the rebuilding of the freeway because, they said, "We're not going to be able to get to our houses if we don't have a freeway." And Willie Brown gave them some support and, in fact, Caltrans reopened the lower deck of the Central Freeway after it had already been closed. So in November 1997, the San Francisco Neighborhood Association put a proposition, Proposition H, on the ballot that called for retrofitting the lower deck and building a parallel lower deck so the freeway would operate in both directions. The only person on the Board of Supervisors speaking out against this was Michael Yaki, who had been Nancy Pelosi's chief of staff and then was a supervisor from the western part of the city. SPUR campaigned against this measure, of course, but it passed with a 53 percent vote. So close.

The mayor and the supervisors had formed a citizen taskforce and the chairman of that was Steve Taber, who was a SPUR board member, an attorney, a transit activist, one of the active people in our Muni reform. Another leader of the taskforce was Eph Hirsch, a SPUR member and civil engineer. And they had done a plan for a landscaped parkway. So a year later, in November 1998, they put Proposition E on the ballot, that repealed the San Francisco Neighborhood Association's plan and called for the building of this landscaped parkway. And it passed by 53 percent. So close in both cases. So the city began detailed design of this parkway.

One year later, there were two *competing* measures on the ballot. Proposition I was put on by the supervisors to reaffirm the parkway plan, and Proposition J by the San Francisco Neighborhood Association to rebuild the freeway. And that measure said that Proposition J could only be repealed by a two-thirds vote. So they were going to try and permanently stop the parkway. As it happened, Proposition I passed with 54 percent, and Proposition J was defeated with 53 percent "no" votes. I guess that's a landslide in politics these days. It was the right result but it was a terrible civic failure, to go through ballot box planning four times on the same issue, and re-voting on the measure. A lot of the blame can go to the mayor and the supervisors who had formed this taskforce, and for four years they essentially ignored the recommendations of it, and let a rump community group take over. Interestingly, one of the two founders of the Neighborhood Association ended up in jail for absconding with city funds that were intended for a community center. So they haven't been heard from again.

The result is really quite wonderful. First of all, the city has gotten tens of millions of dollars selling the land, the former freeway land. There are thousands of housing units that have been built and are being built. The parkway was designed by Allan Jacobs and his wife Elizabeth Macdonald.



Allan had been planning director in the early 1970s in San Francisco and then was dean of the planning department at U.C. Berkeley for many years. He was also the juror on the San Francisco Prize design competition for Union Square who walked out in a fit of pique. And he's written a couple of books. *Great Streets* in 1995, about how the purpose of streets is more than to move traffic, and historically streets have always been social spaces, and it's only after the Second World War that the car became king, and we forgot how streets should be designed. He later did *The Boulevard Book* and, of course, Octavia Boulevard is one of the featured boulevards in it. He has made a third or fourth career out of converting streets around the world into boulevards.

We also used Octavia Boulevard, as it's now called, as a subject for another San Francisco Prize design competition. It was for prototypical housing on these lots. Well, they're mostly very narrow lots, some of them as narrow as fifteen feet.

07-00:10:36  
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

07-00:10:38  
Chappell:

I proposed this competition and the Planning Department wasn't interested. Nobody was interested. So I went to see Gavin Newsom about it, and he said, "Oh, yeah. Do it." And he assigned a bright young staffer, Rich Hillis, to figure out how to do this competition. Rich is now the executive director at Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture. Rich figured out that the city could actually do this competition, and meet all the city's hidebound regulations about selecting contractors, if the city scored developer proposals and one of the criteria would be if they followed the results of the competition. And so there's one building that's pretty much exactly as it was in the competition that's been built, and there's another one coming along. All of the buildings are much better architecture than you normally get in the city. That's been a great success. There has been a whole renaissance of Hayes Valley. There's a wonderful little park named after a neighborhood activist who was on the frontline of fighting the freeway rebuild, and, unfortunately, died before the parkway was completed. A nice park. Hayes Valley is now destination retail, very high-end clothes stores, boutiques, restaurants. So both removing a bad influence and building a fine one.

07-00:12:49  
Holmes:

I wanted to ask you a little about that, too. The Central Freeway is built during those 1950s, which is the high-tide of urban renewal, urban reconstruction. And that it went directly through, essentially, an impoverished African American community, which if we look at urban history across the United States—

07-00:13:10  
Chappell:

That's not accidental.

07-00:13:12

Holmes: No, no. That's exactly the neighborhoods they seem to select. What you're describing now is almost a mending of the neighborhood, right?

07-00:13:23

Chappell: It absolutely is. Yeah. A lot of architects live in the neighborhood. There are a lot of gay people in the neighborhood who were willing to break some rules, and to push the envelope. It has really paid off.

07-00:14:02

Holmes: I also wanted to ask you what is your view on the politics of this? Because here we have the freeway revolt. So you can say by the 1960s it was stopped. But then it largely stood stagnant for three decades. And then when there is a push that, hey, we should do something about this, there seems to be SPUR taking a lead, along with other citizen groups, to push for reform or to push for a new type of development while the mayor's office and the supervisors are maybe in favor, put together a taskforce, yet didn't seem to advance anything in a more positive direction.

07-00:14:47

Chappell: Yeah. Once something's built it's very hard to tear it down. Big change is hard. Incremental change is not so hard. When London burned, what was that, 1668 or something, Christopher Wren did a new plan for the city, totally remapping the city. None of it happened. The city government just wanted to get the tax ratables back on the books so they could keep the city going. The same thing happened in Berkeley after the 1991 Berkeley fire. A few regulations got changed but not very much. The same inaccessible road pattern is in the hills that was there originally. The firetrap has been recreated. Incremental change is just easier. And it comes out of the Federal Highway Administration. Once they build something they're very loathe to change it. So things get built that are very dangerous, but it's very hard to go back in and change it. Just institutional sclerosis.

Willie Brown was, of course, very smart, very powerful. He was never very interested in city building. He could have done a lot more if he'd been more attuned. Mission Bay got done, the ballpark got done, which might not have gotten done under other people. But to him, those were real estate deals. I think they weren't "community building" to him. And why the supervisors weren't more interested? One problem, of course, is we have district supervisors and each one just represents their own little neighborhood. Then there are other people who love their cars and love freeways, and think that they need this. We're having a fight now on Stockton Street. It has been closed for a couple years for construction of the subway station next to Macy's, and at Christmastime they've come in and rolled in plastic grass and made it a pedestrian space, and it's wildly successful and people want to continue that. Rose Pak, the late Rose Pak, started fighting it because she imagined it was going to hurt Chinatown merchants. It's a one-way street *away from* Chinatown. The traffic studies say it will add thirty seconds to your

trip to the freeway. But just this perverse idea that freeways, roads, important things; pedestrians, not so important.

07-00:18:54

Holmes:

Well, I think that also highlights, particularly for SPUR and the essence of urban planning, the diverse stakeholders and politics and community interests that one has to navigate to try to get this stuff done.

07-00:19:08

Chappell:

Right. Interestingly, there's a recent study on CEQA by an attorney by the name of Jennifer Hernandez, who's an environmental attorney, a pro-environmental attorney. Was on the Presidio Trust, and she has studied CEQA lawsuits. Eighty percent of CEQA lawsuits are on urban infill projects, not in the pristine wilderness that CEQA was meant to protect. Infill projects, which are, by definition, environmentally superior to building in green fields. And 49 percent of the lawsuits are against public projects, roads, schools, libraries, art museums. They're not against nuclear power plants.

07-00:20:12

Holmes:

Interesting.

07-00:20:13

Chappell:

[laughter] They're against public projects. Her conclusion is CEQA doesn't protect the environment, it protects the status quo. That's true.

07-00:20:27

Holmes:

Yeah. And certainly the case when we think of the Central Freeway, in a lot of ways, that it is much easier, for a variety of stakeholders, to keep things in place. Then people would also, I guess, complain about the nuisance or the inconvenience of all the construction, which we've seen in other projects here in the city. On that same note, I thought we could move along to thinking of communities and the use of urban space to parks and open space and cultural facilities, which I know you've been very involved in. Now, you also taught for quite a bit on that within urban planning and the use of open space.

07-00:21:22

Chappell:

Yeah. A lot of my career has been parks and open space planning. I originally wanted to be a landscape architect, and one of my uncles who was an architect said, "Oh, you don't want to be a landscape architect. When the building's done, it's already over budget, and they just throw a couple of shrubs in." Unfortunately there is some truth in that. But I worked for many years for Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd and then for EDAW, two of the most prominent landscape architecture firms in the world, and did a lot of parks planning. And then I taught for twenty-five or thirty years at UC Extension, a course called "Gardens, Parks, and Urban Open Spaces," which is a history and theory of open space planning. That is a very interesting program because it's a certificate program in landscape architecture, which means there are no entrance requirements, but there are exit requirements. It's fully accredited and it counts the same as a regular Berkeley degree in landscape architecture

towards licensing. It tends to attract mid-career people who are upping their credentials. So they're serious and they're adults, and it is really nice. When I started teaching the course, it was twenty-four contact hours, and then by popular request it went up to thirty-six, and then to seventy-two contact hours.

07-00:23:10

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

07-00:23:12

Chappell:

It was a big commitment on my time. I've taught at California College of Arts and Crafts (now California College of Arts), at the Academy of Art University, at the San Francisco Architectural Club, and before that at Denver University and the University of Colorado and the University of Northern Colorado. When I was in Philadelphia I was a grad assistant at the University of Pennsylvania. So I've always taught. I love teaching. It keeps you sharp. Students are learning new things that I then needed to keep up. You can't fool students. And just seeing bright young people inspired is really great. I follow their careers. People are always stopping me on the street and saying, "I took your course." I just got a note from a woman in Texas who looked me up and said, "I took your course," and filled me in on what she's doing in her life. It is really, really nice. It was a huge amount of work. It was one evening completely gone and then every Sunday I would spend preparing for class. My partner Jim Jeong kept the books, corrected the quizzes.

07-00:25:13

Holmes:

Well, that's a nice team effort.

07-00:25:15

Chappell:

Every once in a while he'll hear a name and say, "That name's familiar. Was she a student of yours?" He remembers.

07-00:25:26

Holmes:

That's quite a dedicated teaching assistant, right?

07-00:25:29

Chappell:

Yes.

07-00:25:29

Holmes:

There's a lot of professors in grad school who would be jealous of that kind of assistant [laughter]

07-00:25:31

Chappell:

Yeah. [laughter]

07-00:25:37

Holmes:

So that background also seemed to really dovetail obviously with your work at SPUR in a variety of ways. SPUR had long been an advocate for public parks and the use of that space in San Francisco, which in an urban setting like San Francisco that is geographically limited, such is at times really an uphill battle.

07-00:26:05  
Chappell:

And as SPUR is promoting urban infill, you've got to think about the open space.

07-00:26:17  
Holmes:

I know in 1997 SPUR began to put together a community parks taskforce to address this and to try to advance more of that park development and open space in San Francisco.

07-00:26:31  
Chappell:

Yeah. The product of that effort is called the Parks Plan. It's not a physical plan but a strategic plan. It was headed by two people, Anne Halsted, who has been chairman of the board at SPUR, and was a member of the first Open Space Committee in the city, which budgets and plans for new parks, and has been on the Rec and Park commission. And then there was Isabel Wade. Isabel Wade is a PhD forester and she's the person who formed Friends of the Urban Forest. She was also the cofounder of the AIDS Memorial Grove, and then founded this organization called the Neighborhood Parks Council, which was formed to be a consortium of advocacy groups for every neighborhood park in the city. Anne and Isabel put together this taskforce of a couple of hundred people, of knowledgeable invited people. Parks professionals, city government people, community leaders. And it was a six-month effort, and there were four taskforces on it, each one with a paid staff member and each one with a community leader. There was a conditions assessment team that was led by Roz Payne, who is a prominent real estate owner in the city, and a SPUR board member. Supervisor Newsom headed the policy group. Roberta Achtenberg, who was a former supervisor, former deputy director of HUD and at the time was public policy director of the chamber of commerce. She did the funding piece. And then Jim Lazarus did the management piece.

The Parks Plan is a call to action. Just saying we need to up our game and parks need to be beautiful, they need to be fun, they need to be well-funded. The plan lists a bunch of specific policies that the department should undertake, one of which was building a stronger staff at rec and park. Rec and Park has been a political dumping ground for many years. One of the reasons, and one of the things that we recommended be changed and ultimately did get changed, was that the rec and park commissioners got free tickets to the 49ers football games. That's why many of them wanted to be commissioners and stayed commissioners. Crazy. Just political payoff. Many of the Rec and Park commissioners were just political appointments, people with no knowledge or ability or interest in the subject. By contrast, when the SPUR board went on a trip to Vancouver, the head of the parks department is a PhD forester. What a difference. So this document became marching orders for the Neighborhood Parks Council for the next fifteen or more years and ultimately the Neighborhood Parks Council, on a recommendation from SPUR and the Parks Trust, have merged into a group that's now called the Parks Alliance, which works on park improvement and park funding. And Jim Lazarus has just been elected chairman of their board. So the document has lived on.

Its immediate effect, though, was two ballot measures that were put on in March of 2013. Proposition A was \$110 million bond for neighborhood parks. This was the first neighborhood parks bond in fifty-three years.

07-00:31:50

Holmes: Oh, wow.

07-00:31:53

Chappell: These measures were written by Jim Lazarus and Gavin Newsom and Gavin carried them. Key to passing that bond was the reforms in Proposition C that extended the Open Space Fund, established a citizens advisory committee to monitor things, and had a number of detailed mechanisms in it to make sure the bond would work, and that the money would be spent right, and that the rec and park department would get better. This is Jim Lazarus's deep understanding of how to turn the wheels of government. And since then, we have passed two other parks bonds that have been great successes. The parks have never looked better in terms of being redone. The maintenance is still very underfunded.

07-00:33:09

Holmes: Well speaking of funding, particularly with these ballot measures, I know—and correct me if I'm wrong—but the report assessed it was about \$390 million needed for these improvements—

07-00:33:25

Chappell: Yeah.

07-00:33:26

Holmes: —as well as further land acquisitions and development?

07-00:33:32

Chappell: Yeah, yeah. So the bond passed with a 79 percent “yes” vote.

07-00:33:40

Holmes: Oh, wow. That's a big difference than the freeway.

07-00:33:43

Chappell: Prop C passed with seventy-four percent. Why they were a little different I don't know. They both passed well. Yeah. In terms of funding, we did another report that Rec and Park asked us to do in 2011, I want to say, *Seeking Green*. This was all about funding and it was the report that recommended merging the Neighborhood Parks Council and the Parks Trust into the Parks Alliance. It goes into three sources of funding: public money, which has got to be the biggest piece; philanthropy; and then earned revenue. One of the things that Prop C did was it allowed the rec and park department to keep revenue that they earn instead of sending it back to city hall. It also put rec and park in charge of construction of parks instead of DPW. DPW does lots of things and parks was just one of them. And now there's—

07-00:34:59

Holmes: And was that the Department of Public Works?

07-00:35:00

Chappell: Yeah, yeah.

07-00:35:02

Holmes: Perhaps you could discuss the open space acquisitions for the development of new parks. We put this along the Central Freeway. It seems like this is very much a new vision of—I don't think urban renewal may be the term but an urban kind of redevelopment. Could you talk maybe about some of the examples of that? Of using these new mechanisms to purchase perhaps vacant lots and develop them into more community parks.

07-00:35:43

Chappell: Yeah. Rec and Park has gone through a phase where they not only would not develop any new parks, you couldn't give them a park. I think we talked about Emerald Park on Rincon Hill last time. Oz Erickson tried to give this park, build it and give it to the city, and they wouldn't take it because they couldn't maintain it. And so he has built the park and given it to the Parks Alliance, and Emerald Fund is paying for its maintenance in perpetuity. Some neighborhoods do better than others at this. Scott Wiener, the supervisor in the Castro, Noe Valley, has gotten Rec and Park to buy a parking lot on 24<sup>th</sup> St. in Noe Valley, and Noe Plaza is about to open there now. I don't know how that happened. This was at the same time they wouldn't take Emerald Park. It probably has to do with who lives in the neighborhood and how much money they have.

07-00:37:30

Holmes: Perhaps.

07-00:37:30

Chappell: The city is buying a disused reservoir site in Russian Hill for a park, in a neighborhood that is already rich with parks. The neighbors are throwing in some money but not much. But they're wealthy, influential neighbors and it's a site that could have been built with 40 percent of the site housing. That would support building a park on the remaining 60 percent of it. But it's going to be a hundred percent park in a location that isn't very much in need of one. It's close to Fort Mason, close to the Presidio, close to several small parks on Russian Hill.

07-00:38:42

Holmes: Is that one of the challenges of not just thinking of how do we maintain the parks we have as a city but, in thinking of new parks, there seems to be a disparity of wealthier communities want more parks and where they're most needed, perhaps in your lower income communities, the space isn't used for that.

07-00:39:05  
Chappell:

Yeah. Most of the parks in the city are in the northern and western parts of the city. And South of Market, which never was very residential—there's always been some residential area, and that is in dire need of parks. The Department of Real Estate recently did a study, and they're in the process now of buying a site in SoMa. It's a site that has a commercial building on it with a tenant that has a fifteen-year lease. So nothing's going to happen there for twenty years. And, meanwhile, there's a lot of residential development happening in the neighborhood. So it's a question of equity. It's a question of politics.

Mission Bay has forty acres of parks because that was under a single ownership and a redevelopment area. Yerba Buena Gardens has a fifteen-acre park. That was also a redevelopment area, and owned by the city. The Transbay plans have maybe a five-acre park on the roof of the Transbay Terminal and another six acres of parks, the largest where the temporary bus station is. But those are massive land assembly projects. And short of that, it's hard to get a site together. It's hard to get the money together. The Open Space Fund is supposed to be for the purchase of new sites. In fact, it gets raided for capital construction. We raided it for Union Square Park.

07-00:41:25  
Holmes:

That's interesting. But then there also seems to be, perhaps where the parks are, questions of access. Right? You would think these are neighborhood parks but where a neighborhood and nearby park are located don't always mesh. You also want them convenient for others to travel to, right?

07-00:41:45  
Chappell:

Right.

07-00:41:45  
Holmes:

Thinking of access and that connection, this was another issue that SPUR tried to address of not just thinking about parks but also cultural facilities, as well.

07-00:42:01  
Chappell:

Yeah. And we'll talk a little later about the de Young Museum. But our interest in cultural facilities arose out of what was happening in Golden Gate Park to the Academy and the de Young. A woman who had been chairman of SPUR and was on the SPUR board, Beverly Mills, really took the leadership on this. And she had done some consulting work for Rec and Park and came to the realization that the prosperous part of Golden Gate Park was the eastern end where the institutions were, because that's what drew people into the park. It wasn't just the park but it was what was happening there. And we saw this deadlock on the de Young and Golden Gate Park because people really didn't understand the importance of cultural institutions and, moreover, what they need to thrive. The master plan for Golden Gate Park called the museums "non-conforming uses." What? Non-conforming uses? Access was a problem for the de Young, for the Academy of Sciences, for Fort Mason today. And the MTA planning maps, for instance, show Fort Mason as a blank. It doesn't



exist because it was a military base until the 1970s, and they've never caught up. It's federal property so they don't recognize that there are buildings there. They don't recognize there are any people there. Fort Mason draws 1.2 million people a year. It's the second biggest draw in the city and has almost no Muni service because, according to MTA maps, it doesn't exist.

Similarly, at this time the new main library was under construction and the planning was going on to reuse the old main library as the Asian Art Museum. The historic preservation people were fighting that. A library is a place where you sit in one place and you're quiet. Or at least it used to be. A museum you need to circulate through it. Totally different needs and yet people didn't want anything changed in that.

So Beverly put together this three-day workshop, and we brought experts from around the country, and then had testimony by the executive directors of many major and minor cultural institutions in the city, to see what they need and what we could diagnose. We got the statistics on the economic contributions of the arts in the city, and it's huge. It's a major economic engine. Yet the city government didn't really recognize this, and the public was pretty uneven in their understanding. And it became apparent that transportation was key to every one of these institutions. It's how you get people there. And site affinities, what do you need. If you look back, before Davies Hall was built, when there was just the opera house, there weren't any restaurants in the neighborhood, because they couldn't survive when there are only performances half a year. It took until Davies Hall was there, that there's just this explosion then of restaurants, because there's something going on every night of the year.

The whole idea of transportation management was a big thing that we realized, that the cultural institutions need to be a part of and be interested. For many years the opera had a government affairs person who thought everyone drove there and needed to drive. As the neighborhood is changing, as Hayes Valley is developing, what were once parking lots were becoming buildings. And we worked very hard to get them to understand that it's transportation management. Early on, we said "get a contract with Super Shuttle to pick up your patrons at home, take them to a restaurant, then they walk to the opera house and the shuttle takes them home afterwards." Well, this has just started happening in the past year with not Super Shuttle but a private bus company in the city called Chariot. They started to do that. And, in fact, yesterday, we at Fort Mason Center, just got a deal with Chariot, that when we lease space to events, that they can then contract with Chariot to pick up patrons. And, of course, Uber and Lyft have massively changed that. It used to be that when you went to the opera and you wanted a taxi to pick you up afterwards, you had to sign up on a list. And so they had a line, a taxi line, and there would be no taxis. Now the only problem is finding out which Uber is yours. There are so many. There'll be hundreds of Ubers there at the end of a performance.

07-00:49:34

Holmes: Oh, wow.

07-00:49:33

Chappell: We really worked a lot with those major cultural institutions to get them to understand it's the whole experience. Cultural institutions think about the performance but it's from the minute you leave home for the whole evening until you get back. The MTA thinks about the buses and the DPW thinks about—but it's the whole experience and the cultural institutions really need support from the city. We said there should be a shuttle in Golden Gate Park and there's now a shuttle in Golden Gate Park that takes you—I think one goes one direction, one goes the other—to all of the major features in the park. We also said there should be a cultural shuttle in the city and that many cities have them—the transportation consultant that we had on the team for that charrette said, "It'll never work. It'll never pay for itself." The city actually did it and it didn't work. It didn't pay for itself. There just weren't enough people.

07-00:50:59

Holmes: Have there also been, outside of, say, shuttles and then also from the cultural institution side, an effort of trying to coordinate with buses or Uber now?

07-00:51:11

Chappell: Yeah. So there now is a Chariot from a couple of BART stations to the Civic Center. Or, now when you buy a season ticket you can get a season parking pass in the city garage. A lot has changed in the transportation world. And a lot is changing, too, in neighborhood development for and around the cultural institutions. The city has, since Mayor Christopher's time, had grants for the arts program that directly supports arts organizations. But now the Office of Economic and Workforce Development has grants for cultural institutions, planning grants, and they put money into neighborhood beautification projects. On Valencia Street, they've widened the sidewalks, planted street trees. On Divisadero, which was one of the ugliest streets in the city, they put in major landscaping a few years ago and it has blossomed with clubs and restaurants. Friday night is amazing. Never thought that would have happened. There is now an entertainment commission that supports the nightclubs and being sure that residential development doesn't force out nightclubs. Very active on Folsom Street, South of Market, where there are a lot of clubs. When residential development is built they make sure they have extra soundproofing and some of the residential developers have soundproofed the clubs. Purchasers of condos need to sign that they know that there's a club there so they can't complain afterwards. The city has gotten it and arts groups have gotten it.

07-00:54:25

Holmes: In many ways, that's just a great example of how you could take three to four different facets of planning and when they merge together, the success you could have from beautification and access.

07-00:54:03  
Chappell:

Yeah. The Community Benefit District movement that I've done a lot of. Boy, the Civic Center arts institutions really wanted that. And every night that there's a performance there are these guys walking around the neighborhood in gray sports coats and gray fedoras. Just the eyes and ears on the street.

07-00:55:05  
Holmes:

Oh, that's great.

07-00:55:07  
Chappell:

Last weekend was the Market Street Prototyping Festival. This is the second one that was held. Basically, Market Street has been under redesign for years. It was supposed to be finished in 2013. There isn't even a plan yet. Because of that, the Planning Department has started this prototyping festival, which is art projects on the street for a weekend. The planning principle is called "triangulation." Not a surveyor's or a geometrician's triangulation, but the idea that you have some feature that causes two people who are otherwise strangers to interact. It can be a statue, it can be a fountain, it can be a clown. But to create things in the public realm to increase human interaction. So there is a lot going on.

Last year I did a report for SPUR on Saint James Park in San Jose, which is a failed urban park, failed because of the land uses that are and are not around it, and a bunch of bad decisions. It's a management study on how to re-manage and how to re-fund the park.

07-00:56:56  
Holmes:

Can you give some of the highlights of that report? What were some of the flaws that you saw in San Jose on that park?

07-00:57:03  
Chappell:

So San Jose is very suburban. Here's this park with three or four actually great historic buildings around it and then a parking garage. Then they put a road through the middle of the park and then they put the trolley on the road through the middle of the park. They had a senior center in the park, sort of 1950s senior center that drew loads of people. The parks department, thinking like people here think about Golden Gate Park as a Victorian pleasure ground, they said, "Tear out the senior center," so they tore out the senior center so now nobody goes to the park except with their shopping cart.

07-00:58:09  
Holmes:

Wow. That example really shows the importance of planning. So since starting this new discussion on parks and access in the fall of 1998, from workshop to recommendations, you've been able to see, what, almost two decades of progress and advancement on that front.

07-00:58:35  
Chappell:

Yeah. And doing that report got SPUR into the conversation, got me into the conversation with arts organizations. Came to see what we could offer.

07-00:58:54

Holmes:

Which is actually an important bridge that you helped build because a lot of times people would look at SPUR as like, "Well, this isn't a neighborhood project," right? It shows SPUR's expansive reach in urban planning. You mentioned the de Young Museum and the Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park. Maybe you want to discuss those projects a bit. Now, I know they're situated in Golden Gate Park and these projects happened almost simultaneously. But perhaps maybe we could start with the de Young.

07-00:59:47

Chappell:

Yeah. The de Young Museum harkens back to the Midwinter Exposition of 1894, and then opened as the de Young Museum in 1895. It grew topsy-turvy over the years and was badly damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. In fact, they built a steel exoskeleton around it to keep the walls from falling down. It had never been a great museum in terms of collection or building. And they are related.

07-01:00:39

Holmes:

That's true.

07-01:01:39

Chappell:

Where people give their art. Then after the earthquake, they lost their insurance, so they couldn't insure traveling shows. For better or for worse, blockbuster shows are what keep museums going these days. So the de Young, which is a public-private institution, put a bond on the November 1996 ballot, Proposition B, and it was a \$73 million general obligation bond to build a new museum, and then there was to be an accompanying \$44 million in private fundraising. So a museum with a 400-car parking garage in the basement. And there was immediate opposition from parks people saying the museum doesn't belong in the park. It is this idea that this is a Victorian pleasure ground. When Golden Gate Park was designed in 1871 it was following the model of Central Park and Frederick Law Olmsted, and that's what was appropriate at the time. A park was a place to escape from the horrors of the Victorian city: smoke, and noise, and traffic conditions. It was a place for ladies to stroll on Sunday afternoon in their finery. No buildings. Many people continued to believe that's what a park is. Well, the success of Golden Gate Park is it has changed and adapted through many different eras, many styles of recreation. How we recreate today is different than how we recreated in 1890. The cultural institutions in the park are major reasons that people go to the park. It's not just for outdoor recreation.

So we have this crazy system in California where minority rules, and that is on a tax measure like this bond you have to have a 66 2/3 percent "yes" vote, which means 33 1/3 plus one can trump 66 2/3. And, lo and behold, this bond got a 63 percent vote. So, despite being a majority vote, it was not enough. So the trustees of the museum regrouped. Harry Parker was the director at the time. He had been director of the Dallas Museum, and they built a new museum downtown, and it was a great success and, of course, there was the

model here of the Museum of Modern Art, which totally changed its stripes when it moved from the Civic Center to a new building at Yerba Buena.

Remember last week, we talked about the SPUR-EDAW summer student program on Transbay and the students had suggested moving the de Young to the Transbay neighborhood. Well Willie Brown had picked up on that and said they and the Academy should both move there. But the Fine Arts Museums trustees did the right thing and they hired Paul Sedway to do a location study. Paul was a SPUR board member, and I think of him as the dean of American planning. He's a very influential, very smart planner. So he looked at the museum and sites around the city and said, "Indeed, they should move downtown, and they could increase attendance by 75 percent just by being accessible." It's an hour from downtown on the bus to the de Young Museum. It's more like two hours from Hunters Point. We're working on speeding up the buses by taking out some stops, but the way it is now there's a stop every block pretty much, and you get through one change of traffic light and one block at a time. So the trustees in the fall of 1997 voted to move.

Almost immediately, the "Coalition to Keep the de Young at Golden Gate Park" was formed. Some of the same people who had defeated the bond measure because they wanted the de Young out of the park now decided the museum has to stay in the park. A woman by the name of Margaret Brodtkin, who is a children's advocate, stood up and said, "Children cannot be allowed to go to downtown San Francisco." A total misunderstanding of cities, as well as human nature. "That dangerous, terrible place called downtown. Children cannot be allowed to go there." And so the trustees took a poll, and 80 percent of the people polled said the de Young has to stay in Golden Gate Park. Talk about being between a rock and a hard place. So the trustees then voted to stay in the park.

So then there were two measures put on the ballot in June of 1998. Proposition A, which was a \$90 million bond, and then \$44 million in private money to build a new museum in the park. So the only thing that had happened in eighteen months was the price of the museum went up. And then Proposition J, which authorized a privately funded underground parking garage, with some selective road closures. It was not, unfortunately we found out later, very tightly written. So this was 1998 and this was when we did our SPUR cultural study, watching this soap opera unfold.

07-01:08:50

Holmes: Was there a vote in '97, as well?

07-01:08:54

Chappell: No.

07-01:08:55

Holmes: No, okay. It's hard to keep track. [laughter]

07-01:08:58  
Chappell:

Yeah. It's hard to keep track. That's right. A month before the election, the supervisors passed a totally unrelated ordinance that said that landlords could pass the cost of bonds onto their tenants for one year. Why one year? I don't know. Well, this guaranteed that no bonds would get passed in the city. The city is two-thirds renters. They're a very strong voice at the polls. And sure enough, Proposition A, the bond, was defeated. It was 64 percent "yes" and they needed 66 and 2/3. The other thing that came up was studies were going on about Laguna Honda Hospital. This is the only city in the country with a public nursing home, Laguna Honda Hospital, and the hospital was in danger of losing its license, because it didn't meet modern standards. It's a very good facility. It was wards. It wasn't private rooms. The federal government has no standards for wards anymore. So it had to be rebuilt. And so this campaign started, "Old people versus old art."

07-01:10:53  
Holmes:

Oh, wow.

07-01:10:53  
Chappell:

A very populist campaign. And so between "in the park," our "Victorian pleasure ground," "out of the park," "old art" and "transportation," Proposition A was defeated. Interestingly, Proposition J, the privately funded parking garage, passed. It was 58 percent "yes." Because it would be privately funded it just needed to be 50 percent. So as the votes were counted that night, Dede Wilsey, chairman of the board of the Fine Arts Museums, stands up and says, "We're going to raise the money ourselves privately." Harry Parker blanched. Holy smokes, this is a lot of money. And so they went through their studies, had a budget of \$165 million. Board members went on a trip around the world to pick an architect, and they got to Basel, and they met these two guys, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, Herzog & de Meuron, who'd never built a building in this country. Now they since have done many and subsequently won the Pritzker Prize. The trustees were so taken with these people they canceled the rest of their trip and they selected them. I have to say, they did a really brilliant design. One of the things they're experts at is surface treatments, which is not a big subject in modern architecture. The museum is clad in copper and it is a patterned copper. They photographed the shadows of leaves in Golden Gate Park on the grass and this is embossed in the thousands of copper panels on the outside of the museum, no two of which are alike. So it's changing and mottling all the time. And, of course, copper is a material that's changing in color all the time also. The building fits very well into the topography, and is an informal nonsymmetrical kind of building, very appropriate for a park setting.

07-01:13:48  
Holmes:

Does it have a spiral tower, as well?

07-01:13:41

Chappell:

That became a source of great controversy. Yes, it has this tower. And because the architects understood that the park was not a good location for the museum. If you can't see it, you don't know to go there. So like a medieval cathedral with its spire, they put this tower on it. Indeed, it is brilliant because you can see the museum from all over. You go up the tower, which is free, and you can see the Palace of the Legion of Honor, the sister museum of the de Young. From the Legion then you can look out and see the de Young. It's very intellectual. Yes, the tower interestingly twists. Again, it's a very intellectual idea because the road network in the park and the road network in the city are not parallel. They're different. And so at the bottom the tower is parallel to the road network in the park and at the top it's parallel to the road network in the city. It twists. And so it's all quite romantic. When the design came out, it was published in the *Chronicle*, a very small black and white rendering that was kind of abstract. It was kind of an abstract rendering to begin with. But that didn't do anybody any favors, and people immediately hated this building. "It's modern, it's not Spanish colonial. Who are these people? It's going to be an ugly dark material. And the tower. Oh, my gosh, the tower. This will ruin the park forever." And so this went on for 115 public meetings.

07-01:16:35

Holmes:

Wow.

07-01:16:36

Chappell:

Lawsuits. Finally in 2002 the Board of Supervisors got to vote on it and the de Young did an excellent job of organizing the public but had to go through this horrendous process. Two women on the project team, Deborah Frieden and Caroline McMillan, they got the Rainbow Coalition out to support this. The opposition were a hundred percent old and white. The museum had children, they had minorities, they had artists. Ruth Asawa sculpted a tower for part of her testimony. And they came up with the idea that the tower would be the children's education tower, that's where the classrooms will go. No one could attack the tower without attacking children. Completely crazy, but that stopped people in their tracks.

07-01:17:54

Holmes:

Oh, very strategic.

07-01:17:56

Chappell:

People were unable to differentiate between the use by the children, and the building form of the tower. And all through this, Dede Wilsey was at every single meeting. Unbelievable. Not only is she a very wealthy arts patron, but she's a very smart and successful businessperson. She would have been successful if she'd never inherited any money. She'd have made it herself. Just taking such abuse from a hostile public. Warren Hellman also came to some of those meetings, but Dede was at every single one. So was Harry Parker. So many years of my time, and years of their time.

I remember one of the meetings someone stood up and said, "Those rich trustees, they're going to have parties in that tower." And Dede Wilsey and I looked at each other and we said, "I hope so." [laughter] In fact, Dede threw a very nice party for SPUR up in that tower.

07-01:19:20

Holmes: Oh, nice.

07-01:19:20

Chappell: The tower is free, as is part of the ground floor of the museum. And I think the de Young has changed the future of public architecture in the city. For all the fighting there was over it, there's hardly been a peep of criticism since it's been built. It is an enormous success, and it's a very friendly building, and easy to use and great for showing art. It's now the eighth most visited museum in the country, and it wasn't even on the list before. And they've gotten enormous donations of art. Dede went out and she and Harry raised the money. It was twelve years since the first ballot until it opened in 2008, I think. It's partly the changing population of San Francisco. Young millennials are not afraid of modernity. They're not afraid of cities, they're not afraid of high-rise buildings. The opposition cost you and me, the taxpayers and the donor public, millions and millions of dollars. The one good thing that happened is they raised the money while times were good and, because of the lawsuits, they signed the construction contracts in a recession. So they saved a lot of money on that.

07-01:21:18

Holmes: I read someplace that Dede raised something in the ballpark of about \$200 million for this.

07-01:21:23

Chappell: Yeah, \$200 million is what it was. Yeah.

07-01:21:24

Holmes: Wow.

07-01:21:25

Chappell: Yeah. She's tough. She's very tough.

07-01:21:32

Holmes: What was SPUR's role in the de Young reconstruction and then, of course, subsequent public fight on this?

07-01:21:50

Chappell: They tapped me to be the public face of the responsible public. So I was at many, many of those hearings, meetings, writing newspaper editorials. In San Francisco, we have empowered people who know nothing. And I have been on enough juries judging architecture that I know you don't make a judgment from a rendering, much less a tiny black and white rendering in the paper. That you really have to look at the plans, and be able to read plans, and understand what this is going to be like. We don't do much in terms of art



education in our society, and people do not understand architecture. And people do not have imaginations. It's not something we develop in our education. It's interesting that any expensive house or condo in San Francisco is staged because people cannot imagine what it could be like. So people spend \$20,000 to have furniture in an apartment for two weeks [laughter] on the theory that they can sell it for \$50,000 more than with their old junk in it.

07-01:23:55

Holmes:

You had mentioned that initially yourself, as well as other members of SPUR, thought that the Transbay location most likely would have been more ideal than the park.

07-01:24:12

Chappell:

Certainly anyplace with transportation. The de Young, two-thirds of their patrons are regional. And the Academy is a state institution. It's the California Academy of Sciences and draws people from all over.

07-01:24:38

Holmes:

So it was an access issue.

07-01:24:41

Chappell:

Yeah, yeah. The sites that Paul Sedway had picked for the de Young, the first choice was the block just north of Embarcadero Center, between Embarcadero and Washington. It's where the down-ramps from the Embarcadero Freeway were. So here's this piece of vacant land looking out at the bay. Very iconic location across from the Ferry Building, which was then under re-construction. The second choice was Piers 27-29, right on the water. How about that for a dynamite location? Both in easy walking distance from BART.

07-01:25:32

Holmes:

Well, and streetcars. [laughter]

07-01:25:34

Chappell:

Yeah, right. That's right.

07-01:25:38

Holmes:

Well, while we had this huge public discussion about the de Young,—of course, the Academy of Sciences was simultaneously in the mix.

07-01:25:49

Chappell:

Yeah. And the Academy was three or four years behind the de Young, so they got to learn from the mistakes, or at least knew what they were going to be up against when they started. Like the de Young, it was a building that had grown like topsy and was a mess of a building even before the earthquake. And then in the earthquake, pipes broke, which isn't very good if you're an aquarium. So in March 2000—this was three-and-a-half years after the first de Young bond vote—there was an \$87 million bond on the ballot for the Academy. They needed 66 2/3 percent "yes." They got sixty-seven. Phew. Just sneaked by. It was a different call than "old art." It was "kids." Their poster for the "yes" on the measure was a baby seal. Who can hate a baby seal?

07-01:27:09

Holmes: How can you vote against a baby seal?

07-01:27:11

Chappell: Cute, fuzzy. And kids. Every kid who went to school here was taken to the Academy, so at least those people had a connection. It got the same pushback about transportation. It got the same pushback about buildings in the park. But they got to their 67 percent. Their architect was Renzo Piano, who is Milanese, and the most charming, personable, poetic guy you ever want to meet. He's a superb architect, but he could also sell you the Brooklyn Bridge, and speaks in these great poetic terms about—a community center is how he described it. This was a very expensive building. I think it was \$488 million. They set up a leading citizen's committee right from the beginning that I was on. I would go to these meetings, and these fundraising events, and here were these bearded professors with their tweed sport coats with leather patches on the elbows. How are these people ever going to raise the money? I didn't believe they could do it. And, boy, they did it. The director, Pat Kociolek, Bill Wilson, who was a developer, Dick Bingham, prominent society attorney, boy, they did it.

07-01:29:10

Holmes: Well, you also had, from my reading, too, George Montgomery, who was from a prominent family in San Francisco.

07-01:29:17

Chappell: Yeah. When they announced this, I think SPUR, we were about the first people to salute. We came right out very strongly in favor of it. And it is a totally new building sold as a remodel. There was one wing of the building called Africa Hall, which was filled with dioramas of moth-eaten lions. At one of these citizen meetings, one of the prominent NIMBYs in the city said, "Oh, you've got to save Africa Hall. I remember that when I was a kid." And I'm thinking, "No kid today is going to give a hoot about stuffed lions." Indeed—it's the least active room in the museum—to make it active they put penguins, the penguin exhibit, African penguins in that room. That's the only reason you go in, because penguins are so great to watch.

07-01:30:52

Holmes: Everybody likes penguins, yeah.

07-01:30:53

Chappell: In fact, they said we're going to save Africa Hall. And they saved one wall of it. One wall. Then they rebuilt it to look like it used to, with a fake plaster art ceiling and everything. But the whole building was sold as a remodel.

07-01:31:16

Holmes: It was a complete new construction.

- 07-01:31:19  
Chappell: Complete reconstruction except for that one wall. While they were under construction, they moved the Academy to a temporary location downtown. Children survived as far as I know. No one died.
- 07-01:31:42  
Holmes: [laughter] Dangerous downtown!
- 07-01:31:34  
Chappell: Yeah. It is a great building. It is interesting. It has always been interesting to me. The de Young was accused of looking like an airport. The Academy looks much more like an airport than the de Young does. It's formal Beaux-Arts. Modern but Beaux-Arts, symmetrical, very formal. But I guess the architecture maybe is more accessible, it's more recognizable as a familiar building form. People see buildings that look like that all the time. It has a green roof which is a selling point with the public. It may not really be environmentally such a good thing. It just skated through the public process with very little opposition.
- 07-01:32:44  
Holmes: And the funding scheme on that—was that a mixture of public and private?
- 07-01:32:51  
Chappell: Oh, yeah. Yeah.
- 07-01:32:53  
Holmes: Because I know they had to do some fundraising.
- 07-01:32:55  
Chappell: Oh, yeah. It was mostly private money. And it's an interesting thing because it's a state institution but a city bond.
- 07-01:33:02  
Holmes: Yeah, that's where I was confused.
- 07-01:33:03  
Chappell: That's a little funny but it is here. As it was happening, and since, I often have wondered why did the de Young have such a hard time and the Academy had such a relatively easy time. Yeah.
- 07-01:33:23  
Holmes: That was one of my questions. Yeah.
- 07-01:33:23  
Chappell: Yeah. I think part of it is the opposition was exhausted. They'd been out with their pitchforks six nights a week for four years. And I asked one of the opponents why he was doing this, a fairly prominent person. I said, "Why are you doing this?" He said, "Because I can." And not only that, he proudly said, "I have never been in an art museum." So this very populist kind of thing. But we have empowered people in this city. We listen to them, we give them airtime. When the Fisher Museum was proposed in the Presidio, there were

lots of people who opposed that for lots of different reasons. But one of the leaders of that told me, she said, "I don't like modern art." And that was a reason to oppose this, because she didn't like modern art. "I like pictures of flowers."

07-01:34:50

Holmes: Fruit baskets.

07-01:34:54

Chappell: It was the fuzzy animals at the Academy, the children at the Academy. Every school kid has been there. It wasn't old art. It was young kids. The architecture of the Academy, I think, is easier to understand than the de Young. It looks like a regular building. A very sophisticated regular building, but a regular building.

07-01:35:25

Holmes: In thinking about this, as well, it seems like art versus fuzzy animals and a planetarium. It's really pulling on, I guess, the interests of a larger section of the city. And that it's been there in Golden Gate Park since 1916 and so there are the field trips, that attachment that I think the de Young may have been missing. Because part of this was the parking garage. Am I correct in that it serves both?

07-01:36:07

Chappell: Yeah. This is another soap opera. The 1996 first de Young bond was to have a 400-car garage under the de Young. When, the second time, when the proposition for the de Young failed but the proposition for a privately funded garage passed, it was described as an underground garage under the concourse that would serve both the de Young and the Academy. And, in fact, it never was to be under the concourse. It was to be under the roads that are around the concourse so it's close to the museums. One pod is close to the de Young and the other pod is close to the Academy. You enter the buildings through these garages. And clearly you can't invite millions of people to a facility and not let them get there. It is such a long bus ride.

Part of the other setting is that the roads in the eastern end of Golden Gate Park have been closed on Sundays since the early 1970s. So the de Young and the Academy, their biggest attendance is on Saturday when people could get there. Every other museum in the country, the biggest attendance is on Sunday, because a lot of people work on Saturday. And Saturday's errand day and Sunday's play day. So there were people who were agitated about this parking garage, fearing it was going to destroy the concourse. They also wanted to close the roads on Saturday. So two propositions were put on the ballot in 2000. Proposition F was put on by signature and it said that the Saturday closures would start January 1, 2001. Then the supervisors, at the behest of the two institutions, put on Proposition G, which said that the roads will be closed on Saturday six months after the garage opens, which only made sense. And, indeed, both measures were defeated, which is often what happens when you

put two competing measures on. So the result was they continued planning this underground garage. It was a public-private partnership because it's public land. The Golden Gate Park Concourse Authority was formed as a non-profit, with a non-profit board of directors. Warren Hellman was supposed to raise the money for the garage. And Warren said to me, "This is impossible." He said, "I go out to people, they say, 'What? You want me to give a million dollars to a parking garage?' [laughter] 'Nobody's going to give money to a parking garage.'" They have a list of donors on the wall but I think it was largely Warren and Dede who just wrote the checks.

There was a whole grab bag of lawsuits continuously against this garage. And most of them got thrown out of court. But there was one that stuck. It was not clear in the original Proposition J how much of the access would be underground and how much would be on the surface. The access to the parking pod closest to the de Young from Fulton Street is depressed. It's a few hundred yards. The access to the Academy from Lincoln Boulevard on the south is surface street in the park. That was an existing surface street. Some people believed all the access from the wording of the proposition would be underground. So another proposition got put on the ballot in November 2005. The garage is about to open and they didn't know if the garage could be used. So this proposition was put on and it passed by 68 percent. I think people were just sick of the nonsense by this time. It passed 68 percent, which is good. It needed 50 percent.

But seven propositions, nine years from the first to the last. Sixteen years after the Loma Pieta earthquake. Lawsuits, hearings, hundreds of hearings, millions and millions of dollars in lawyers and time and inflation. SPUR's philosophy, and my philosophy in everything I do, is you try it once, you run it up the flagpole, you hope it works, and if it doesn't work you move on to the next thing. The San Francisco way of doing things is, it's never over. Just over and over again until the last person standing. Whoever can shout the loudest and stand up the longest. I often think there are people that the fight is more important than the result. They feel empowered by the fight. In fact, they get their name in the paper, they can stand up in a public hearing, appear on TV. Of course, the root of the whole problem was the museums were forced to stay in the park. And the result is compromised. You can only drive up to the front door of these institutions if you're handicapped, or a pedestrian or a bicyclist. But you can't in a car. So you have to enter through the basement, which is a funny thing to do with a \$500 million building.

07-01:44:20

Holmes:

That's very true actually.

07-01:44:21

Chappell:

The institutions are attracting thousands of people a day. But it's this all or nothing attitude. People never think about timing. Can this be a pedestrian space sometimes and a car space other times? Does it have to be twenty-

four/seven always one or the other? Is there not a way to share? We don't play nice with each other in San Francisco.

07-01:44:51

Holmes: Yeah, I had questions on that, too. The de Young opens in 2004. Four years later, 2008, the Academy of Sciences finally opens with parking garages for both, right. The street closure, though, that aspect, is that JFK Drive? Am I correct on that?

07-01:45:18

Chappell: So Saturday closures have never happened. People forgot about that. Sunday closures it's, yeah, JFK and some other roads in the eastern end of the park. And so it's terrific. It's terrific for the park. I don't know how the institutions do on Saturday versus Sunday today.

07-01:45:47

Holmes: For that traffic, yeah.

07-01:45:51

Chappell: I think there are times when the garages are filled.

07-01:45:57

Holmes: It gets back to, as we started off talking about, of access to cultural facilities. You need to make the entire experience easy or otherwise what seems like a good day say, on a Sunday or Saturday afternoon, gets clouded by, "Man, that's a headache just to get in." Right?

07-01:45:19

Chappell: Yeah.

07-01:46:21

Holmes: Were there other aspects that the institutions, or that even perhaps SPUR was suggesting to make that experience and that access more available?

07-01:45:34

Chappell: We never scrutinized the architectural plans of the garage. We scrutinized the things that were controversial. With fifty/fifty hindsight, I think I would have designed the garages a little differently just in terms of legibility. It's a little confusing. I go there enough now I know where to go, but it is a little confusing. Yeah.

07-01:47:13

Holmes: And there was also, speaking of the larger surroundings there in the park, an aspect of landmarking the concourse, as well.

07-01:47:21

Chappell: Yeah. This was done by a landscape architect. It went back to this misunderstanding that the concourse garage was going to be under the concourse instead of under the roads. The concourse is a formal French parterre of pollarded sycamores. But it is funny, because at the midwinter

exposition, which was when the concourse was built, in 1894, it was a romantic flowered parterre with a 200-foot steel observation tower in the middle. So looking nothing like it does now. When you read the landmark papers for the concourse, they know who designed the bandshell. They don't know anything else, who designed the concourse, when the fountains were built, when the trees were planted. There's no written history of any of this. It was never important enough. And generally my feeling on parks is you should landmark the location. You should landmark the use but not the specific design because styles of recreation change. While they wanted a romantic flower garden in 1894, at some point they wanted a formal parterre. Many of the trees were dead at the time and they have been replaced. But it became very controversial. The only thing that happens in the concourse is the concerts in the band shell. And going to a concert with trees every ten feet is not very good.

07-01:40:52

Holmes: No.

07-01:49:53

Chappell:

So it became very controversial whether you could re-plant missing trees. Must you fill in the pattern? Can we take some out? And unfortunately the way historic preservation is interpreted in San Francisco is to completely freeze things the way they are. For instance, can there be a food kiosk in the concourse? Can there be a café? Now, think of a Parisian park and think of the Tuileries Gardens, which is the same kind of thing, of these formal rows of trees, and there's a café where you can sit down and have a reasonably priced sandwich and glass of wine. You know how nice that would be if you could do that in the concourse? Where is the food service in the concourse? In the bus parking lot next to the restrooms because that isn't landmarked. The concourse is landmarked, so the interpretation is that you can never have any use there. And the whole reason Golden Gate Park is a vibrant park is it has changed with the times.

I picked up this morning's *Chronicle* and there's an article about the historic light standards on Van Ness Avenue that were built for the exposition after the great earthquake, the 1915 Pan Pacific Exposition. Van Ness Avenue is being redone for bus rapid transit and they're redoing the sewers and everything is being redone while they're doing this. And they're replacing the crumbling light standards. Well, this plan began in 2001, fifteen years ago. The environmental documents that documented the replacement of the light fixtures were published in 2010, six years ago. Hundreds of hearings. Widely known. I've always liked those light fixtures. I thought it was too bad they're taking them out and not replacing with replicas, but I've known that for ten years. All of the public has known that for six years. The non-profit San Francisco Architectural Heritage just discovered this. They went to the Board of Supervisors trying to stop this. Tree advocates stopped bus rapid transit from happening for two years because they discovered that some trees would

be cut down and replaced. Now the historic people have just discovered that the light fixtures—by their complete irresponsibility of not following what's going on, and then jumping in at the last minute. And this will delay the project and cost millions of dollars towards what end, who knows.

07-01:53:49

Holmes:

I wanted to touch on the Green Schoolyard Alliance but I know we're almost out of time and maybe that would be a good place to pick up in next session.

07-01:54:00

Chappell:

Whichever way you want to do it. I can do it now, or we can do it later.

07-01:54:05

Holmes:

Well, let's go ahead and do it now.

07-01:54:07

Chappell:

Yeah, okay.

07-01:54:08

Holmes:

We're already here. Because I know we wanted to talk about another side of open space, which will be the waterfront, I believe, next time. So the Green Schoolyard Alliance and this kind of education outside—this dovetails a lot with the use of public space, open space, and bringing that to schools.

07-01:54:34

Chappell:

Yeah. I mentioned the eras of park design. One of the other eras, through the middle of the twentieth century, was the recreation era. This is the asphalt parking lots and the concrete block buildings with basketball courts and organized sweating. That's what the schoolyards in San Francisco, to my astonishment, traditionally have been. Just asphalt with no grass, nothing. So there's a woman by the name of Nan Maguire who is a SPUR member and a parks advocate. And she did a project at Michelangelo Playground in North Beach, turning this playground into a playground and park and gardens, with a lot of neighborhood sweat equity. She got together with a couple of women, Rachel Pringle and Arden Bucklin-Sporer, and they came up with this idea of the Green Schoolyards, and came to me. And I said, "Wow, what a great project." So SPUR staffed the project, and they had an office at SPUR. This is one of the many non-profits that we have helped form over the years.

07-01:56:29

Holmes:

Get off the ground. Yeah.

07-01:56:30

Chappell:

And I did the initial fundraising for them. Basically it's teaching children about nature. It's using gardens as science education and food education. There are a lot of kids today who don't know where French fries come from. Right? They don't know what a potato is.

07-01:57:06

Holmes:

That's our food culture, unfortunately.



07-01:57:10

Chappell:

So it's teaching people to be environmentally conscious, teaching them about science, teaching them about nature, and having a good time and beautifying the schoolyard. It's part of an international movement. I think it really started in England. And every year the Green Schoolyard Alliance, now called Education Outside, has a conference and people come from around the world, and you see the great stuff happening at lots and lots of places now. But this was a few years back. So I would carefully look at our SPUR donor lists, and figure who would relate to this, and help them out. It was a very grassroots beginning. Then a school bond was coming up and the chairman of the board of the San Francisco Unified School District was a SPUR board member, Emilio Cruz. So I took Arden to see Emilio, to pitch getting Green Schoolyards into this bond. I said to Emilio, I'm trying to explain this concept, and I said, "It's like a science lab." And he looked at me and he said, "No, it *is* a science lab." So we got the Green Schoolyards in the bond as a science lab.

07-01:59:07

Holmes:

Oh, fantastic.

07-01:59:08

Chappell:

That was the line item. Since then, it's been in every bond. It's in the annual budget. I think there are now eighty-five or a hundred schools, maybe more, that have Green Schoolyards Projects going on. I think the last bond there was \$14 million, which goes a long way for landscape things.

07-01:59:35

Holmes:

Oh, sure.

07-01:59:35

Chappell:

And teachers love it. Kids love it.

07-01:59:40

Holmes:

That's a win-win.

07-01:59:41

Chappell:

It really is.

07-01:59:42

Holmes:

And, again, thinking of taking the initiative and being innovative. We have limited space. How do we open this up for multi-use that's, again, not made out of, well, petroleum and concrete?

07-01:59:56

Chappell:

It's one of my favorite organizations. Yeah.

07-02:00:00

Holmes:

And what year did that start?

07-02:00:04

Chappell:

I don't remember.

07-02:00:07

Holmes: Yeah. I had a hard time finding the date on that but I know it's been going on for quite some time.

07-02:00:12

Chappell: Oh, let me see. I can figure it out but not today. I know exactly how to figure it out.

07-02:00:22

Holmes: Okay. We'll put that in the record in our next session. All right, well, I think that's good for today. Hey, thanks so much, Jim.

07-02:00:28

Chappell: Yeah, okay.

### Interview 8: October 19, 2016

08-00:00:00

Holmes: All right. This is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley and I'm sitting down once again with Jim Chappell. Today is October 19, 2016. This is our eighth interview session and we are here at SPUR headquarters in the beautiful city of San Francisco. Jim, thanks for sitting down with us again.

08-00:00:21

Chappell: Of course.

08-00:00:23

Holmes: We left off last week talking about the Green Schoolyard Alliance. I know we want to move today into talking about a lot of the various projects and SPUR's work dealing with the waterfront. Were there any remaining discussions in regard to the Green Schoolyard Alliance?

08-00:00:44

Chappell: Yes. I couldn't remember last week when the Alliance started. It was 2001 and 2002 that SPUR staffed the Green Schoolyard Alliance out of the SPUR office, which is a role that we've taken with many organizations over the years, to give them a leg up and help them get going and get their 501(c)(3) status and raise money for them. So that was 2001, 2002. And then it was in 2003 that I took them to Emilio Cruz, who was chairman of the school board and put Green Schoolyards in the November 2003 Proposition A bond fund. Since then they've been off on their own and sailing well and just getting bigger and bigger.

08-00:01:47

Holmes: Wow. They were recognized, when was it, in 2012, if I remember correctly? Was it recognized by the city? With an award for the good work that they've done.

08-00:01:56

Chappell: That was an award they gave me.

08-00:01:58

Holmes: Even better. Even better.

08-00:02:00

Chappell: In 2010. Yeah.

08-00:02:01

Holmes: Oh, that's great. That's great. Well, along those lines, because I know last session we were talking about neighborhood parks and open space, and one of the most iconic open spaces here in San Francisco is, of course, the waterfront and what's also called the port. A lot of people forget that it was a port at one time. Why don't we start there, the long process of trying to transfer that waterfront and the port to San Francisco.

08-00:02:31

Chappell: Yeah. And when I think of this, I think of returning the waterfront to the people of San Francisco. That really has been SPUR's theme for now almost sixty years. Just going back in history, the first Europeans who came to San Francisco of course came by ship. Spanish, Russian, British, Americans. So the city really did start at the waterfront. And in 1835 the Spanish established Yerba Buena as a port and then 1846 was the Mexican American War when, of course, San Francisco, California, became American rather than Mexican. And 1849 the Gold Rush. In 1848 there were less than a thousand people here and by December of 1849 there were 25,000 people, many or most of whom came by ship. So San Francisco early on centered on the waterfront.

In 1863 the state established the California Board of State Harbor Commissioners. So the management of this piece of San Francisco, the ownership and management, was taken over by the state and with no obvious connection to city government. Beginning in the 1880s the harbor commissioners built a seawall, taking land that once was bay and mud flats, and creating land there. Today we've found out that the seawall needs to be largely rebuilt for seismic purposes at billions of dollars that we don't have, and don't have any identified source of. But this has been a big part of the story of the waterfront and we'll talk more about that later. Then in the 1950s the California Board of Harbor Commissioners was called the California Association of Port Authorities, and it was still a state agency. And the state was not minding the shop. Not surprisingly, with ports in Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, San Diego, we were just one of couple, one of half-a-dozen ports and I think it's somewhat a question of out-of-sight, out-of-mind, too. Sacramento is not thinking about individual cities. And, also, what became apparent by the 1960s is that the fundamentals of the port were bad.

So in the 1960s, in SPUR's first decade of existence, two economists on the SPUR board, Mike Marston and Jerry Keyser, started studying the port and

they had and still have a firm, Keyser Marston Economics. They observed that the Port of Oakland was growing and getting federal money and that there were economic block grants, essentially available to cities. But because the San Francisco port was not part of a city, it was the state, the state was not eligible for the grants. So Oakland would get this money from the feds and then they could sell bonds backed up by the federal money and double their money. In theory, the state could have sold bonds for San Francisco but who out of San Francisco would—Los Angeles is not going to vote for bonds for San Francisco. So there was a lot of deferred maintenance and some of these piers went back nearly a hundred years.

So Mike and Jerry met with the state port authority and said, “Well, how can we take this over, because San Francisco should be running this?” And the port authority said, “Well, for \$350 million we’ll sell it to you.” Well, \$350 million in 1969 is \$2.5 billion today.

08-00:07:41  
Holmes:

Yeah. That’s a lot of money.

08-00:07:41  
Chappell:

So that was clearly a non-starter. Being two smart economists they said, “Well, look, you’ve got \$60 million of outstanding bond debt on the port. We’ll take over the port and we’ll take over the bond debt.” Clean deal. So that worked. John Burton, our local assemblyman, got a bill through, the Burton Act of 1969, which left the port in the ownership of the state but put the management in the city of San Francisco. And SPUR did a report at that time entitled, *Port of San Francisco: Asset of liability?* It was equivocal because there is some of both. There’s potential there, but its potential was clearly not as a port but as other things, and they foresaw turning this land back to the people, since the port, which was an industrial use, was leaving. There was more than poor maintenance of these facilities. But the finger piers and the backup space behind it were built for break-bulk shipments and railroad servicing and the belt line railroad ran along the waterfront until the 1970s. And what was happening worldwide is that containerization was coming in for a whole number of reasons. There was no physical room to do that in San Francisco.

08-00:09:54  
Holmes:

Unlike when you look at ports such as Long Beach or Oakland.

08-00:09:57  
Chappell:

Right.

08-00:09:57  
Holmes:

Right. Places that had that kind of space.

08-00:09:58  
Chappell:

In fact, every major port in the world has moved. The port of LA is in Long Beach. The port of New York (now New York and New Jersey) is in New Jersey. Amsterdam, Rotterdam. All of the ports have moved outside of their

old inner city locations to places where you've got hundreds of acres of land for containers, places where you can put 150-foot high cranes that you'd be hard pressed to put at the foot of Telegraph Hill in San Francisco. But there are other reasons, too. The Transcontinental Railways all end in Oakland. They don't come to San Francisco. So it's a three-day train trip from San Francisco to Oakland, down the peninsula, through the backyards of some very wealthy people, slowly, through a tunnel that is both a one-way tunnel and too low to stack containers, double-deck containers. And some shipping companies put containers on ships and took them to Oakland. But all at an extra expense.

The city had built Mission Rock Terminal in the 1950s, which is a large pier just south of China Basin, essentially at the Mission Bay development today, but hardly ever used. Even in 1969, the port was only being used at 20, 30 percent of its capacity. So SPUR realized that there were other opportunities there and that the port was essentially gone in 1969; it was really gone in 1989 but it was essentially gone in 1969. But this has been a huge public education effort on our part. The generation that remembers the port as this wonderful thing, there's not too many of those people left. The port has been highly romanticized.

08-00:12:46

Holmes:

And you also had unions, as well.

08-00:12:50

Chappell:

Oh, yes.

08-00:12:50

Holmes:

Which was another dynamic to that.

08-00:12:52

Chappell:

Oh, yes. The unions still control some incredible real estate in this city that is essentially unused. A couple of incredible buildings and a bunch of real estate. This is kind of a long background but, in fact, there's even some more ancient history and that is the public trust doctrine. The public trust doctrine goes back to Roman law and then to English common law. But what it does is, it says that the rivers and the seas and the ports and the fishing grounds belong to the public, which is a really important and good concept. Beyond that, what the public trust doctrine means has been defined by the courts in thousands of court decisions. So it's not like opening the zoning ordinance to see what you can do and what you can't do. And this is a problem for development, because the biggest enemy of development is uncertainty. How long are you going to work on something before you can find out if you can go past "go?" Just an example of that, a couple of years ago, the 8 Washington project went on for almost ten years. Small development project, half of which was on a seawall lot. It was finally killed at the ballot box by ballot box zoning. But we did not go to the State Lands Commission until the financial partner, CalSTRS, the

California state teachers union, had spent \$44 million planning this project.  
\$44 million!

08-00:15:06

Holmes: Wow.

08-00:15:07

Chappell: We went to the Commission. There are three State Lands commissioners. Betty Yee, the controller, Gavin Newsom, the lieutenant governor, and Mike Cohen. He's the director of finance. The public trust doctrine doesn't govern just the water, but it is the land behind the seawall lot that once was tidelands. Between the low water mark and the high water mark is all taken in by the trust doctrine. And there are 43 seawall lots in San Francisco, and some of them are acres, a number of acres. So this is a peculiar thing for land use planning in that the city of San Francisco doesn't go to the waterfront. It stops a block from the waterfront, and then all the rules change. The State Lands Commission in California has been very rigid about protecting maritime use. It's been an integral part of the state's history. It's been difficult in many cases to get past that. And conditions really have changed. The de facto Port of San Francisco is in Oakland, and so the question is what is the beneficial public use of the waterfront in San Francisco? San Francisco manages the port but it is still subject to State Lands and it is owned by the state. The McAteer-Petris Act that formed BCDC (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission), and we'll talk about that in a minute, is an exercise of the public trust, and has been helpful in many ways. One of the ways is it sets up some real rules. So there's this case by case decision-making on things along the waterfront.

08-00:17:55

Holmes: Which also adds not just another layer of regulation and, say, state management, right, in some regards, but for development, would you say it increases that uncertainty?

08-00:18:09

Chappell: Oh, tremendously. Because with both State Lands and BCDC, you don't go until the end. You can't go with, "Hey, I've got an idea. What do you think of this?" The project has to be fully fleshed out. And there's a process with the city planning department, that's just been a couple of years old now, the PPA, the Preliminary Project Application, and that is, you go in when it's just a gleam in your eye, and take their temperature, and they write you a letter, and direct you in a way that they think is going to work and be permissible. Even before there was that process, it was always a long iterative process. But yeah. To get within an inch of the finish line and being told "no" is not a very good thing.

The general rule is that you can, of course, do "maritime" along the waterfront. That's what State Lands is protecting. And then they also said "public uses." So what is a public use? Retail is a public use. Hotel is a public use. Office is

a private use. Housing is a private use. But a timeshare is a public use because it's more like a hotel than a house. And different states and different countries have interpreted the public trust doctrine very differently. If you go to Boston, which has finger piers just like we do, every one of those finger piers is used for office or housing, most of them housing, with a public walk on the deck around them and a public room at the end of the pier that you can go rent or use. Wonderful waterfront. Brings people to the water's edge. Isn't that what we want to do? Vancouver also. Now in Vancouver, the government owned a lot of land that then became parkland with towers in it, and the residential towers support the parkland and the public access. Beautiful. We have not been able to do that.

So the Port of San Francisco has had to go for exceptions on a case-by-case basis. And we'll talk about several of these today. But Pier 1, the pier just north of the Ferry Building, got an exception for office space and there were kind of two grounds for that. It's the offices of the port, so that's a maritime use if you stretch it a little. And also historic rehabilitation of a historic pier. But that was a one-off thing—the Ferry Building. Now, the Ferry Building is retail on the ground floor, so that's a permitted trust use. The upstairs is office, so that had to be an exception. That got an exception because there is the retail on the ground floor. There were some other hard exceptions there. Piers 1½, 3, and 5, which are the next piers north, so they are retail/restaurant on the ground floor, in the bulkhead buildings. PacBell Park, that's not a maritime use but, of course, it brings 42,000 people to the waterfront every time there's a game. That was a no-brainer for me. It wasn't a no-brainer for State Lands and BCDC.

08-00:22:41

Holmes:

It was a hard fight. Yeah.

08-00:22:43

Chappell:

What are they saying? This doesn't need to be on the water. Well, the ballpark brings more people to the waterfront than everything else combined along the waterfront. Mission Bay, which had been a bay at one time. So it was all subject to state lands. And what they did there was they traded the paper streets in Mission Bay, because it had become a rail yard, and the streets were never laid out, for land that was more valuable for public access, which is the waterfront. So those developments have worked out. There are others that haven't. And, at any rate, they've all added years and tens of millions of dollars to the process. That money doesn't come out of the developer's pocket, it comes out of the port's pocket when push comes to shove.

08-00:23:48

Holmes:

And I think those also seem to be good examples of, as you were saying, exceptions. There's no standard regulation or policy put in place for these developments or by these developments.

08-00:23:59  
Chappell:

Yeah, yeah. While there were continuing proposals in the 1970s and 1980s for the Ferry Building, for other piers, there was no market for them, and there was no market because it was judged that people would never cross under the Embarcadero Freeway to use them. There was a wonderful I.M. Pei plan for the Ferry Building and Pier 1 in the late 1980s. The bankers could never see them working.

So I'm going to talk about four of SPUR's signature projects today. One of them was the return of the port to the city. And even though the port has not been a success as a port, it is getting the attention it needs and it is being opened up to the public much more than it ever was. In fact, it was completely blocked off to the public for security reasons, both protecting the shipped goods and also protecting the public from getting run over. But this mantra of "saving the port" is sort of like "saving Golden Gate Park" from use.

08-00:25:48  
Holmes:

Which we were discussing last time. That kind of Victoria—

08-00:25:51  
Chappell:

The Victorian pleasure ground, right, and this romantic idea of the port has persisted. So a second signature project was the formation of BCDC, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. Now, you've interviewed Will Travis, so you've heard the whole story much better than I can tell it.

08-00:26:18  
Holmes:

And Joe Bodovitz. Correct.

08-00:26:20  
Chappell:

And Joe Bodovitz, okay. But just to recap a little of that. The Bay Conservation and Development Commission is a really important part of that and something SPUR was very involved in making happen. But it's basically a regulatory agency. It's not a planning agency, although Will Travis is a planner and really expanded the purview of what they did in his twenty years there. In 1963 Senator (J. Eugene) McAteer, state senator, proposed as part of the whole Caltrans freeway plan that had been done for the city, a freeway essentially through Telegraph Hill connecting up to the Embarcadero Freeway to Angel Island and then on to Marin. And when SPUR looked at this they said, I don't think so. So John Hirten, who was the first executive director of SPUR, and Joe Bodovitz, who was the first deputy director of SPUR, and Bill Roth, who was the SPUR chairman—he was also chairman of the Matson Line—went to see Senator McAteer. And they said, "This is not going to fly. Don't sully yourself with this. But we've got a better idea. Let's set up a committee to study what we should be doing with the bay." And so SPUR loaned Joe Bodovitz to this commission for six months. The other things that were going on at the same time, 1963, Mel Lane wrote his book, *The Future of San Francisco Bay*, and then the three ladies in Oakland, Catherine Kerr, Esther Gulick, and Sylvia McLaughlin were sitting up in their houses looking



down at the bay being filled, and started probably the first really effective citizens group in the country that resulted in Save The Bay, along with SPUR, BCDC.

08-00:29:11

Holmes:

It's interesting to also think about that they initiated Save The Bay in 1961, which is a year before Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*. So really an overlooked piece of the environmental history of America.

08-00:29:30

Chappell:

Yeah. And Sylvia just died last year at ninety-nine, I think. And right up to the end, once a year she'd call me up and come over and want to check up what's going on, make sure we're doing the right thing, but also wanted to stay informed on the latest thinking. Boy, what a powerhouse. And formed this great organization, Save The Bay. In 2011, Ron Blatman, who was a SPUR board member, did this four-hour PBS video called *Saving San Francisco Bay*, which is a great documentary shown around the world.

So the McAteer-Petris Act came out of this committee that Joe Bodovitz led. And so then Joe became the first executive director. Mel Lane, of Lane Publishing Company, became the chairman. Staff planner was Al Baum, who was a young planner on the SPUR board, on the San Francisco Planning Commission by virtue of being head of the Urban Design Committee on the SPUR board. He's also the guy who coined the acronym SPUR in 1960. The second ED of BCDC was Mike Wilmar, who's been a longtime SPUR board member and we've talked about him on charter reform and Muni. He's been very, very involved in SPUR. BCDC basically does two things. It stops bay fill. A piling is bay fill. And, indeed, the bay is now bigger than it was when the McAteer-Petris Act passed. But it's also very complicated. We don't need to go into that because it's not quite so simple as stopped bay fill, and I am sure Will Travis has covered that. It also regulates development along the hundred-foot shoreline. There the goal is to increase "maximum feasible public access" are the words in the act. So BCDC has had a huge impact. Very important. Anne Halsted is the vice-chair. I'm her alternate on that. In Ron Blatman's movie, of course, Sylvia is interviewed and so is John Hirten, the first SPUR executive director. All of this is kind of a long background to some of the things I did at the port because those, of course, were before my time.

The port is 7 ½ miles of shoreline, 39 piers, 600 acres, 43 seawall lots, 245 buildings, 20 million-square-foot of commercial industrial space, sidewalks, streets, utilities, and, until 1993, the belt line railway. I might have given a different date on that a few minutes ago. It was 1993. And some of this stuff is a century old. The weather is punishing. In my role at Fort Mason, we and the Park Service just replaced some stainless steel railing along the piers a year ago. It is rusting already. Stainless steel rusting after a year. Anybody who's ever had a boat knows you have to keep on top of it.

08-00:34:23

Holmes: Is that one of the reasons, too, that the Golden Gate Bridge is painted almost continuously?

08-00:34:29

Chappell: Continuously. Yeah, yeah. And these piers not only have deferred maintenance issues, but they have seismic issues. My non-structural engineer's "take" on seismic engineering is, "We don't know very much about it because every time there's an earthquake the earth shakes in some different way and all the codes get rewritten." And so the older the piers, the more problems they're apt to have. All through the 1960s and 1970s, there were many proposals to do developments along the waterfront, some good, some awful. But they all had a couple basic purposes. One was public use, and the other was generating revenue to support the infrastructure, to keep the buildings and the piers from falling down. In 1990 the port was down to making \$10 million a year in revenue from port activities, and by 1996 it was down to \$2 million a year. So the working port was gone. Interestingly, it is having a little resurgence, as we're having a little resurgence of boutique industry in San Francisco. In addition, cars are now being brought in from Mexico and shipped out to China. More automobiles are now manufactured in Mexico than are manufactured in Japan.

08-00:36:34

Holmes: Oh, wow.

08-00:36:35

Chappell: If you go down to Pier 70 today, I think there are 4,000 Teslas waiting to go to China this week and next. The ships are coming in. So as these developments were being proposed, one of which included essentially demolishing the Ferry Building and building a high-rise tower in the bay—

08-00:37:09

Holmes: That was US Steel, I think.

08-00:37:11

Chappell: US Steel, yeah.

08-00:37:12

Holmes: Yeah. And then I think it was on the adjacent site that Castle and Cooke wanted to develop—I don't think it was a high-rise but they wanted to do office buildings and maybe a hotel and shops and these kind of things.

08-00:37:23

Chappell: Yeah. And periodically someone still comes up with one of these ideas. There was one a few years ago. The developer quietly invited me in to see renderings of three new islands in the bay for an office building, to see if this was going to work. And that was not hard. Yeah. So in 1969 a community organization called San Francisco Tomorrow was formed and they were formed to fight the Transamerica Pyramid, and went on after that with a heavy concentration on fighting development along the port. And in November 1990,

seeing development proposals rolling out, they wrote what became Proposition H. Proposition H's purpose was really to halt all non-maritime development on port land. It did one very good thing, and that is it called for a land use plan, a waterfront land use plan. Because, remember, the planning department doesn't look at port land, and the port had no planners then. This waterfront land use plan, Prop H said it would be done in 180 days. Okay, 180 days. And it also said that hotels were forbidden. No hotels on the waterfront. The people who wrote it, well there were several things they didn't understand. One is that the working port was gone, not coming back. And the other was if you want this to be available to the people, there has to be some kind of economic engine to open it to the public. They also confused a land use type, hotel, with a building type, high-rise building. You could do a 40 foot low-rise hotel in an existing pier shed, and it would be very successful. With minimal exterior changes to those pier sheds, they could become a hotel. A hotel is the most public of private uses. I haven't stayed in a hotel in San Francisco since 1977, but a week does not go by that I'm not in a hotel for a meeting, meeting people, whatever. Very, very public place. Sit down making phone calls in the lobby of a hotel. Very nice. Nice restrooms. And one day, actually there was some kind of press event, I don't remember, something with the port, and I happened to be standing next to Jane Morrison, who is the leader of San Francisco Tomorrow and has been since it was formed by her husband, Jack Morrison, who was a supervisor. It was a miserable cold, windy, foggy day and we're out there freezing, and she's complaining about how terrible it was. And I so wanted to say to her, "Jane, if there was a hotel here, we'd be in a nice warm hotel meeting room. Wouldn't that be nice?" I held myself back.

So the plan was not done in 180 days. It took seven years to get the plan done. And one of the authors, Andy Nash, who is a planner and had been at San Francisco Tomorrow, and then came to SPUR and became a SPUR board member later on, when we were starting our Muni reform in the late 1990s, he said, "we thought we knew what should be done." And he said, "You just think you know what should be done." He said, "Proposition H, we just sat down and we wrote it, three guys and a bottle of wine." And he said, "We'd have done it completely differently if we'd known what we found out, that it wasn't going to be 180 days but it was going to stop development for seven years on the waterfront while the buildings continue to deteriorate, the port's finances continue to deteriorate, and you're just digging yourself in a hole." He said, "There are always unintended consequences. Take any proposals to the public, and listen to everybody you can and you'll get a better result." And that's what we have done in everything at SPUR.

08-00:43:11

Holmes:

Holding committees, yeah.

08-00:43:12

Chappell:

We shop it around to the public, to the supervisors, to community leaders, to business leaders, to the mayor, because no matter how experienced we are, we

each only have a limited scope of what we know. That's one of the wonderful things about the SPUR board, is every board meeting you learn something, because there's some other board member who knows a whole other subject that you don't know about.

08-00:43:45

Holmes:

I wanted to ask you about Proposition H and SPUR's role in waterfront committees and your work on that. You have Proposition H happen in 1990 and this is right after the 1989 earthquake, which essentially opened up the waterfront, as we've discussed before—that really changed the vision of what the waterfront really could be and the possibilities for that. There also seems to be a clash of visions on that. So the San Francisco Tomorrow, like Save The Bay, you have this mix of an environmentalist outlook of preserving the bay as it is. What was it, the statement with Save The Bay was “Is it a Bay or a River?” But you also have this romantic view, intermixed with that, such as the port is the port. “I remember when the port was the port and now you want to turn it into strip malls.” How were these varying visions navigated? Between developing the port to make money, to bring it back to the people and actually make it the iconic—well, what we see now today.

08-00:45:02

Chappell:

Yeah. There was a committee, of course, formed to do what became the port's waterfront land use plan, to oversee the plan. And it was chaired by Bob Tufts, who is an attorney and a SPUR guy and brilliant and a wonderful chairman. But some of the people on the committee, Jane Morrison, of course, and her position was there should be no development ever. Nothing. And then Jimmy Herman, the ILWU president, longshoreman. And Jimmy was waiting for the clipper ships to come back under the Golden Gate Bridge carrying iron ingots to the steel mills South of Market. And his position was that this has to be all maritime, nothing else can happen there. So the plan was a compromise. Essentially from China Basin South, maritime use was the plan, all of which has to be subsidized. Then from China Basin North, a combination of maritime uses interspersed with public uses, and commercial uses and public access along it. I mentioned that the port didn't have any ability to do this plan. So, in fact, the SPUR board actually did the plan. It then got carried to the public. And the SPUR waterfront committee was led by two people: Teresa Rea, who's a planner who I had worked with at EDAW and am now working with on the Fort Mason board; and Jeff Heller, who is an architect. Mike Wilmar, a former ED of BCDC, Preston Cook, who was chairman of the port commission. So there were some really good minds doing the backroom work of crafting the plan. One of the things, as a result of this, now the port is able to do a plan—they have a good planning staff. David Beaupre, I was meeting here at SPUR yesterday with him on a waterfront project and excellent guy who is shepherding development along. Other people on that committee, a woman by the name of Ellen Johnck, who is now on the city's historic preservation commission, but she formed a group called the Bay Planning Coalition that represents largely industrial users along the bay. And, of course,

Save The Bay. So all interests were represented on this committee. The result is a compromise. What's clearly happening now, though, some time has passed, Jimmy Herman is dead, the port is continually doing more land use planning. BCDC had to true-up their plan to the port's waterfront land use plan, and that took a couple more years. But BCDC did a special area plan for the San Francisco waterfront.

08-00:49:17

Holmes:

Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that. So we think of the different regulatory agencies that control waterfront development. We had members of BCDC on the committee but did BCDC have to approve all the other proposed developments along with the port?

08-00:49:37

Chappell:

Yes. They did a special area plan, focused on the San Francisco waterfront, a couple of years after the waterfront design plan. And then the port has gone on to do an urban design plan. There's a design review committee that's always been excellent at BCDC. So it gets coordinated. But the waterfront land use plan had to go through seventeen different agencies—

08-00:50:25

Holmes:

Wow.

08-00:50:25

Chappell:

—City and state. That's part of the reason it took seven years.

08-00:50:33

Holmes:

Which also shows that SPUR was not just navigating the diverse interests that were on the committee, but then you had to navigate seventeen different agencies.

08-00:50:43

Chappell:

Yeah, yeah. So from the time of transferring the port to the city, to the time of BCDC's special area plan is 31 years. And if planning is bringing the future into the present so you can deal with it, whose present is this? It's a different group of people. Some of them aren't even alive by the time you get to the end of the process, if the process is 31 years. It sure makes planning very difficult.

So we look at the waterfront and particularly north of China Basin, but increasingly south of China Basin that is supposed to be periodic maritime uses, public access, and what else can you do there that's a public use? State lands loves hotels. Proposition H forbids hotels. So you can't do hotels. So you can do cultural institutions. How many of those are there? The Exploratorium. SPUR was the first group to salute when they proposed that site. But they're not doing all that well. And as we mentioned last week, the de Young took a run at it and they got stopped for different reasons. But if they hadn't gotten stopped for different reasons they'd have gotten the "we need to save our port for ships" reason. So what do you get? You get Pier 39.

That was 1978, 1979. How many Pier 39s and Fisherman's Wharf's do you want? Fewer than we have, probably. My partner Jim Jeong grew up with a view from their flat of the waterfront and he's never been to Fisherman's Wharf and he's never been to Pier 39 and never will. This is a real rub, that the acceptable uses are few and far between. The port is looking at Pier 17, I think, to do a retail kind of thing there. The Telegraph Hill Dwellers have said, "Well, you can do the bulkhead building but not the rest of the pier." Remember, those piers have been used for parking limousines, storage of floats for a parade that happens once a year.

08-00:54:13

Holmes:

Which seems like a very inefficient use of such prime real estate that's so iconic.

08-00:54:18

Chappell:

Those piers, it's like being on a ship. You not only see the water, but then you look back and you see the whole skyline of the city. It's quite magical. And worse than that, is the piers are going to fall into the bay someday if we don't do something with them. And while Prop H and the waterfront land use plan was underway, the supervisors did exempt the Ferry Building from Prop H. They were smart enough to see the possibilities once the Embarcadero Freeway was gone. Here it was.

In 2006, the Embarcadero Waterfront National Historic District was proposed and ultimately formed. It was very controversial among some SPUR members because a national historic district is the highest level of preservation, and it's a straitjacket for reusing piers that were made for cargo, and then using them for people. There's some fairly different things you want, like windows. But ultimately we supported it because we saw this as the only way to get around the prohibition of office space. It's still on a case-by-case basis but there was precedent that office space could make the grade.

08-00:56:33

Holmes:

And for our readers of this oral history, can you give a little bit of the boundaries for those who may not be completely familiar with San Francisco? The Embarcadero waterfront—what that all encompasses when they're at San Francisco?

08-00:56:47

Chappell:

So the Embarcadero waterfront essentially refers to the piers from Fisherman's Wharf south, including the Ferry Building, to the two piers at Mission Bay, which are 48, 50, I think.

08-00:57:20

Holmes:

What visitors to San Francisco would think of as the main waterfront.

08-00:57:26

Chappell:

Yeah, right. The bulkhead buildings are quite beautiful. One of them burned a couple of years ago. It was rebuilt perfectly, which was not that easy either,

because the secretary of the interior's standards for historic preservation frown on re-creation. It's a controversial interpretation. And so there was some effort to say, "Oh, no, this has to be modern, different." But fortunately it went back to the original design. So it's this row of a dozen or more piers with these great arched openings, all of a family, all painted the same color. And that had to be done very quickly because America's Cup was coming. They might have had a bigger fight if that wasn't on the horizon.

08-00:58:49

Holmes:

And so is that the type of straitjacket that many feared? There's not much room for much innovation when we're doing that.

08-00:58:56

Chappell:

Okay. So Pier 1 was the first pier that got turned into office space and it contains the port's office, as well as other commercial offices. There's a public meeting room with windows. They put a mezzanine in the building. The windows were all high windows because it was a warehouse. So it let light in, but did not let burglars in, or pallets going through the glass. So the ground floor did not have low windows originally. There were some roll-up doors and those could be glazed. So the SHPO, the state historic preservation officer, said, "There weren't windows in 1900 when it was a warehouse, there can't be windows today when it's an office building." They finally made a compromise that every other bay could have a window in it brought down. And that's the kind of crazy thing that happens, that it's one side saying nothing can ever change, we have to preserve this in amber and the other side saying people are going to use it. What sense does it make that every other bay can have a window—half the people get a window near their office and half don't. The argument is "the public will be confused" that there used to be windows here. Well, that's insider's baseball, if anything ever was. The only thing the public is confused by is why can't you design a better building. So I would say, yeah, Pier 1 was 1998, and that developer was AMB, who still have their office in there, and the architect was SMWM (Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein and Morris) and Page & Turnbull, and that's important because they're going to come back.

During this period the port executive director was Monique Moyer. And she was appointed in 2004 by Gavin Newsom and stayed until 2015. She had been the public finance director of the city, and so her job at the port was to get the finances in order. She's an excellent finance person and she stopped the hemorrhaging and got a lot accomplished. She did not get so much accomplished in terms of development. More projects didn't happen than did happen. The supervisors love to meddle in development projects and they particularly like to meddle on the port. Supervisor Peskin lives on top of Telegraph Hill, and started out his career through the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, who don't believe anything should be built within their viewshed from the top of the hill. So he's very active stopping development all over the city, but particularly on the port. It got so bad that Monique filed charges against him

with the city attorney. The supervisors are not allowed to go down into departments and give them directions. They can talk with the commission but the charter clearly forbids that, and purportedly Monique and her senior staff were getting alcohol fueled calls from Aaron Peskin at midnight telling them that they were going to be fired if they approved any development.

08-01:03:41

Holmes:

Oh, wow. San Francisco politics at its finest.

08-01:03:45

Chappell:

Yeah, yeah. In 2006 the port did a ten-year capital plan. And \$1.5 billion in deferred maintenance. This is just basic maintenance. At the current rate of spending of the port, that is 200 years.

08-01:04:12

Holmes:

Wow.

08-01:04:14

Chappell:

Something's wrong with this formula. This was before sea level rise. So some of the piers are yellow tagged, some of them are red tagged. Two piers collapsed within the last ten years. Many of the port buildings are underutilized. A number of them were cleared out for America's Cup and they're still sitting empty. So we have this very compelling vision of our waterfront with maritime uses here and there, other public-serving uses, all connected by public access. But it's a tough road. The financing isn't there and every time there's a development proposal they get gutted by the supervisors. whether it was the 8 Washington project that's not going to happen or Seawall Lot 337, which is just off the ballpark, it's to be a Giants development of housing and office space and a large park. The land belongs to the port, it's a seawall lot, the Giants negotiated a deal with the port for a certain amount of development with certain conditions and a certain price that was going to pay the port many millions of dollars for 66 years. After the deal was negotiated the supervisors came in and upped the amount of affordable housing in the project. And I think it was originally 25 percent or something like that, 25 percent or 30 percent. They upped it to 40 percent.

08-01:06:50

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

08-01:06:51

Chappell:

Who's paying for that? The port. Which means you and I are paying for it. The port is not going to get one penny out of this deal. Some supervisors are going around saying, "Oh, 40 percent is the new standard. This developer can do it, look, any developer can do that." Well, the developer isn't doing it, we're doing it. And meanwhile, one of the biggest economic opportunities the port will ever have is gone.



08-01:07:31

Holmes:

Well, it brings up a thorny issue of, on one hand, affordable housing is important in San Francisco, particularly when we think of the possibilities of massive gentrification, not only what has happened but also what can continue to happen here in San Francisco. But then, on the other hand, as you're pointing out, the economics of the port also make that a double-edged sword almost.

08-01:07:58

Chappell:

Yeah. If we want affordable housing, I think we the taxpayers should pay for it. In Vancouver, for instance, the developers give the site or a portion of their site but the city builds the affordable housing. We'd be much better if we would do that, but that would be a city expense that we'd budget for. We don't take it out of the port. It's like if you're indigent and you go to San Francisco General Hospital, we all pay taxes to support that hospital, and to take care of indigent people, as well we should. But it's not like it's coming out of the hospital's budget unexpectedly. It's a budgeted expense that there's a societal agreement to pay for. And that isn't the case when you come in after the fact, and redo half of the deal but not the whole deal. Basically the piers have a negative residual value. You have to pay more to get them up to shape to be usable than you'd pay for land across the street. It's a problem.

SPUR and BCDC just completed a sea level rise study along Mission Creek, the new housing is there. A couple of years ago I was looking at one of the ground floor units along the creek. Quite wonderful, but I could imagine coming into my living room in a kayak someday. By 2030, in 14 years, this study, SPUR, BCDC, and Arcadis, the Dutch engineers who are experts at this, they're saying somewhere between 6 and 12 inch water rise in Mission Creek. And in 34 years, 12 to 24 inches. The new buildings on Seawall Lot 337, the Giants development, they're designed with a split level lobby, one side for now, and the other side for when sea level rises. The roads are in. Third Street is in. The Third Street light rail is in. That's not going to be raised. There's going to have to be some protection. There are a number of different strategies and different ones for different places. But this is a serious problem. Will Travis, he really took on sea level rise, which BCDC could have punted on. And I got to hand it to him. They're front and center on it. In addition to just sea level rise, then there's storm surges, king tides, El Nino.

08-01:12:01

Holmes:

There's a lot of dynamics in play.

08-01:12:02

Chappell:

This city and every other major city in the world is in trouble. All the great cities of the world are on water. When Katrina hit New Orleans, I was in the Netherlands speaking at the University of Amsterdam at that time. People couldn't believe that the dikes were only built for a hundred-year flood. They said, "We build for the thousand-year flood." Of course.

08-01:12:48

Holmes: Yeah. Well, they have a lot of experience with that. That's for sure.

08-01:12:53

Chappell: Yeah.

08-01:12:54

Holmes: And speaking of the economics of the Embarcadero and the port, it seems that the Giants ballpark was a huge boon and success story for that, but also an uphill battle.

08-01:13:12

Chappell: Yeah. And it, of course, is port land and was very low-level industrial warehouses beforehand. It has been so important because it really showed the possibilities of the waterfront. And I don't think Mission Bay would have happened when it did without the ballpark coming first. The Giants moved here from Manhattan in 1958. Well, they were at Seals Stadium at 15<sup>th</sup> and Bryant for two years, which subsequently became an auto dealership and hardware store and now a shopping center. All without any rezoning.

08-01:14:11

Holmes: Interesting.

08-01:14:13

Chappell: Very interesting project. So Candlestick opened in 1960 and they played there for 39 years. There was always a love/hate relationship with Candlestick. The weather is awful. It's hell to get to when 50,000 people are arriving and leaving at the same time, and mostly driving. And it was also built as a combined baseball and football stadium. A football field and a baseball diamond are fairly different in shape. Never worked well for baseball. Bob Lurie, who was a local real estate developer, bought the team in 1976. It was going to be sold to Toronto. As wealthy people do, they buy teams for toys. So that kept it here. And because of the problems with Candlestick, which incidentally was owned by the Rec and Park Department and provided revenue to Rec and Park—I think we talked last week about the Rec and Park commissioners getting free tickets, which was one of the problems.

08-01:15:47

Holmes: Yeah. Well, that explains it, too, right?

08-01:15:48

Chappell: Yeah. So Bob Lurie was looking down the peninsula for sites where the weather would be better, and where he could get a better deal. Team owners are always playing cities off against each other. "Who's going to give me the most money to do this?" It's a shell game. Then in 1987, a surprising thing happened and that is Harry Britt said there should be a stadium essentially at Showplace Square, at 7th and Townsend. It was surprising to many people because Harry Britt was the gay supervisor, who was appointed by Dianne to succeed Harvey Milk when he was assassinated. I remember at the time people saying, "Gay people don't go to baseball." [laughter] These old

stereotypes. Harry's a baseball fan. He also wanted to keep them in the city for the economic value. The supervisors appointed, at Harry's behest, a taskforce, and the taskforce wrote a proposition, Proposition W, on the November 1987 ballot, that was a policy statement. "Should the city develop a ballpark at 7<sup>th</sup> and Townsend?" This was controversial for some of the usual reasons. Oh, traffic. Oh, weather. But it was also just a policy statement. And it was vague. So it was defeated 53 percent to 47 percent.

08-01:18:16  
Chappell:

So that was November 1987. Two years later, Art Agnos and the supervisors put Proposition P on the ballot, in November 1989. This was a new site, the China Basin site, which is the site where the ballpark was ultimately built. In order to build a ballpark, you had to raise the height limit. So the height limit was 40 feet. The whole city had been down zoned in the 1970s to 40 feet. Well, not the whole city, but much of the city. It called for a 45,000-seat stadium, with 1200 parking spaces, and the city would give the site to the Giants for free. In addition, the city would put \$2 million into it every year for ten years, and get back 20 percent of the profits on the stadium. I don't know what the economics of this really were. It would be interesting to go back today and look at it. But SPUR was supportive of this at the time. Publicly funded stadiums, of which they all were in these days, are controversial amongst economists. I think it's clear that they don't pay their way, if that's all you're looking at, dollars in and dollars out. But there's a public-spirit aspect to these and it's the old Roman thing of bread or circuses. Give them circuses. People really identify, obviously, with ball teams. But it's also advertising for the city. The China Basin site, I don't know that there's a ball field in the world that is as good an ad as that is, as you're looking out at San Francisco Bay on television, seeing that all over the country.

Well, the election was November 1989, and October 17<sup>th</sup> was the Loma Prieta earthquake, and this doomed the proposal. It would have passed without that because it just missed. It missed by under 2,000 votes: 49.5 percent to 50.5 percent. So clearly it would have passed. But the public was really spooked about the city's finances, as well we should have been. The amount of money we have put into seismic upgrades since Loma Prieta, a billion dollars in the Civic Center alone. A billion dollars. We're still going around the city replacing gas lines, replacing water lines, replacing sewer lines. There are still schools, recreation buildings. We're continually selling bonds for seismic strengthening.

08-01:21:47  
Holmes:

That's an interesting aspect, when we think of that. The earthquake, on one hand, opened up possibilities for the waterfront, but at the same time, in its immediate effect, it undercut the Giants ballpark.

08-01:22:01  
Chappell:

Things were very tough here financially after that earthquake. Very tough. Yeah. Individuals can ignore the risk. It's a little harder for the city to ignore it.

I don't have earthquake insurance. [laughter] And, of course, what happened in 1906, is people set their houses on fire because they had fire insurance, but there was no such thing as earthquake insurance.

So, discouraged at the situation after the 1992 series, Bob Lurie announced he was selling the team to Tampa. Instead a group of local leading citizens, I would say, got together to buy the team, and appointed Peter Magowan, who was the CEO of Safeway at the time, to be the CEO of the Giants. So that was 1992, 1993. And in March, 1996, the Giants put Proposition P on the ballot for the first privately funded ballpark or stadium in the country. No public money. This isn't exactly true because, of course, the city provides transit, and we all pay for transit. But not enough to cover the cost. The city provides police. But, in fact, all the capital costs came out of the Giants. So by this time, I was at SPUR. And there were a variety of opinions about stadiums. The economists know that they don't really pay, although they're always sold as being moneymakers. So I said, "Well, let's go to Denver." Denver had just built Coors Field. So we took the SPUR board to Denver. And when we got on the plane, probably a third of the people were supportive, a third of the people were opposed, and a third of the people said, "I don't know." When we came back two days later, a hundred percent of the people were supportive, because what we saw is that you build this facility and it attracts some 40,000 people on former disused industrial land, and you develop a whole community around it. Apartments, condos, restaurants, parks, all of the things—

08-01:25:22

Holmes:

Yeah, retail.

08-01:25:23

Chappell:

It was such a quality job. It was not Candlestick Park in a sea of asphalt. But it was a tight urban site. In Denver there are sightlines from all around the ballpark, through the gates, that you can see the green field. It's wonderful. And a very beautifully designed, neo-traditional faux brick building. So we were fully supportive. The Giants ran a brilliant campaign. They said, "Who do we want to front this for us?" They got Quentin Kopp, this right-wing curmudgeon, who had been a supervisor and a state senator and a judge, and who was famous for not wanting to spend a nickel on anything, and here he was supporting it. On the other side they had Roberta Achtenberg, lesbian, lefty, had been supervisor, had been deputy secretary of HUD, had run for mayor. So we had the left and the right. Then Cecil Williams, the minister from Glide Memorial Church, who represented all the heartstrings. Between those three people, how could anybody say no? And, in fact, it passed very handily, 66 percent "yes" vote on that. There was still BCDC and State Lands. The big question was is this non-maritime use appropriate? Is this 150-foot building appropriate? And fortunately they made the right decision. Like the Golden Gate Park master plan calling the de Young Museum a nonconforming use, the idea that bringing 40,000 people to the waterfront, what, 80 times a year is not good for public access to the waterfront?

08-01:28:17

Holmes: It's really hard to argue against that. But the ballpark, would that also be considered another exception if we think about waterfront development?

08-01:28:27

Chappell: That's right. Oh, yeah. There was one funny controversy that erupted at SPUR. After the building was under construction, and the naming rights sold, and the Giants announced that they had a sponsorship from Coca-Cola. There was going to be this large Coke bottle laying on its side in a park for children, on essentially the roof of the bleachers. And a controversy erupted in the city about the health effects of soda, which we know even more today is a bad actor. A Coke bottle itself is a very beautiful form, and every design student studies the lines of a Coke bottle. So there were two SPUR board members who thought they should not do it and said, "We need to discuss this at the SPUR board." So I put it on the agenda. Larry Baer, the vice president of the Giants, was on our board, and he saw the agenda, and I got a call from Larry and Peter Magowan saying, "Can you take this off? We'd like you to take this off the agenda." And I said, "Well, no." I said, "You really don't want me to take this off the agenda." I said, "People are talking about this, and you know when you have an argument with your wife, the worst thing you can do is not talk about it. You put it out on the table and talk about it." And I said, "And we will talk about it and we will find that there are two members—the vote will be two to whatever." And, "Oh, what if the press comes?" And the press would have been Gerry Adams, who was the land use writer for the *Chronicle* at the time. And I said, "We should be so lucky if the press would come, but the press never comes." But they said, "Oh, we can't have that." I said, "Okay, if the press comes, I'll ask them to leave and they will. We're a private organization." But I said, "This is the best discussion that there will ever be of this, and you really want to publicize it." Indeed, we had a great debate, just ranging on all kinds of planning issues, and the conclusion was, well, it's good we've had this debate. Let's never waste our time on something like this again. There are important issues to deal with. And I said afterwards to Peter, I said, "And the funny thing is in 25 years when your contract with Coke is up, Pepsi's going to make you a better deal, and you're going to want to switch it to Pepsi, and the city's going to landmark the Coke bottle and you'll never be able to switch it." [laughter]

So the ballpark opened in April of 2000, and they had a party for people who they had worked with during the campaign, including all of these neighbors from Potrero Hill, a mile away, who had opposed this. I thought it was so ironic. There they are eating the Giants' food and drinking their drinks. It was obvious from day one what a home run, excuse the bad pun, that the ballpark was going to be. On days when there is a game, it's like the whole downtown changes, because people are walking from the Financial District down 2nd Street, down the Embarcadero, down 1<sup>st</sup> Street. It is a civic happening. They built 5,000 parking spaces, which have never been full. Never once. In the proposed Seawall Lot 337 development, they're building a garage for 3,000

cars that will support the office space and the residential for part of the time, and the ballpark for the rest of the time. And, frankly, by the time that's built, I'll be surprised if they even need 3,000, because there's so many more transportation options coming along today. We have the condos, the apartments, the restaurants.

We learned in Denver that they very much encouraged bars and restaurants around the ballpark for two reasons. One is it's a transportation management strategy. That is, some people come out of the ballpark and get on the bus or the train right away, and go off. But you can't take 40,000 people on your bus right now. And so some people go to the neighborhood bar and have a beer, and 45 minutes later they go to the bus. Some people have two beers, and an hour-and-a-half later they go. It's a transportation management strategy.

08-01:34:36

Holmes:

You can see how that also goes both ways. Like people maybe get there a little early, go to eat versus coming right when the game starts.

08-01:34:46

Chappell:

And the other thing they did in Denver was that they, in order to get a permit for a bar or a restaurant, you had to agree that you're in charge of the cleanup on your block or for several blocks around. So picking up beer bottles, picking up papers, hosing down the sidewalks. All done free to the public by the neighborhood businesses. Well, we had a supervisor at the time, Sue Bierman, who was a lovely woman but not a good policy thinker. She put a cap on bars and restaurants around the Giants ballpark, which is too bad, because it could be a much livelier neighborhood, and certainly Mission Bay development needs more of those uses.

08-01:35:53

Holmes:

Could that cap ever get overturned?

08-01:35:53

Chappell:

Yeah. It was just an ordinance.

08-01:35:58

Holmes:

In thinking of what the ballpark has been able to do for downtown and for the city, it almost is reminiscent of not just what Seals Stadium in some ways did many decades ago but what you also see with a lot of ballparks throughout the great cities here in the United States.

08-01:36:20

Chappell:

Yeah, yeah. And that's why it was very disappointing for the 49ers to build a 1960s-style suburban stadium, although San Francisco's short on sites, as we see with the Warriors Arena, which has bounced around proposed San Francisco sites for decades. But they ended up building it in such a suburban location. On a BART line, okay. On a BART line in Oakland, okay. But Santa Clara?

08-01:37:09

Holmes:

I wanted to also discuss the Ferry Building, which I know was another major project that SPUR was involved with there on the waterfront.

08-01:37:21

Chappell:

Yeah, yeah. And, of course, the Ferry Building is a real civic monument. It was at one time the second biggest passenger terminal in the world, Charing Cross being number one, which is astounding for this little city. Architecturally, this tower at the end of Market Street—we have these two diagonal streets in the city, Market and Columbus. Columbus ends at the Transamerica Pyramid if you're going in the right direction, otherwise it's in your rearview mirror. The whole main street, Market Street of San Francisco, focuses on the Ferry Building. The other end, at Castro Street, ends in a whimper at a gas station. But Bernard Maybeck did an unexecuted plan for, like a Greek temple at the top of the hill, and a water cascade coming down the hill, forming the other end of this iconic boulevard. The way the Ferry Building operated was that passengers came on and off at an upper level, came into the upper level concourse of the building. There was then a bridge over the Embarcadero, passenger bridge, and down into the street. And luggage and freight was handled on the ground floor. So the ground floor is a low ceilinged, mean kind of space because it was made for freight, not for people. And the death knell for the Ferry Building, of course, was the building of the bridges in 1937 and 1938 and then the Key System railway. So the ferry business dried up very quickly. The port did a bad remodel in the 1950s. The port offices put a mezzanine in to create a third floor, so this great two-story nave was cut in half and there was this funky third floor upstairs where the port offices were, and then there were other not very nice offices throughout the building because it's not the right shape particularly for windowed office space. So SPUR was continually urging its remodel, and there were these developers coming and going. Nobody could get the financing to do it until the Embarcadero Freeway came down. And so the earthquake was in October of 1989.

In 2001 the port came out with an RFP for developer/architect teams. Developer/architect/finance package teams is the way these things work these days. And so the usual protests were heard from people who said, "Well, we've got to save this for the ferries." Well, we've all been working on getting more ferries for a long time. We are getting more ferries. But there's never going to be the passenger load to support a building that large, and to support the rehabilitation of the building. There are a series of beautiful ferry terminals north and south that are outside ferry terminals, which is what we use today, and the commercial takes place within the Ferry Building. We're not providing waiting rooms. So I had to do a lot of public education about the port and the possibility of this project. And there were four finalists in the competition. They were all some level of festival marketplace, which by this time was a proven model. We had all the boards at SPUR, and a lot of public participation, people coming in and out, and presentations and so on. It was

very interesting because three out of the four were a similar concept to the way it has developed, and that is the emphasis on the nave and the length of the building. The fourth one was sort of the reciprocal concept. Instead of emphasis on the nave, it was emphasis on the perpendicular movement, from the street to the water. And this is why competitions are good, because you get to see ideas.

08-01:43:09

Holmes: Yeah. That's an interesting design.

08-01:43:12

Chappell:

The winning proposal was Bill Wilson, the developer, later Wilson Meany, later Wilson, Meany, Sullivan, now Wilson Meany again, and the architect SMWM (Simon Martin-Vegue Winkelstein and Morris), and Page & Turnbull, historic architects who had just done Pier 1. So they knew it very well. The concept included taking out the top floor, this 1950s addition, but also taking out the second floor in the nave. So there'd be this great cathedral-like space that's 660 feet long or something like that, and then office space on the second floor, on the outboard sides of the nave. So the plans were developed and this went to the SHPO, the state historic preservation officer in Sacramento who said, "No, this is a historic building. It's landmarked." But landmarking can be cancelled, but then you couldn't get historic tax credits. Historic tax credits are 20 percent. It's a huge part of the restoration of any commercial building. We just did a pier superstructure at Fort Mason and it was \$20 million to restore the superstructure and another \$17 million to do the pilings. But it couldn't have been done without historic tax credits, and the Ferry Building couldn't have been done without historic tax credits. So it was touch and go, and it looked like the whole thing might die. Our congressional delegation in Washington was able to speak with the secretary of the interior and a compromise was reached.

08-01:46:00

Holmes: Oh, wow.

08-01:46:02

Chappell:

The compromise is that 80 percent of the second floor has been removed but there's a bridge in the center that's a hundred feet wide, and the floor tiling is mosaic on that floor, although it was in terrible shape. But in the center, there's a medallion of the State Seal of California. It's, I don't know, 8 feet in diameter, something like that. So that's preserved and they were able to restore the tile. They also have kept the second floor intact on each end of the great nave. And this is one of these compromises, like the "every-other" windows at Pier 1, that made the project worse. Because there are these great arched openings on each end of the Ferry Building and it would have been like walking into the Galleria in Milan except now it's squished down because they kept the floor in at the end, and it's rental office space that isn't public. Again, it's one of these crazy compromises that comes out of the way we interpret the secretary of the interior's standards for historic buildings. That



some historian feels warm in his heart that this is the way it always was, and the public “understands” that this is the way. The public does not understand or care that that’s the way it was. There are many glorious things about that building but one of the really glorious things is lost.

08-01:48:14

Holmes:

But thinking of the congressional delegation being able to strike that compromise, this speaks to how fortunate San Francisco is today. If we think about just the senators, right, you have a former mayor and supervisor in Senator Dianne Feinstein, as well as what I like to think of as a San Franciscan by extension in Barbara Boxer. Both very powerful senators, both very much identified here with San Francisco.

08-01:48:55

Chappell:

And Nancy Pelosi.

08-01:48:59

Holmes:

Oh, very much so. Yes.

08-01:49:00

Chappell:

Yeah, we are so lucky. They have been so good. The development model for the Ferry Building was Pike Place Market in Seattle, which, of course, is this wonderful food market that was built in 1907. And, I must say, I was skeptical that this could be recreated, and be able to amortize a very expensive historic remodel project. The leasing was done by Michelle Meany, married to Chris Meany, partner in Wilson Meany Sullivan, developer. They said local businesses only. No chains. This is not going to be Pier 39, it’s not going to be Fisherman’s Wharf. This is going to be a local community resource. And, boy, were they right. My attitude on touristic things is that you shouldn’t build anything for tourists. You should build it for San Franciscans. And if San Franciscans like it, tourists will love it. The Ferry Building is a social event every Saturday. There’s a farmers market outside, an educational farmers market. There are a hundred small businesses in the Ferry Building. I’ve done some work with the Ferry Building in the last few years and it’s a tough thing to manage, because there are a hundred small businesses, most of whom have never been in business before. This is their first retail outlet, and it’s a very personal management challenge. But why does the public love it? When they first were leasing it, they had to practically give away the office space. They’re now doing great. What a place to have an office. The port hearing room is on the second floor looking out at the bay, and it’s also the BCDC hearing room. And it is so great. I was at the BCDC meeting last week or the week before when it was Fleet Week. What a show.

08-01:52:22

Holmes:

Yeah, yeah. I know we’re almost at the end of our time but before we go I wanted to get your thoughts on the resulting policies at the port. We talked about a number of projects, and we still have a few more to cover in the next session, of dealing with the waterfront, which I think will fold in nicely with

talking about planning for the growing city. But in looking back on the Ferry Building, the ballpark, the history of the port and trying to rearrange and navigate development on the waterfront, what were some of the policies for the port that came to mind and came to fruition throughout that process, with SPUR working on those projects?

08-01:53:07  
Chappell:

Well, what we tried to do is to redesign the playing field for the port. There were kind of these four big projects: Returning the port to the city, BCDC, the waterfront land use plan, and one we'll talk about next time, the Blue Greenway, which were really cutting edge, changed the landscape. And now other organizations, whether it's the Giants or developers or the port itself, which now has a strong staff, can go forward within this new framework that allows some progress. There are still compelling economic problems and one is that BCDC, State Lands, and the port planning process are not all synced together. And especially the fact that BCDC and State Lands come in at the end and not at the beginning. That has to be changed. You know how hard it is to get two people to agree on something. Try and get three institutions on the same page. Not easy. The seawall lots need to be removed from the State Lands trust. There is no compelling public purpose to that. Physically, institutionally, it's an easy thing to do. You just declare them surplus, which they are. But, again, that's a heavy lift. It's like reforming CEQA. You just say those two words, reform CEQA, and all the environmentalists see casinos in the Sierras when something else is in mind. So there will be a lot of opposition to that, but I think it has to happen. The Prop H hotel ban has got to change. And that probably can't change until the people who wrote it are dead. Some of them are still active. But that is the biggest potential income source of the seawall lots. The F-line and E-line trolleys are very beloved, and so beloved you can never get on one. Just as we have put more money into the cable cars, we need to put more money into those lines, as both a visitor experience but also just basic transportation for people who work in restaurants in Fisherman's Wharf. How do they get there from BART? They live in Vallejo. They come in on BART. And one of the ideas we've had is a transportation improvement district. A transportation improvement district is where the property owners agree to assess themselves for extra services. One of the things I've been doing the last few years, since I left SPUR, is forming community benefit districts, otherwise known as business improvement districts. It's the same thing. Property owners and businesses agree to assess themselves, in that case mostly for clean and safe services. In this case, to bolster the trolley service.

There's also the concept of transfer of development rights. This has been a huge resource in San Francisco for preserving historic buildings. And the concept is, you have a two-story historic building. The underlying zoning is ten stories. You can then sell eight stories worth of development rights to someone else, who will put eight stories on a different site in a non-historic location. You get a good bit of money that compensates you for keeping the

historic building, which is a resource. Everybody wins. This was put in the downtown plan. It was written by George Williams. George is a longtime SPUR board member, former deputy planning director, an attorney, as well as a planner. It has worked beautifully. And, in fact, all the development rights have been sold and we need to find new places to do them. The city is looking at doing the Civic Center buildings. You could sell 20 stories over city hall to somebody and that would get the city a lot of badly needed money. But the same thing could happen with those port buildings, and pump money into the port to restore and maintain those buildings. We underbuilt the Embarcadero Parkway in terms of pedestrian and bike access. Bicycle use is just growing by leaps and bounds and will continue to do so. It's flat. That's one thing about the waterfront. It's flat.

08-02:00:33

Holmes:

One of the few flat places in San Francisco, right?

08-02:00:35

Chappell:

Needs a Class I protected bikeway. Now in some places, it's shared pedestrians and bicycle, which is never safe for either. As car use diminishes, maybe we can eke out some more space. We did a project, I don't know, maybe five years ago. We have this project here, the Piero Patri Prize, where every year we select a student from landscape architecture schools around the country, and give them a stipend to do a project along the waterfront. And several years ago the project was the EmBIKEadero. Looked at all the possibilities of where can you shoehorn in a bike lane.

08-02:01:39

Holmes:

Well, that certainly does bring the waterfront back to the people in a lot of different ways.

08-02:01:45

Chappell:

It sure does. It's so glorious to walk along the waterfront and needs to be more so.

08-02:01:54

Holmes:

Well, I think we'll touch on that in our next session dealing with the Blue Greenway, which I think dovetails a lot with that.

08-02:02:02

Chappell:

Great.

08-02:02:03

Holmes:

All right. Thanks, Jim.

Interview 9: November 1, 2016

09-00:00:00

Holmes:

All right. Well, this is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley and I'm once again sitting down with Jim Chappell. This is our ninth session and today's date is November 1, 2016 and we were here at SPUR

headquarters in the beautiful city of San Francisco. Jim, thanks for sitting down once again.

09-00:00:25

Chappell: Sure.

09-00:00:26

Holmes: In our last session we were discussing development and development policy and the rewriting of that policy on the San Francisco waterfront, largely conceived. I wanted to finish up on that discussion before we move to development of housing, particularly a concept that SPUR began to promote called the Blue Greenway.

09-00:00:52

Chappell: Well, in our work on parks and recreation, it became very apparent that most of the parks and trails and so on are in the northern part of the city, in the western part of the city, and that the southern part of the city is really lacking. And that, of course, is because it was once largely industrial. And as it becomes more residential, there's a need for more parks. So working with the Neighborhood Parks Council in 2002 we put together a three-day charrette to look at the southern waterfront and look for recreation opportunities. Our partner at the Neighborhood Parks Council, Isabel Wade, was originally from Vancouver and she found in Vancouver the former city councilman, who was really Mr. Planning, a guy by the name of Gordon Price. So we brought him to San Francisco to look at the southern waterfront with us and to give us some ideas. If you know Vancouver you know there's a continuous trail around the whole peninsula and it's pedestrians, bikes, skateboards, and it really brings everyone to the waterfront very easily. So Gordon gave us a very inspiring presentation and showed some slides of how this could work in San Francisco. So we took it upon ourselves, as a project, to get this system of trails, of kayak put-ins, of parks, of beaches along the southern waterfront, and Isabel came up with the name of the Blue Greenway, which was really brilliant. SPUR and the Neighborhood Parks Council worked on this for a number of years, and it was Anne Halsted and me from SPUR leading the effort here, and Isabel and her team leading it on the other side.

Took a long time to get any traction with the port and the city, and eventually we turned it over wholly to the Neighborhood Parks Council. It's really squarely in their wheelhouse. After a number of years it got accepted by the city, and is now in the official plans of the port and the city, and is going to happen. As the new developments along the waterfront, like Pier 70 and other developments at Hunters Point are happening, the Blue Greenway is now an integral part of it. So it's going to have a big impact here for years to come.

09-00:04:04

Holmes: Which was the theme, I believe, of our last session, of not just talking about development on the waterfront but bringing the waterfront back to the people. And this was a series projects over the many years you were at SPUR, which

was very much at the forefront of that kind of plan. I had a quick question regarding the Blue Greenway, since we also talked about that on the waterfront there are overlapping jurisdictions. Was BCDC involved with the Blue Greenway planning?

09-00:04:35

Chappell:

Not while I was still working on it, because at that time we were still pretty conceptual. But yeah, before anything gets built they have jurisdiction of the first 100 feet, and it will all have to be permitted and signed according to the Bay Trail signs and so on, which is a good thing.

09-00:05:03

Holmes:

Yeah, very much so. Well speaking of developments, you mentioned Pier 70, which was in many ways a very innovative waterfront development that began here in San Francisco.

09-00:05:16

Chappell:

Yeah. Pier 70 is about 65 acres owned by the port, some of it former filled land, and some of it upland. And very early in San Francisco's history, it began to be industrialized, and then in the 1880s it became a steel works and Bethlehem Steel Ship Building. In World War I and World War II, destroyers were built at Hunters Point, and the last ship that was built there was 1965. Much of the area has been lying fallow since then. The largest floating dry-dock on the West Coast is there, and that is still operating and very busy, providing a lot of good jobs. But the rest of the area has been sitting abandoned. And time after time, in the 1990s particularly, developers took a look at this. I can remember three different times, with three different teams of developers, who came to SPUR, and we'd try to figure out how to make it work. We could never make it work economically, because the whole city was down-zoned to 40 feet in the 1970s. Right away there's a limit there on return. And as a former industrial site, there is pollution. Then the historic buildings; while they're a great opportunity, they are also very expensive. I was on an advisory team and a jury one year for an NAIOP challenge, the National Association of Industrial and Office Parks, and every year there's a challenge between the Berkeley Business School and the Stanford Business School, to do an actual development project. We spent I guess a semester, working on that, and the numbers just never worked. So what has happened, though, is Pier 70 hasn't changed, but economic conditions have changed. As other things are getting filled up, Mission Bay is getting filled up, development is moving south. The Third Street light rail is operating. There have been a number of successful examples of the waterfront, of properties with 66 year leases from the port, the Hotel Vitale, the Ferry Building, Piers 1½, 3, and 5. Developers are used to this. And then there are things like the Tate Modern in London that is in an old industrial building. It's superb for large scale twentieth century, twentieth-first century sculpture. I actually tried to get Don Fisher to put his modern art museum in those historic buildings. It would have been perfect. He declined. He never recovered from having to deal with the

port, he said, on building his Gap headquarters on Folsom Street at the Embarcadero.

So a few years ago, in 2011 and 2012, the port finally figured they could do it, and they came out with requests for proposals. They split it into two projects, one the historic buildings, and the other the rest. And the historic buildings are being done by Orton Development Company, who are experienced in this, and they actually did the Ford Plant in Richmond across the bay. The rest is being done by Forest City, who are a very good mixed-use developer. Whereas there had always been resistance to development by people in Dogpatch, which is the adjoining community, and Potrero Hill, which is above Dogpatch, this has gone through. Now, one thing is it is all low-rise, which is what the neighbors want. But also the neighbors are changing. Dogpatch is a cool place—

09-00:10:58

Holmes:

Well, it has a cool name. Who wouldn't want to live there?

09-00:11:01

Chappell:

[laughter] And has some cool people living there. The population of San Francisco is changing. There are people who've moved here since it's been a city, and people who aren't afraid of cities but love cities, and that's why they're here. So it's all come together. It's also had a couple advantages we've never had before. One was the passing of the infrastructure financing district for the port, which allows the port now to use tax increment financing based on future tax revenues, to pay for infrastructure needs today. So that's hundreds of millions of dollars.

09-00:11:55

Holmes:

Well, from our economic discussion last session, discussing those kind of economic hurdles of development on the port, that seemed to be a game changer in a lot of respects.

09-00:12:06

Chappell:

Yeah, it really is. And the other game changer is the last parks bond now allows using that money for development of parks on port land, in addition to Rec and Park land. In fact, the park is under construction down there today, Crane Cove Park, and that is using park bond money. So it's not the developer's obligation, it's coming out of the bond. This is all good news for the port, and it's great to see some good news for the port. There are other impending problems coming down the line, and that is most of the piers are not seismically stable. And with sea level rise coming, we're going to have big decisions coming up as to what gets saved and what doesn't get saved, and where the money comes from. So this whole thing that SPUR started in the 1960s of bringing the port back to the city and repurposing it as a city resource is still playing out.

09-00:13:34

Holmes:

I wanted to ask you, Pier 70, in many respects, is a big success for both San Francisco, but particularly for the port. What were some of the lessons that Pier 70 brings to mind with development on the port, and particularly for thinking about future developments?

09-00:13:58

Chappell:

It has an advantage in that there's a good-sized piece of land there. But this is a lesson also for Hunters Point, because there's a big sized piece of land there also. Much of the rest of the port is just a thin strip along the waterfront. But I think now it has been, since 1994, 1996, that the waterfront land use plan was passed, and at least some people are getting used to development on the waterfront. And certainly, the great successes of things like the Ferry Building and Piers 1½, 3, and 5 that have become destinations. People appreciate that. BCDC loves it. And the port and the maritime unions have realized that the world has changed.

09-00:15:21

Holmes:

Also of thinking, too, of the mixed-use that we see on Pier 70, which I think in a lot of developments is now very much of the times, but were lacking many decades ago.

09-00:15:35

Chappell:

Yeah. Pier 70 had an advantage that some of the land was not once water, and so housing can be built there. I wouldn't be surprised, in the future, to see either changes at State Lands about allowing residential, or making it easier to trade off and really keep the waterfront public, but backing up and going across the street, being able to do residential more easily, and being able to switch with other areas and do land trades.

09-00:16:37

Holmes:

Yeah, indeed. Well speaking of housing, I think that would be a good place to go into our conversation on that topic. When we're thinking about the history of SPUR, SPUR and housing, it's like transportation. SPUR really changed the playing field in San Francisco. We see this with transportation, but we also see this certainly with housing. What were some of your earliest actions on that front and how did SPUR begin to approach that?

09-00:17:09

Chappell:

So when we look at housing production in the city, it is extremely low. From 1980 to 2000, San Francisco grew by 100,000 people after having had a declining population since the Second World War. So 100,000 people. And from 1980 to 2000, a total of 20,000 dwelling units were produced in the city, or an average of 1,000 a year. So we have 5,000 people a year moving to San Francisco, and we're only producing a thousand housing units. Clearly that doesn't work. So housing production has been a big SPUR priority. At the same time we were producing a thousand housing units a year, Vancouver, BC, a much smaller city, was producing 3,500 housing units a year. Chicago, a much bigger city, was producing 5,000 units a year. So we knew we had to

get that number up. And just by way of example, what has happened is that in 2009, as units got finished up that were started before the Great Recession, 3,400 units came online in 2009. Of course in 2011, only 348 units came online, which is part of the problem.

09-00:18:55

Holmes:

I wanted to just ask really quickly, since we're discussing those stats and comparing, say, San Francisco to Chicago, is the geographic limitations. With San Francisco, you have a city that's on a peninsula. Not much open land that you can use. At the same time, outside of land use, there are also development regulations that pose kind of obstacle.

09-00:19:18

Chappell:

Yeah. In Chicago it's a question of when did cities stop annexing land. San Mateo County used to be in San Francisco, and if that were the case, we would be able to do many more units than we can. And, of course, Chicago just annexed thousands of miles of farmland, flat farmland, and it was easy. So yeah. And there is this myth that San Francisco's filled up, and no more people can come here, which certainly is not true. We'll talk about Mission Bay. Other examples are Hunters Point and Treasure Island. We already talked about Market-Octavia some, that former freeway land. So we have the space. But the regulations are daunting. What developers need is certainty, because if you're borrowing tens of millions of dollars, you want to be able to pay that back. San Francisco has market certainty. That is, if it gets built, it will get occupied. But it doesn't have entitlement certainty. And that is a great problem. The entitlement certainty also has led to the fact that only the biggest, wealthiest developers can develop here. The little guy can't develop here because it's just too risky.

So we went from 348 units in 2011 to 2016 when there are 6,000 units coming online this year, and 6,000 units coming online next year. In fact, rents are going down. Rents and sale prices peaked between the second and third quarter in 2015. So despite what many people say, supply and demand does work in San Francisco. You laugh. There are *supposedly knowledgeable* people who will stand up and tell you supply and demand doesn't work in San Francisco.

09-00:21:53

Holmes:

Oh, interesting.

09-00:21:53

Chappell:

So every couple of years, SPUR has done kind of a big strategic plan for where to go to produce more housing. And then we pick them off one-by-one, and then recycle it in a couple of years, and see how we did and so on. So just some of the things that SPUR has done are restarting the neighborhood planning process; re-jiggering the Office-Housing Production linkages; writing the inclusionary housing ordinance; writing ordinances to allow secondary units, in-law quarters; trying to pass housing bonds; and passing the



housing trust fund; working with architects on what we call affordability by design. Making recommendations for changes at the planning department and building department to make it easier to create housing. We'll talk about the Housing Action Coalition that we formed, and then new neighborhoods, the Mission Bays of the world. So I came in at the end of 1994 and that spring one of our first papers was a white paper on housing production, just sending this up the flagpole, that this is something we're going to work on. And SPUR believes that every housing unit can be a good housing unit, that we need housing units at all price points. We need affordable housing, we need middle income housing, we need luxury housing. Because people can afford luxury housing, if there's not a unit for them to buy, they will just go down the food chain and occupy another house.

09-00:24:23

Holmes:

That's an interesting aspect of looking at the wider spectrum of how gentrification works; looking at all price points. That's really interesting.

09-00:24:33

Chappell:

Yeah. And not everybody does that. So the last affordable housing bond that had been passed in San Francisco was in 1980. So in 1996, we were at the forefront of leadership of a new housing bond, a \$100 million bond, and it passed. That was the same amount, though, that the bond had been 16 years prior.

09-00:25:05

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

09-00:25:06

Chappell:

So it really is much less money. And it passed by the tiniest majority. 66.7 percent was required and it passed by 67.4 percent. But our system's winner-take-all. Pass is pass. There were a number of subsequent bonds that didn't pass. In 1996 Oz Erickson joined the SPUR board. We wanted him on the board to help us increase housing production in the city. And Oz is, or was, the largest housing developer in the city, and doing what were called "high-rise" projects at the time, 20 story projects. So Oz set up the SPUR Housing Production Task Force. It was 40 people on four separate committees. So I think the 40 people only met together once, and then there were four groups of approximately ten people working on different facets of the supply problem. There were not-for-profit developers, for-profit developers, land use attorneys, architects, planners, each biting off a chunk.

In six or eight months they came out with four reports that were then our marching orders for the next, at least, five years. One was a demonstration plan. Another was zoning reforms. Another was inclusionary housing. Another was building department reforms. Zoning code reforms, including parking requirements. And the demonstration plan was for what the city calls the Central Waterfront, but this included Dogpatch and Pier 70. We looked to Vancouver for some models there. Basically this was a plan for reusing vacant

port and industrial lands. It had a row of high-rise buildings along I-280 to block noise from the neighborhood, and turn land that was not good for residents into land that would be good for residents, because it screened the freeway noise. And then step down to midrise buildings, and then to the single family houses that were in the neighborhood. It had a concentration of density along the Third Street corridor where we knew light rail would be coming, and had mixed use retail along Third Street. So we came out with this in the SPUR newsletter, and went to a community meeting in Potrero Hill to present it. And we got to this hall and there were hundreds of people there with their pitchforks out.

09-00:29:06

Holmes:

Oh, picket signs and pitchforks.

09-00:29:08

Chappell:

[laughter] How dare we talk about their neighborhood and how dare we suggest anything but single family houses? It's a time-honored thing that SPUR has done, that architects do, ULI does, landscape architects do, is you do a community project as a demonstration to get something to rise up in the public interest that hasn't been, and to try and solve some problems. After we did our plan, Dan Solomon, a very good housing architect, was teaching a studio in Berkeley, and he had three teams of students doing plans, which were even more high-rise than ours. And in reaction to this, the neighborhood group wrote a letter to the mayor, which was a good thing, saying the city needs to do a plan for this neighborhood. They also said that the plan should be to cut down the existing density in the neighborhood to *half* what it was at the time. That part not so good. But I have always thought that our demonstration plan was a success because it did get the city to do a plan, even if the plan wasn't what we would have done.

Interestingly, a couple of years ago I was helping some other people in the neighborhood form a green benefit district. The first one in the country. It's like a business improvement district, except it's to create and maintain public open spaces. And when one of the neighborhood activists heard I was on the team, she insisted I be thrown off because I had done this terrible thing 15 years before, more than 15 years before. And I've always thought that what we did was a success, because the right thing happened, that the neighbors got together with the city and did their own plan, which is ultimately what you want to have happen.

09-00:32:05

Holmes:

Sure. When we think about this development plan, when you were pushing it out, you held a community meeting there for them, which SPUR has done on numerous issues.

09-00:32:19  
Chappell:

Right, yeah. Right. And one of their questions was, do you live in this neighborhood, because if you don't live in the neighborhood you can't have an opinion.

09-00:32:27  
Holmes:

Yeah. [laughter]

09-00:32:29  
Chappell:

So that was March 1998 and the next month, April 1988, we came out with a proposal to restart neighborhood planning in the city. The theory is that the city is running out of what developers call "prepared land." That is, land that is in the city's general plan for development, and already zoned for development. And these former industrial lands, former freeway lands, weren't. So instead of a developer having to pick off a piece of land, piece by piece by piece, and go through rezoning and go through the neighborhood fights, get it all out on the table and do it all at once. Get the community's input, develop a plan that the community can live with, that the city can live with, that has a chance of being economically possible. Do the EIR upfront on the plan, and then if a developer comes in with a specific project and meets the stipulations of the plan, it's easier to then go through the EIR process, and before a developer buys a piece of land, he knows what he can do on it, and the neighbors know what's in the future.

Oz and I took this to Willie Brown to ask him to restart neighborhood planning. We took along with us Roberta Achtenberg, who had been a supervisor and deputy secretary of HUD, and was at the time vice president of public policy at the chamber of commerce. And she represented both the progressive left and the chamber of commerce. We also took Brad Paul, who was a Tenderloin activist. So we had Oz and me as centrists, and then two lefties, which you do when you see Willie. And Willie brought his planning director, the DPW [Department of Public Works] director, the Redevelopment Agency director, the PUC director, the fire chief, and the police chief. Oz and I pitched this idea of restarting neighborhood planning, and doing a complete plan. And the police and the fire are things that are of concern to neighbors and so get that in as part of the plan right from the beginning. And Oz and I pitched, and Roberta and Brad nodded yes, and Willie is just sitting there like a sphinx, as he always does. You have no idea what he's thinking. Don't play poker with him. [laughter] You don't know if he's making up his grocery list or thinking of his date tonight or listening. When it was all over he turned to his planning director and said, "Gerald, do this. Pick three neighborhoods, tell me what they are." So the Planning Department picked three neighborhoods: Market-Octavia, both sides of Market Street, from Eleventh Street to Noe Street, including the Duboce Triangle, the former Central Freeway land, the Franklin-Gough corridor; and then Balboa Park, which is the BART station, the southern gateway to the city. The BART station, Muni yards, Caltrans freeway leftover lands; and the third one was Dogpatch.

09-00:37:22

Holmes: And that's the Central Waterfront, right?

09-00:37:25

Chappell: The Central Waterfront, yeah. And then later Japantown and Glen Park were added in, for what the city called Better Neighborhoods plans. And we wrote the scope and the SPUR urban design committee, it was headed by Paul Sedway, who is a very experienced, nationally known planning consultant. He wrote the scope and the budgets for these studies. This was in 2000. When the planning department came out and announced the program in the winter of 2000, they called it Better Neighborhoods 2002. And I was outraged that they were going to spend two years doing these plans. Why not Better Neighborhoods 2001? It can't take more than a year. Well, for the first one, for the Market-Octavia plan, it took eight years.

09-00:38:37

Holmes: Oh, wow. What was the main source of delay?

09-00:38:40

Chappell: Every year we'd take the SPUR board somewhere. And we were in Vancouver in May or June. They were just starting to do a new downtown plan for the city. So the downtown, really big job. And we said, "When do you think this'll be finished?" And they said, "December." [laughter] So in San Francisco we need to consult everyone. Hundreds of public meetings. The problem is that the same people don't come twice. It's a different group of people every month. So you have to keep recycling, doing the same thing again. And then by the time you get to the end, many of those people have moved and there's a new group of people who got off the plane yesterday. In fact they said with the Market-Octavia plan, "You're rushing this through," because they just became aware.

That being said, the Market-Octavia plan is a great plan and it has resulted in thousands of housing units along the trace of the former Central Freeway. I think we talked about this in a previous session. One of the reasons it was so successful, is who happened to live in the neighborhood. There are a number of architects who live in the neighborhood. The Duboce Triangle is a quaint, nice neighborhood, that actually had a bunch of public money put into it in the 1960s, planting street trees. All the streets have mature trees on them, which is unusual for San Francisco, and makes a big difference. And they had done sidewalk widening and so on back then. It's also a gay neighborhood, so we have people who know cities, and had moved to San Francisco because they love cities, and people who are used to breaking some of the rules. They were willing to break a lot of rules, not the least of which is parking. San Francisco, like most American cities in the 1950s, instituted a one-to-one parking law. In some places like Los Angeles it's two spaces for every housing unit. In San Francisco, it's every housing unit you built needed to have its own parking space. That is hugely expensive for two reasons. One is just building a parking space can be \$100,000, easily. And the other thing is, it limits the number of

units you can build above it by how many cars you can get parked on one level. So the Market-Octavia plan has one to four parking, and it works just fine. It's a transit-intensive neighborhood. Half the households in San Francisco don't have a car to begin with, and if you have a garage, you're probably going to buy a car. If you don't have a garage, you'd have to be out of your mind to have a car. So it's good for Muni. It's good for everything. And it's a whole lot cheaper. Parking spaces do sell for \$100,000 in ordinary neighborhoods.

09-00:42:48

Holmes: But you were saying it took, what, eight years to get this plan?

09-00:42:52

Chappell: It took eight years.

09-00:42:54

Holmes: So what were some of the obstacles on getting that through?

09-00:42:59

Chappell: "You're going to put more housing in my neighborhood? You're going to make it crowded. It's going to be higher than my two-story house."

09-00:43:09

Holmes: The "Not In My Backyard," the NIMBYs, yeah.

09-00:43:10

Chappell: Yes. That's essentially what it was. And there are different parts of the neighborhood. So what was appropriate on Market Street might not be what's appropriate three blocks back. So there are a lot of moving parts in the plan. Then, after the plan got adopted, a group of NIMBY's kind of "discovered" historic preservation, and they got the city to do historic resource analysis of the neighborhood. Actually, it started while the plan was in its eleventh hour. But then what happened is, after the adoption of the plan, the city had to go back and re-jigger the plan because they, of course, found lots of "historic resources," translated old houses. And historic preservation is really a very important thing to the quality of our life. I taught history of architecture for 25 years and I really believe in it. But what's happened is, it is the tool of choice for NIMBY's today, and harms real historic preservation, because people don't take it seriously. But at any rate, the Market-Octavia plan has been very successful. It would have been all built out now if it weren't for the Great Recession, but it will be all built in a couple of years.

The other plans were not as good. The Central Waterfront plan was just destined to be low density, because of some of the people there. A different population than lived in Market-Octavia. And then there was pressure South of Market to do what is called the central SoMa plan, the Central South of Market plan. So the Central Waterfront got subsumed into that plan, and the whole focus of that plan was "no change," of keeping everything industrial

and/or low density. Some good things are happening in the Central Waterfront today, but it's market pressure brought on by the Third Street light rail.

I mentioned I worked on the Green Benefit District. And that's just getting started now this year. But neither that, nor the development along Third Street, came out of the Better Neighborhoods planning effort. The third area of the initial Better Neighborhoods areas was the Balboa Park plan and that came out in 2009, I think. It really isn't a plan at all. It is some re-jiggering of the BART station, some housing on Muni yards, preservation of a historic building, and a lot of infrastructure changes, none of which are funded. So there's no funding in the plan. And here it is, the southern gateway of the city, where, when you're driving in on I-280 or coming in on BART, it should be a node of high-rise buildings. Maybe someday people will come back and re-plan it.

They did a plan for Japantown and Japantown has been planned many times, and nothing has ever been allowed to happen in Japantown.

09-00:47:53

Holmes:

Is that also because just the local community is opposed to further development?

09-00:47:59

Chappell:

The Japanese American community is very intent on keeping J-town Japanese, which is good. That's what they should be doing, and I think that's what everybody wants. But that terrible 1950s shopping center could have towers on top of it, and would bring many more people to the neighborhood. But nothing.

09-00:48:34

Holmes:

Speaking of towers. I wanted to get your thoughts on this because I understand when we are thinking of mixed-use and we are thinking of high-density, towers really are the option. One of the few options, it seems, that hit both of those requirements. But then again we're also thinking of the anti-growth, the downtown plan, a lot of regulations that limit the height of towers. I wanted to get your view on that kind of struggle and then also how that dovetails with the Office-Housing Production program.

09-00:49:11

Chappell:

Yeah. So there are places high-rises are appropriate, and there are places they're not. Rincon Hill, you're starting from scratch, very appropriate. And, in fact, the city's urban design plan says put the high-rises on hills so that the city doesn't get visually "flattened," but you accentuate the hills. In the western part of the city, probably not. But you can do a lot of density without high-rise buildings. Look at Geary Boulevard. It's probably five, six miles long, and mostly one-story retail. You put one floor of housing above that, you've increased housing by a hundred percent.

09-00:50:05

Holmes: Yeah, that's true.

09-00:50:07

Chappell: You put two floors of housing above it, you've increased housing by 200 percent. And you could do, I don't know, tens of thousands of units that way, in walk-up buildings. Now, there are building code and planning code breakpoints in terms of the height of the buildings before you have to change structural type, which has a big cost implication, if you're going from stick-built to steel or concrete. The standard has been, first floor a concrete podium with parking on the ground floor, and you need the concrete for fire protection, and then three or four floors above. And that's an economical model. You could line Geary Boulevard. Taraval Street is another one, with a rail line down the middle of the street, and where you could get a lot of housing in without major change.

09-00:51:25

Holmes: Was that part of the Office-Housing Production program of having that kind of mixed-use, of businesses on the ground floor?

09-00:51:35

Chappell: No. The Office-Housing Production program is something different. It was started in 1981, and what it says is, that if you develop office space, you have to contribute a sum of money to an affordable housing fund, run by the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development. So this was a great program. And by 2000, it was time to look at it again, and see how well it had done, and see if we could extract any more money from office developers. The idea is to find any "excess profit" in the model. You have to understand that developers don't use their money to develop things. Developers don't have money. They go to a financier to get the money. One of the most usual financial sources are union pension funds. Also insurance companies. These are people who have a lot of money that they are trying to earn some money on, but they need to keep their principal, because they're going to pay you and me someday on it. So they have a fiduciary responsibility to the people whose money it actually is, to the schoolteachers who put the money in the pension fund. And there's a certain amount of profit they need to get, and it varies. But 5 percent, 6 percent, something like that isn't uncommon. And then the question is: is there additional profit? And sometimes the developer is a fee developer, and that is the developer's getting paid to do this, and getting a fixed known amount of money. Or sometimes the developer is an equity partner, and taking the risk. If you do it right, you make a profit. If you don't do it right, you lose. And almost every developer goes bankrupt, periodically, because not all projects work. But the theory is there might be some excess profit in there. How much can you grab for affordable housing, without depressing the supply of office development? All an office building is, is a box for jobs, and as a society, we're trying to create jobs to keep people working. One number was set in 1981, and we said, time to set another number. The mayor's Office of Housing set up a process to look at this, and

got an economist in. Got in two advisors. One was the Council of Community Housing Organizations, which is the cartel of non-profit housing developers in the city. And the other was SPUR. So the committee was Calvin Welch, the head of CCHO (the Council of Community Housing Organizations), and me. And Calvin brought his very good deputy, Rene Cazenave, in. So the three of us would meet with the economists, and kind of go through all the numbers, and try and figure out how much more money we could pick up for affordable housing. And then he'd go back to his constituents, and I'd come back to SPUR, and we'd make sure that this is going to work, and not depress office construction. Calvin's still a very active guy in the city, very, very smart, but operates on the principle of, "I win, you lose." So it wasn't a very nice process. But his deputy, Rene Cazenave, was the sweetest man. Same politics as Calvin, same goals as Calvin, but very nice. So he and I worked really well together and just sat down, rationally looked at the numbers, figured it out. Ultimately the report was accepted by the mayor's Office of Housing, the Planning Commission, and ultimately the Board of Supervisors and the percentage got reset. I think it has been reset again just recently. It's a valuable source of money for affordable housing when office buildings are being built.

09-00:57:09

Holmes:

I was about ready to ask you about that. Yeah.

09-00:57:11

Chappell:

There are years that go by when not a single office building is built, because the economy does that. And housing and offices are almost reciprocal of each other, when they get built. We knew we needed to do more than that. What had been happening in the Planning Commission was developers would go through this multi-year entitlement process on a building, on a residential building now, and come to the final hearing at the Planning Commission, and the commission would negotiate a contribution to the mayor's Office of Housing affordable housing fund. That doesn't make sense for the developer, because everything's done and then you find out, "Surprise," you find out how much you need to contribute to get the project approved.

09-00:58:26

Holmes:

It's another current of uncertainty into this process. Yeah.

09-00:58:31

Chappell:

That's right. And the theory is that, in the development process, the residual is the cost of land. Much land in San Francisco has been held for a long time, so it has a very low cost basis. It's been paid off, sometimes for generations, sometimes decades. So if somebody bought a piece of land for \$1, and the market is \$10, that's what they want. But maybe they'll take \$9. And what it's ultimately worth, is what you can build on it. If part of that formula is money that the developer has to give to the housing fund, the only place the money can really come out of is the land cost. It can't come out of the profit, because the union trust fund or the insurance company has a fiduciary responsibility to



the people who put the money in. They have to get their 5 percent or whatever number it is. The developer is a business and they perceive they have to get some level of profit. They always start out with “this much” and it ends up “that much.”

09-01:00:13

Holmes:

They worked on that, though.

09-01:00:17

Chappell:

But where there should be some wiggle room is in the land value. But if it's too much, if it's depressing the value of the land too much, people won't sell land, and that's exactly where we're at today. Because of legislation that got passed at the ballot in June, you can't transact a piece of land in the city today for development. It went off a cliff last spring. So that's what we don't want to have happen. And Oz always says, “We can do anything prospectively. If you know going in, you know what you can pay for the land, and hopefully the land owner will figure that out also.” So we wrote the San Francisco Inclusionary Housing Ordinance. I say we. It was Oz Erickson, Gabriel Metcalf, my deputy at the time, Mark Leno, who was a supervisor at the time, and Calvin Welsh. The four of them met once a week for, I think, 18 months, Friday afternoon at city hall and worked out what that percentage could be.

09-01:02:06

Holmes:

I was going to ask you, because it seems like the same type of funding scheme we were trying to do with the Office-Housing Production program then put to housing developers.

09-01:02:18

Chappell:

Yeah, yeah. And it's very complicated because, is the project “for rent” or is it “for sale?” There's a different percentage. And affordable to whom at what income level? So, again, there's a lot of moving parts. But it started out as 10 percent to 12 percent, depending, and it went on for a number of years and then the supervisors upped it to 12 percent to 14 percent. The Great Recession came along and that didn't work. And in 2014, I think it was—yeah, 2014, SPUR and some other people negotiated what's called the Grand Bargain, that it would go back down to 10 percent to 12 percent, and that a fund would be developed, that would ultimately put in up to \$50 million a year in an affordable housing trust fund. And that Grand Bargain lasted all of two years. The Board of Supervisors then determined that this should be changed to 25 percent. It changed to 25 percent last June. No one fought it because it was going to pass. Free money. Gosh, free money. Who's going to vote against that? But, as I say, there hasn't been a single major project announced since that happened. The other part of the Grand Bargain wasn't changed, that we're still putting this money into the trust fund.

09-01:04:45

Holmes:

And in a sense, the creation of that fund, because you were mentioning after 1996, what was it, Proposition A, which funded affordable housing, and then there were a number of propositions that failed up until just recently in 2012.

09-01:05:07

Chappell:

Yeah. The bond passed in 1996. It was 16 years. And then there was a \$250 million bond in 2002 that failed, \$200 million bond in 2004 that failed. We led on all of these, but just couldn't make it over the hump. 2008 some other people put forth a proposition that set aside money for affordable housing, which we supported, but they all failed. Oh, it was 2012 for the trust fund. I said 2014. And then in 2014, by which time it's clear we have a real housing shortage problem in the city, that a \$310 million bond was passed. But, of course, that's probably less than a \$100 million bond was between inflation and construction costs.

09-01:06:19

Holmes:

In 1996.

09-01:06:20

Chappell:

And then at that same election in 2014, Prop K was a policy statement to construct middle-income housing, and that passed, but no one has done anything about it. There is a measure on the ballot this November to take a little money that's going to affordable housing, and put it into middle-income housing. I don't know if that will pass or not.

09-01:06:57

Holmes:

Well, then there was also an aspect that I thought was really interesting, which was the "affordability by design." What is SPUR's involvement with that? Is that trying to cut down the cost by design?

09-01:07:15

Chappell:

There are many things that determine the cost of a unit and one of them are the codes. Building code, planning code, housing code. Three separate codes that don't necessarily line up together, and that have been developed to protect the public safety. Planning is an exercise of protecting the health, safety, and welfare, what the constitution says, and that's what planning comes under. And, of course, building code and housing code are very closely tied to safety. Over the years, the codes get more and more and more elaborate. The building code is thousands of pages. Then there are all additional regulations, and they've all become Christmas trees, because we each have an interest in some facet that we want to protect the public about. And as developers are trying to build things they say, "Well, I could do this if it weren't for that." So we regulate generally two things in the planning code. One is height and bulk. How tall is the building? How big is it in relation to its lot? And we regulate number of units. Those things typically aren't lined up right, and so you get a building that could have enough square feet for a 100 units. But the unit count regulation says there can only be 50 units in it, so that makes units twice as big, you do all two-bedroom units, and therefore twice as expensive, because

pretty much you're paying by the square foot to build a building. So SPUR has proposed that we only regulate building volume, and don't try and say how many units. Let the developer decide, let the market decide how many units are in it. So Supervisor [London] Breed passed such a legislation for two areas in the city last year. People are now trying to do this. Another thing is regulating the number of bedrooms. X-percent one bedroom, Y-percent two bedrooms. This is like the Soviet Union telling farmers what crop to plant next year. Just let the market figure that out, and it'll figure it out better than some bureaucrat could. I can't tell you how many units it should be, but somebody who's building them and selling them knows what sells and what doesn't, knows what people want, and what they don't. The parking regulation is another one. One-to-one parking, what that basically says is, your car has a right to a place to sleep at night inside the building. You don't have that right, but your car has that right. It doesn't make any sense at all. I mentioned before concrete podium plus three stories. That's what the planning code calls for. The building code will let you do four stories over the podium, with a little more fire protection, and many cities have allowed this in the past, and San Francisco has just started doing it in the last year. There are two buildings in my neighborhood that have an extra floor on them, and that then lowers the price of each unit, because each unit has a smaller percentage of the land cost that they're amortizing. The land cost, the roof cost, the elevator cost, the stairway cost, and so on. Allowing residential on the ground floor. If you don't have parking, you can put residential there. The Planning Department generally wants you to have retail on the ground floor, and they have not figured out yet that we have too much retail, and we're going to have increasingly more too-much retail as we buy more and more online. And ground floor apartments are perfect for ADA access. No stairs, no elevator, walk-in flat from the street.

The "dial" is something we've worked a lot on, and it's how many affordable units at what price. If you are doing an affordable unit for someone who's making 25 percent of the area median income, whatever they pay you in rent isn't going to cover your costs. So it's very expensive for you. If you are providing housing for someone who's making 125 percent of the area median income, they're paying you a lot more money, and therefore you can do more of those units and give the developer some choice. Or even if you don't give them the choice, the percentage is different depending on—

09-01:14:06

Holmes:

So what it sounds like is that this other program—combined with a lot of the different programs, SPUR was involved in a lot of different venues of trying to get affordable housing on the books in San Francisco.

09-01:14:21

Chappell:

Yeah. And that's a really important thing: combined. None of these is a silver bullet, but you do a little here, and you do a little there, and you do a little there, and all of a sudden you've got something. In-law apartments, accessory

dwelling units. The state requires cities to zone some single-family neighborhoods for in-law housing. In-laws are very economically efficient, because they don't cost the taxpayers anything. They cost the homeowner who owns that house some money. In San Francisco, the typical house is a garage on the ground floor and the house above. And behind the garage there's a room that's filled with your old skis and bicycles and junk you never use. And so it's very easy to add a unit in San Francisco without changing the exterior building envelope, which is what the neighbors should care about. They shouldn't care about what you're doing inside the building, if the building envelope doesn't change. So SPUR took a run at this twice, in 2001 and 2006, and got defeated by the NIMBYs. Actually, I said the state law requires this. San Francisco had zoned 40 pieces of land in the city to allow in-law apartments, to get around the fact that we weren't in conformance with the state law. Every other community in the Bay Area allows in-laws. They're a good thing. When you get old, you can move from the house upstairs downstairs. Your mother could live there. A schoolteacher could live there, a student could live there. People who probably don't have cars anyway.

And then in 2015, Supervisor Scott Wiener introduced in-law legislation for his neighborhood, for the Castro, and the other supervisors didn't care, because it wasn't their neighborhood, it was just his neighborhood. He supported it, and a very progressive population in that neighborhood, and it happened. Then Julie Christensen, a former SPUR board member, who was appointed by Ed Lee to be the supervisor in Chinatown/North Beach, she got it passed for her neighborhood. And just last month, in September, now it has passed citywide, that, without going through planning, just going through the Building Department, you can put an in-law unit in your house, and if it's more than a four-unit building, you can put any number of them. You just can't change the building envelope. You have to get a building permit. No planning. And this is big and it's free.

09-01:17:57

Holmes:

Well, and it's also a good example of the other facet that SPUR's worked on in regards to bringing about more affordable housing in San Francisco. You mentioned dealing with the Planning Department. Part of that housing plan was doing a report as well as trying to put forth some recommendations on—

09-01:18:20

Chappell:

SPUR and the AIA (American Institute of Architects) have a big overlapping membership and a lot of common interests in this. Of course, it's the architects, who are working trying to get their plans approved all the time, who know what the problems are. So we did a report in 2004, and then did one three years later, about how we can do this kind of thing, on a number of very detailed reforms for processing in the Planning Department. How does the department work, both Planning Department and Building Department? Where are there efficiencies? Because it's the building user, it's the tenant or the homebuyer who pays for the delay. It takes an incredibly long time to get

through the Planning Department and the Building Department. Today, when all the plans are electronic anyway, the architect sends them over the net. You're not walking around with a roll of drawings anymore. For instance, just one example, everybody can be checking them at once. If there are six different people in the department each one checks for different things. They could all be checking. You don't have to wait. So there are probably 20, 30 pages of recommendations of those kinds of things. And so after three years we went back and looked, and saw how much success we had had, and not much was the result. Very, very hard to get bureaucracies to change. One of the things we do is every year we go to the mayor's office, and try to get better funding for these departments, if we perceive that they're underfunded. Transparency, consistency. Building inspectors are famous for making up rules as they go along. And I've had some personal experience with this more than once. But they're gone. They say it, and you have to do it. It doesn't pay to argue because they'll find something worse.

One of the very successful things we did was to start the Housing Action Coalition. In the late 1990s we invited Carl Guardino, who is head of an organization that is now called the Silicon Valley Leadership Group, it used to be the Silicon Valley Manufacturers Group, to come to SPUR, and give a speech and tell us what they're doing, and what we could learn from them. And the thing that was most exciting was they had formed something called the Housing Action Coalition. Their coalition developed criteria for good projects. What's a good project that we would like to support? Then if the project meets their criteria, they would go to bat for it at the planning commission, at the Board of Supervisors, city council. Boy, when he said that Gabe and I looked at each other and said, "We've got to start a Housing Action Coalition," because, at that time, I was the only person in the city who would show up at Planning Commission hearings, or Board of Supervisors hearings, and testify on behalf of a new development, other than the developer. I was the only disinterested person. Meanwhile, there are a hundred neighbors there saying, "Don't do it." So this was extremely attractive to me. We thought, "Wow, what a way to effect change." Like so many other things SPUR did, we said, "Let's start a separate organization, because this is really a body of work that's big enough." We let it lie fallow for a couple of years. We didn't have the bandwidth. But there was a SPUR board member by the name of Tom Radulovich, who's also our elected BART representative from San Francisco. And Tom said, "I'll start the HAC." It started out as a SPUR committee, including Steve Vettel and George Williams, and we hired Kate White to be the first executive director, and she's the same Kate White who we hired as co-director of City CarShare when we started it. And to be a full HAC member, you have to be an organization. There are now 150 organizations that are members, and they are not-for-profit housing developers, for-profit housing developers, construction unions—the construction trades of course support housing development—land use attorneys, architects, planners, developers. The HAC now has a staff of three and they're taking a leadership role in both supporting good projects—there's a project review committee,

that is half non-profit people and half for-profit people. One of the rules at the HAC is that we only discuss housing production. We don't discuss anything else about housing. Don't get into rent control. All of these things. So it's a group of people who wouldn't agree on nine out of ten things but we're there because we all agree on the tenth thing, housing production. I'm on the regulatory committee of the HAC and there are eight major policy changes we're working on and trying to get through the city. So it's great.

09-01:26:00

Holmes:

The personnel of SPUR have been connected to so many different bodies and agencies throughout the state. So when we think of like City CarShare and even now the HAC, it's a good example of not just the work that SPUR has done as an organization by themselves, but also the other organizations they have helped spin-off and lead here in the city. I wanted to transition to actually talking about some of the new neighborhood projects. And I'm sure Mission Bay is probably one of the most recent. Also one of those that currently seems to be in the news quite a bit. You had written in your notes, and in my own research, the number of plans that had been proposed for that area of the waterfront, that I think it went through four mayors, three planning directors, five failed plans, and one failed ballot measure at the end of the day.

09-01:27:06

Chappell:

All of which had enormous investments of SPUR time in them. Before my time, board members and former executive directors, and then since 1994 a lot of my time. And that's because it is so important. It's 300 acres, a mile-and-a-half, say, from downtown. And it had been a bay, which is why it's called Mission Bay. It ultimately was filled and became railroad yards for SP and Santa Fe Railroads. The boats would pull up and load or unload from the freight cars. By the 1980s, it was a half-used port warehouse, some other disused warehouses, railroad tracks that were never used. There was a golf driving range in the middle of the city, obviously a temporary use, parking and so on. All railroads in all cities in this country had this resource, that they were essentially given initially, that was not making any return for them. So they were trying to redo rail yards everywhere. In fact, they've been pretty successful most places now. So the first plan that SP Realty did was in 1981, and they just divided the 300 acres into a grid plan, and put 20 story buildings on every block, either office buildings or housing units. This was terrible. And the city said, "Not here. Not here."

So Southern Pacific Realty then sold the land to Santa Fe Realty. In 1981, they hired a team of Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd, the firm I had worked for in Philadelphia and Denver, my first job, and IM Pei, the noted Chinese-American architect, to do a plan. It was a spectacular plan. They restored part of the bay and had a system of lagoons and islands and office buildings, condo buildings, town houses, parks, huge amount of waterfront. The tallest building was 42 stories. This didn't look anything like San Francisco, and that was a problem in conservative San Francisco. People said,

“This doesn’t look like San Francisco. We can’t do this here.” And other people said, “Oh, it’s too much office space. This’ll create a second downtown.” At that time downtown was downtown and you could conduct all your business, go to business meetings with anyone within five minutes’ walk. That has gone away anyway.

09-01:31:02

Holmes: Everybody was on Montgomery Street. Yeah.

09-01:31:03

Chappell: Yeah, that’s right. And the Potrero Hill neighbors said, “It’ll block our views,” although considering who designed it, they very carefully located the towers to minimize view blockage. But at any rate the plan never got traction. And that was, I think, 1983, 1984 when that plan finally got introduced. In reaction to it, in 1984, the Potrero Hill neighbors did their plan and it was essentially the old grid plan, laid out in single-family houses. It was modeled on the Sunset District, and there was no chance that this would ever pencil out. All of the infrastructure had to be new. Plus so close to downtown.

09-01:32:07

Holmes: Yeah. Well, it was also low-density, too.

09-01:32:09

Chappell: Yeah, yeah. So the next plan was commissioned not by the developer, but by the city, by the Planning Department. And they hired EDAW, which was the firm I had worked for. This was 1985, when I was off, not working. And Teresa Rea was the project director on that plan, a SPUR board member, and person who’s on the board of Fort Mason Center with me today. And this was low-rise to mid-rise, five to ten story buildings. Respected the grid plan, but also respected the San Francisco idea that streets end at the bay—which is very important idea because it gives the public a view of the water whether you’re looking out your front window or walking down the sidewalk. The grid turns as the city goes around so that streets are facing the bay. And it did that very cleverly. It was a very legible plan. You would not get lost going through it. And I may be prejudiced, but from my view it was the best of the plans. It was achievable, it was doable. You could do it block-by-block. You could sell parcels block-by-block. But it never got the investment financing it needed. So that was 1985, 1987.

In 1990, things were still sitting. Santa Fe Pacific Realty then became Catellus. They spun off a new development company headed by a guy from San Diego called Nelson Rising. They hired Skidmore, Owings & Merrill to do some re-jiggering of the EDAW plan, and basically what Catellus asked them to do was add more retail, because they thought that would make it more saleable in the financing market. Knowing what we know today, that would have been the worst thing you could have done, was more retail. And even then it felt like too much. But the plan was then passed by the city, and the Planning Department wrote a “development agreement,” which is a contract. The city

will do this, the developer will do that. You get to build so much stuff, on so much of a schedule. Mission Bay then and now has no zoning on it. It has a development agreement, which is a much better tool than zoning because it's flexible and realizes that in a plan that could take 20 years to build out, you'd have to go back and rezone things all the time as market conditions change. Catellus put on the ballot Proposition I in November of 1990, to exempt Mission Bay from the Proposition M office cap. The Proposition M office cap was passed by the voters in 1986 to meter downtown development, so you could only do around a million square feet a year. And one of the reasons that Mission Bay couldn't be financed was this metering of the office space, and at an artificial level that had nothing to do with supply and demand. Well, the only reason Proposition M passed in 1986—there had been proposals for it before, that the downtown developers always fought. Well, in 1986 they said, "Hey, this isn't such a bad idea. If we can slow down development of other office space, the office buildings I already own will be more valuable." So in 1990 then, Walter Shorenstein, who was probably the biggest office owner in the city at the time, he fought Proposition I. He funded the opposition to it because he thought his office space would be more valuable if there was less competition. And Proposition I was defeated by 600 votes out of 200,000 passed. 600 votes. So it was back to square one. And that was 1990. Catellus asked the city to cancel the development agreement. There were other things in the development agreement written by the Planning Department that couldn't work. One is, housing and office space were supposed to be built in tandem, and they're totally different markets. They also required a big upfront payment, \$30 million from the developer, sort of earnest money that they were going to do this plan, and no developer could do that. So we're back to nothing, just this piece of empty land. Nelson Rising, really smart guy, he and Willie Brown were trying to figure out how to make something happen.

Meanwhile, UCSF Medical Center on Parnassus had run out of land, and they kept trying to expand, and kept being stymied by the neighbors. There were years of agreements of not expanding, and the noose kept getting tighter and tighter. So they did a study looking at sites, and they were looking at three different sites in the region. And one day it appears in the *Chronicle*, that it's rumored that UCSF was about to announce it was moving to Alameda, to Harbor Bay Isle. This would have been really serious for the city: 21,000 jobs, major hospital, research. So Willie got together with Nelson Rising. And, as Nelson tells it, Willie says, "Nelson, you're going to give 40 acres to UC." And Nelson said, "I practically fainted. Hundreds of millions of dollars, I'm going to give away." But, in fact, that's what they did and it was a great scheme because it was the catalyst for development, because who wants to be near one of the best medical research facilities in the country? Biotech companies, pharmaceutical companies. At that time there was not a single biotech in San Francisco. There was not a single tech company in San Francisco. So these companies want to be near the professors because they want to get the inventions. The university and the professors want these companies near them because they want to commercialize their inventions.



They maybe have the discovery, but they don't know how to make it into a pill that you're going to buy.

09-01:41:08

Holmes: The business aspect, yes.

09-01:41:08

Chappell: And so it worked for everybody, and the development has gone much faster than anyone ever thought. One of the good things was that UC had a schedule. This could not take eight years of handwringing. Boy, when Willie says something, his staff does it. He put Rudy Nothenberg in charge of it, and Rudy had run most of the important departments in the city. Was Chief Administrative Officer. At this time he was Willie's chief of staff. He was a SPUR board member. Brilliant administrator, brilliant politically, and then his deputy, David Prowler, who is a planner every bit as good, and, boy, they just drove this thing through. But nobody knew, would anybody really salute? That was the idea. So former SPUR chairman, a guy by the name of Bill Evers, went to Don Fisher. He said, "Don, give SPUR \$25,000 and they'll take that money and they will hire somebody," and Bill had picked out this somebody, "to sell this development, sell this biotech campus to the thought-leaders in the community, to the biotech companies, to financiers." And this is something SPUR had done before and Bill Evers had done with SPUR on other projects. First of all, we're a non-profit, so it's a charitable deduction. But economic development is part of our charter, and public education is what we're all about, so it fit right in. Bill came to me, and I probably called our board chair and said, "Is this okay?" and then we did it. UC, as you know, is like steering the *Titanic*. They could never have figured this out. I just said, "Yes, we'll do it." That resulted in the next step, which was the formation of BALSAs, which was the Bay Area Life Sciences Alliance, and this was Don Fisher, head of the Gap; Bob Burke, AMD Developers, who did Pier 1; Gerson Baker, big developer; Bill Rutter, chairman or president of Chiron; Mike Bishop, who was the chancellor; Sandy Robertson, the venture capitalist; John Larson with the Brobeck law firm; Rudy Nothenberg; and Bruce Spalding, who is the head of planning for UC. All brilliant people. And they hired as their executive director, Cliff Graves, who had been head of the Redevelopment Agency, and Tom Swift, who was the head of the local office of Hines Development. So these were the guys who caused Mission Bay to happen. They put up the money, they found the initial tenants, drove it through the university's difficult process.

Then the university started the Mission Bay Taskforce, and appointed me to that. It was headed by a professor, Keith Yamamoto, who was their vice-president for strategy. Brilliant strategist. There were some other community leaders on this and professors and representatives of other interests at the university. The professors were dead set against this move. They knew Parnassus. It was familiar to them. They looked down there. Here's this piece of dirt, in the middle of nowhere, with no transportation, nowhere to live

around it. Keith and I had the vision. And we developed a three-point program to make this happen. The first was we saw that 43 acres wasn't going to be nearly big enough for the campus. So they needed to, at the same time, be redeveloping Parnassus, be redeveloping Mount Zion. And what they're doing in Parnassus is clearing out the insides of these buildings, and rebuilding within the same envelope, and rebuild San Francisco General that is staffed by UC. So that would not only met the demand for what the community and the university really needed, but it would give the professors—"You will have a choice," we said, "whether you want to go to Mission Bay or not. Every department can decide. You want to stay at Parnassus, that's fine," knowing that, in fact, when they saw it, they would love Mission Bay.

09-01:47:37

Holmes:

Sure.

09-01:47:38

Chappell:

The second thing was that we had to develop Mission Bay really fast, develop enough to get a critical mass. You couldn't put one building down there, because, in fact, nobody would go to one building. You always needed to have something else under construction. And the third was it needed to be a really good campus. It needed a good plan. You needed good architects, landscape architects, an art program. They have a fabulous art program in there. And a student center. It's got a great student center. Two swimming pools, one on the roof. It's really very first-class, whereas Parnassus isn't. Parnassus is buildings, some from a hundred years ago. And what we were doing was we were *creating place*. We're putting a pin in the map and saying, "This is something." And, of course, when the professors saw it, then everybody wanted to move to Mission Bay.

09-01:48:59

Holmes:

Mission accomplished.

09-01:49:00

Chappell:

So great. We okay?

09-01:49:10

Holmes:

Mm-hmm.

09-01:49:11

Chappell:

Okay. So there wasn't yet a plan for all of Mission Bay and so Catellus hired Johnson Fain architects from Los Angeles, Bill Fain, to do a plan. Nelson Rising is from Southern California. The firm was Southern Californian. And they essentially did a suburban office park plan. It's a grid plan, easy to lay out, easy to market land to different people. Very large blocks. Low rise. The Potrero Hill neighbors required no more than five stories. It has clear "use districts." There's the university in the center, and then the commercial tech firms around it, and the residences a ways away. This was a requirement of UC. I tried to get them to do some mixed neighborhoods, but because of their experience on Parnassus, they didn't want to be able to see a residential

building, because they just saw trouble. And the plan removed the I-80 stub on the north side of the development, to connect the development more in with San Francisco. It didn't remove it on the west side, although SPUR has now proposed that. The city is studying it to try and integrate the development with the neighborhood more.

The first building was an interesting story because there was a lawsuit. The university was suing Genentech for patent infringement, and the university got \$200 million from Genentech, \$50 million for the building and \$150 million in settlement money. So this building was under design before the campus plan was done, which is not a good idea. It was essentially designed as a generic building to go someplace when the campus plan was done, because a plan for the campus needed to be done in addition to the plan for Mission Bay as a whole. So it was a design competition. I was on the jury for the competition. There were five firms competing—43 acres, 2.7 million square feet of research labs. And the firm we chose was a firm that was not very well known in the West, and not that well known at that time, anyway, although they are today. And it was two guys, Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti. Machado and Silvetti. They were Argentinian. Went to Berkeley, taught at Harvard, and had an office in New York and an office in Buenos Aires. Their plan fit beautifully into the overall scheme. It was classic rectilinear, nice mix of open space, and balconies, and parks with the buildings. Classic, refined. I guess refined is what I would say about it. And it was beautifully presented. Usually when you do something like this, that architect gets to do the first building to demonstrate to other people what they want. This has recently happened in Hunters View, where Dan Solomon did the master plan, and then he did the first building, so other people can understand what it has to be. Well, that didn't happen because Genentech Hall happened as the first building.

None of the buildings at Mission Bay UC turned out to be as refined as the master plan was. And maybe we were too conservative on the plan, because it doesn't really sing yet, although it's only half built. There are, I think, ten buildings that the university has done. The only building that really sings down there is Ricardo Legorreta, the Mexican architect, did the student center, which is his typical Mexican colors of dark red and hot pink and bright yellow and bright purple, looking like this medieval fortress or something with a tower. And Don Fisher who is, of course, one of the big backers of the whole Mission Bay thing, when the building got done he said, "You've got to paint that out." He wanted to paint it beige like all the other buildings. And I guess Don Fisher made his money making khaki clothes that are beige.

09-01:55:23  
Holmes:

Yeah, that's true.

09-01:55:23  
Chappell:

[laughter] He likes beige buildings. Fortunately that didn't happen. So this is a development that was—from 1980 to 1999, 19 years—not a shovelful of dirt was ever moved. Catellus did a really smart thing, and they hired SMWM, who we've talked about, that architecture firm, to put together a visitor center for them. Every project has a marketing center, but this was a lot more than a marketing center. It was in one of the old warehouses. And it was not only all the drawings and all the models, but all the background information that was used in the planning. When they had community meetings, of which there were many, they would occur here. And people could understand how you got from A to B.

09-01:56:24  
Holmes:

Oh, that's nice.

09-01:56:26  
Chappell:

Why is this building here and not there? How is this going to work with the transit system? How is this going to work with the light rail when it goes in and so on? And then, as every architect came along, they had to put the model of their building in the overall model that was there, and then have big models of the building. So you could really see it, material samples. Very helpful. The development has 6,000 housing units, 30 percent of them are affordable. The first residential project that was built was a one hundred percent affordable project, which sent a real message that this isn't just a money-making deal. This is a part of the community. One of the next things that was built was a public library, which is on the ground floor of an affordable senior housing project. Today there are 4,000 daytime residents there, 4,000 jobs. 3 million square feet of biotech. There'll be a total of 6 million, both the private and the campus, when it's done. There are 50 biotech start-ups there, 9 established biotech and pharmaceutical companies. The headquarters of the California Stem Cell Research; a Kaiser Clinic; 10 venture capitalists; and 3 research institutes. A hotel will be starting soon. The ground floor retail on two of the streets, the early ground floor retail, is disappointing, in that it's mostly chains. There is a Safeway, which is great, because usually it's hard to get grocery stores in. But there is a Safeway. But the small neighborhood serving businesses have not happened yet. The laundry, the hardware store. And these are things that can't happen without the population. It's economically impossible to get them before their customers are there, or they'd go out of business.

09-01:59:21  
Holmes:

Very true.

09-01:59:22  
Chappell:

So that is still disappointing to people who live there. There's a fire station, a police headquarters. They moved their headquarters there. There's a school site. The school board is dithering on it. Serious mistake in terms of neighborhood-building. There should be a school there right from the

beginning. There are daycare centers. There will be 60 acres of park. About half of that is built now, privately maintained, not maintained by Rec and Park. The method for the infrastructure, streets, roads, sewers, parks, there are two tax increment financing districts, Mello-Roos districts. Just geographically, they did one, and then they did the other later. And so the developer builds all of the infrastructure, and then is reimbursed through the Redevelopment Agency, now, the Successor Agency to the Redevelopment Agency, through the Mello-Roos districts, which have bonded against future tax revenue, the way we do things today. I said there isn't zoning and it's a good thing because the plan has changed. UC finally figured out that they needed student housing. They proposed, I don't know, a 15 story building maybe. John Burton, Assemblyman Burton, Senator Burton, lives on Potrero Hill, and he made them cut the top several stories off the building, or said they'd never get another cent in state funding if they didn't. So there's 430 dorm rooms there. They cut out thirty acres for the hospital, for the UC hospital, which had not been planned to be there. And now, of course, there's controversy that the Warriors have bought fourteen acres of land at Mission Bay. And there is a group of people fighting this, and it's actually Bill Rutter from Chiron and Bruce Spaulding, who had been the vice-president of the university, because they know that Mission Bay is running out of land for these biotech companies, and they don't want to see this land go to something that isn't related. I don't know what their end game is going to be on this. They tried to explain the financial model of Mission Bay with the biotech companies, and that the land was needed, and the public did not get it at all. So they then changed their tune to it's a traffic problem for the hospital. But that isn't it.

09-02:03:06

Holmes:

The various strategies.

09-02:03:09

Chappell:

I have no idea what negotiations, if any, are going on in the back room to figure that out.

09-02:03:19

Holmes:

Jim, I wanted to get your thoughts here, with the little bit of time we have left, on the lessons and critiques of the Mission Bay development, and then perhaps thinking of how that also serves the larger conversations on housing in San Francisco.

09-02:03:38

Chappell:

Yeah. So Mission Bay gets a lot of criticism for feeling like a suburban office park. It does. And one of the things is, we used to build buildings 25 feet at a time. You go down the street and every 25 feet there's a door. Well, now buildings are built a block at a time. So they are very massive buildings. They're not tall buildings, but they're massive. The blocks are too big. The sidewalks are too small. The landscaping is still small. When the trees grow, landscaping makes a lot of difference in terms of bringing down scale. It puts a roof over your head. There's a rhythm along the street. That will help. But

new towns, and this is essentially a new town-in-town. New towns have always been problematical because towns take time to develop. The places we love have developed over hundreds, or thousands, of years, if you look at European cities. And when something comes in and is built in 20 years, it all looks new and shiny and is overly codified. The planners at the Redevelopment Agency, who got to plan everything or get to approve everything, had a really heavy hand and that shows. Over time it will get better. As people live in things, they get quirky. And Stewart Brand, who was the author of the *Whole Earth Catalogue* when I was in college, and now runs the Long Now Foundation at Fort Mason, with a very good salon there called the Interval, he also wrote a book called *How Buildings Learn*. It shows buildings, many of which were great architectural monuments, as they got lived in and changed. And the architects look in horror as these changed, and Stewart Brand points out that this is exactly what needs to happen, to make the places humane. The Le Corbusier house that gets a peaked roof and flower box added. [laughter] The defining characteristic of San Francisco, I think, is quirky. And Mission Bay is not quirky. Maybe it will be in a hundred years. It's also way over-parked. It was over-parked to begin with, and then the biotech companies from the peninsula came in and said, "Well, where are we going to park our cars?" And Gavin Newsom got the plan changed to add a lot more parking. Someday when that parking isn't needed, and the parking garages get torn out, some of them, then other more interesting things can happen. When more retail comes in, as more people live there, the corner store kind of thing will happen more.

This whole saga is now 36 years old. There are some good lessons for planners in this, and one is that zoning doesn't make development happen. A plan does not make development happen. There has to be a reason for it and the reason for it here was the campus. It's like the song, *You've Got to Have a Gimmick*. You have to have a *reason* that makes things happen. It's good to have a schedule. UC had a schedule that had to be met. City government would do a lot better with more schedules. The Planning Department would do a lot better with more schedules. You need flexibility. Zoning is a blunt instrument. It's a very imperfect tool, and every Thursday night you can go to city hall, and watch them change zoning every single week. It's much better to have a development agreement that sets out the broad parameters, and then lets things bob and weave as the world changes. Strong leadership. I'm not normally an exponent of the great man or the great woman theory but, in fact, a strong mayor helps. I've seen a number of other mayors we've had over the years who could never have—

09-02:09:34

Holmes:

Pulled that off.

09-02:09:37

Chappell:

Yeah. It was Willie Brown and then his team. Rudy Nothenberg, brilliant strategist. David Prowler knows how to get things done. Jessie Smith, the

deputy city attorney. David Madway, who'd been the Redevelopment Agency attorney. Boy, they just kept right at it and it happened. The Board of Supervisors kind of stood back and let this happen. After Willie was in for several years a new Board of Supervisors was elected in reaction to Willie, to tamp Willie down. And kind of the leader of that group, Chris Daly, a real firebrand, he said, "Well, Mission Bay would have never happened like this on my watch," but he never tried to interfere. He needed to say that because that's his shtick. He just let this happen, and it's providing thousands and thousands of jobs, thousands and thousands of housing units, hundreds of millions of dollars worth of income into the city. It's providing healthcare. It's providing very important research that's going to keep us living longer than we otherwise would.

09-02:11:20

Holmes: Would be or should be.

09-02:11:21

Chappell: Yeah, right.

09-02:11:22

Holmes: Well, this is great. I wanted to follow-up with some conclusions on housing but I think we can dovetail that in our final discussion.

09-02:11:35

Chappell: Okay. There's one other Mission Bay topic. The Campus Facilities Improvement Association. Do you want to do that now or do you want to push that to next time?

09-02:11:48

Holmes: I don't—

09-02:11:50

Farrell: You tell me.

09-02:11:50

Holmes: We could do that now.

09-02:11:53

Chappell: Okay. Quickly.

09-02:11:53

Holmes: Yeah, sure.

09-02:11:55

Chappell: So remember I said one of our three principles in the Mission Bay taskforce was to get this all done quickly. And the question is, where does the money come from? Well, money comes from the state. Money comes from individual donors. Money comes from foundations. But is there someplace else we can get some more money? And so we formed a non-profit public-private partnership called the Campus Facilities Improvements Association. CFIA we

call it. And Rudy Nothenberg was the first chairman, and he, of course, was a SPUR board member. Lynn Sedway is the second and current chair, a development economist, active SPUR member. The treasurer is Jerry Keyser, who was the SPUR board member who figured out how to bring the port back to the city. I'm the secretary. Bob Gamble, who had been budget director for the city under two mayors and chief financial officer of the Redevelopment Agency, is on the board. There are two UC people on the board, the director of real estate, and the former vice chancellor of finance. Okay. The theory is that we know that private business can make things happen quicker than government, and UC is government. And private business can make it happen not only quicker but cheaper. Government has a long decision making process that ties itself up in knots. CFIA is a private non-profit with seven of us on the board and our attorney, who's David Madway, who had been the Redevelopment Agency attorney. And we can just sit down and do it.

And so we built the Sandler Neurosciences Center at Mission Bay. And, from the time that the RFP was written until the building opened, was 50 months. Construction took two years. It's a \$175 million building, which is \$750 a square foot for the building, plus the equipment. It's a state of the art facility. Skidmore Owings & Merrill architects. LEED platinum building. Figuring out how to do this was not easy. It was the lawyers full employment act for a couple of years. Figuring out how to do it took more time than building the building.

So CFIA was established in 2008 to build this building, although we can also build other buildings on any UC campus now, once it exists. The model is tax-exempt bonds are issued through the I-Bank. The I-Bank is the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank. (We did I-Bank bonds for the SPUR Urban Center, as do many non-profits in the state.) And the bonds are then sold to buyers to cover the unfunded cost. So the money that you haven't collected from someplace else. There's a group of buyers out there just waiting for these bonds because they're tax-exempt bonds, because CFIA's a non-profit. The bonds for the SPUR building were bought in five minutes, and likewise for this building.

UC owns the land. They leased it to us. We subleased it to a team of a developer, Edgemoor/McCarthy Cook and architect Skidmore Owings & Merrill. They built the building. We paid them through the bondholders. They will manage the building for 38 years. While the building was under construction, we were the client. We were the agent on it. And now, we keep the books and review the books and make sure everybody's doing what they're supposed to do, according to the 5,000 pages of contracts underlying this. So the developer then leases the building to the university until the year 2050 and then in 2050 the university will own the building. The developer will have gotten his profit out of it, which is about 6.5 percent. Or the university could choose to let us do this again, and sell another set of bonds if they choose, or anybody else. It's a very clean thing once you got it figured



out. This goes back to SPUR, right at the beginning of Mission Bay, that infusion of money from Don Fisher, to find somebody to create the conditions for it to happen and CFIA is that same kind of thing.

09-02:18:59

Holmes: That kind of public-private partnership.

09-02:19:01

Chappell: Yeah. So I continue to be involved in Mission Bay, and will be as long as I have my marbles, I guess. By 2050 someone else will be doing it.

09-02:19:15

Holmes: Wow that's great. Well, I think that's a good place to leave. Thanks so much, Jim.

[End of Interview]

## Interview 10: November 7, 2016

10-00:00:00

Holmes: All right, this is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today is November 7, 2016 and we are here once again with Jim Chappell for our tenth and final session of this oral history. We are here at SPUR headquarters in the beautiful city of San Francisco. Jim, thank you so much for joining us one last time.

10-00:00:28

Chappell: My pleasure.

10-00:00:30

Holmes: Last session we had a very good discussion about housing. Are there any final thoughts and comments on that?

10-00:00:42

Chappell: A couple of things. Ben Rosenfield, who's the city controller (and a former student of mine), actually, recently did some calculations and he estimates it would take 20 years of producing 5,000 housing units a year, or 100,000 units, for supply to exceed demand. So when people say "supply and demand doesn't work," we've never even tried. And that's what we're trying to do now, is do at least 5,000 units a year. There's also a very interesting exhibit downstairs, put together by SPUR and Plan Bay Area. It shows that there are 147,000 potential units in the city somewhere in the planning pipeline, or that policies in the planning pipeline that would allow—so these are an identified 147,000 units. They also looked at existing zoning and proposed legislation that's on the table now. And it says there's capacity for 500,000 more units in the city without major up-zonings. So there is the ability to do it. We just need to do it.

I think also last time you asked me why it's so difficult to build housing, and I blithely said it was NIMBYism, but there's more to it than that. There are four reasons that people oppose housing and one of them is just misinformation. When a project comes out, the rumor mill gets going, and there's misinformation. Our job, and other advocates job, is to sit down and try and get the right information out there. And that needs to be done with small groups of people and one-on-one, which is not the way the city conducts meetings. They have vast hearings, which just make people mad because they're not being listened to.

There's also conflicts of interest. Now, in this boom we've had the last couple of years of increased supply, all of a sudden apartment owners have realized rents are going down. Both rents and sale prices peaked between the second and third quarter of 2015. And people, whether it's an individual homeowner, an apartment house owner, don't want more housing built because it competes with the product they already have.

10-00:03:44

Holmes: And there's your supply and demand right there, right?

10-00:03:47

Chappell: That's right. There's also a conflict of values that people define themselves as being "good" and developers as being "bad." The answer to that is, again, for developers to sit down with people and show that they're human. They're no different than anybody else. They have a job they're trying to do. They have kids who they want to live in the city. They're not evil. And then the last and most difficult thing, is dealing with people's emotional needs. There are people who have defined themselves as "community advocates," often self-appointed community advocates. And to maintain that position, it is necessary to continue to find things to fight against, in their mind. People who need a cause are afraid of change, and that's why it was so interesting to see the recent study showing most CEQA lawsuits are against public projects—museums, schools, parks, things that should be good in the public mind. But if you're in the business of stirring the pot, you need to keep stirring the pot. So enough said.

10-00:05:21

Holmes: Thanks for that, Jim. Well, speaking of stirring the pot, when we think of building SPUR and the legacy of the organization, there's always that kind of battle between those who stir the pot and those trying to lay out a path for reasonable policy. This is really what we kind of want to spend our last session on, looking at not just your history within the institution but also the larger institution itself. Can you tell us a little bit of that background, the composition and the organization of this agency you ran for a few decades?

10-00:06:00

Chappell: SPUR really is a remarkable organization. When I started there was a board of directors of 65 and one of the first things Anne Halsted and I said is, "We're going to decrease the size of this board. This is crazy." Well, in fact, we increased it to 75, because we needed people to do the work and the SPUR board is a working board. It's not a society board. It's not primarily a fundraising board. But it is people who understand the policies and the subjects we're working with. And the goal is to have the board about a third subject matter experts, a third neighborhood people, often immediate past presidents of neighborhood organizations, and a third major employers because their needs represent hundreds of thousands of people in the city. There are 11 board meetings a year and typically there's 45 or 50 people at a board meeting. The board meetings are an hour-and-a-half. Board members are requested to be at 9 out of the 11 meetings. So there really is good participation. And while we want people representing different areas, different businesses, different neighborhoods, we ask people to leave that hat at the door, and to be just here as a SPUR board member. It is remarkably successful that people are not representing some other interest. Even if they're coming from that interest, and that's why we want them in the room, when push

comes to shove they need to be looking out for the good of the whole city. Board members are really serious about that.

10-00:08:13

Holmes: It seems like they're San Franciscans first—

10-00:08:15

Chappell: That's right.

10-00:08:16

Holmes: —in the sense of what you're asking.

10-00:08:17

Chappell: Yeah. And the city has this idea that a conflict of interest is bad, and so on city commissions, they're looking for people who aren't involved and don't have opinions. I've always said I don't want any board members without a conflict of interest, because that would mean they're not participants in the system. But as long as everybody knows where they're coming from, and they put the whole above any parochial interest, they are good citizens and board members. I know people don't understand that. They say, "Oh, you have architects on your board," or "You have businesspeople on your board." It is so different from that. The board meetings are so respectful. I've never been to a board meeting where I haven't learned something because there are people coming from vastly different backgrounds. I've always said I never wanted a unanimous vote on anything, because that's a sign that people aren't thinking. And so there are wonderful, respectful debates and nobody walks out mad.

As we look through 50 years of board of directors' minutes of meetings, there are two recurring themes. One is the board saying "we should be more neighborhood based" and the other is the board saying "we should be more regionally based." And, in fact, this is all coming together, because in the last five years there's now a SPUR Oakland and a SPUR San Jose. So we are involved in the three major cities of the region and able to look individually at what's going on in that city, but then putting it together for the region as a whole.

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Holmes: Is the same board dealing with those or do they have separate boards?

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Chappell: It's complicated. [laughter] They have their own board but then there's the motherboard, if you will, too. Gabe is CEO *and* executive director of San Francisco, but there is an executive director and a staff for each Oakland and San Jose.

10-00:10:58

Holmes: Yeah. I'm sure, as you well know, and I think you've articulated it fairly well in our sessions, that each city is like its own organism. It has its own history, its own rhythms, and so adapting policy to that, say if you are a San

Franciscan, adapting policy to Oakland would probably be difficult without the insight of the residents there.

10-00:11:21

Chappell:

Yeah. I think probably every two years while I was here a delegation would come over from Oakland and say, "Help us start a SPUR Oakland." And one of the concerns was being carpetbaggers. I'd say, "It needs to come from you. We're here to help." And so far it seems to be working.

10-00:11:47

Holmes:

That's great.

10-00:11:48

Chappell:

It's been a great leap forward in the last five years.

10-00:11:51

Holmes:

Indeed. Well looking at that, to be more neighborhood and be more regional, it also seems that SPUR has also been in the middle of its own criticisms, right?

10-00:12:10

Chappell:

Yeah. When I started, whenever SPUR was mentioned in the paper it was always called a "downtown real estate group." And it took about ten years, but today it's successfully "San Francisco's think tank" or "urban affairs think tank." There were always two phone calls I would always take, and one was my chairman of the board, and the other was a reporter. You can spend a half-hour on the phone with a reporter for a one-sentence sound bite. But an awfully good investment of time. And I would always then write and thank the reporter after the article came out and say, "Great article," and cc their editor. Of course, sometimes they would get things wrong and I would still say, "Great article. And if you write on this subject again, here's another piece of information you might find interesting." Often then I would call them and discuss things that they hadn't quite gotten right. And I still do that today when there are subjects, I mean, I know these reporters, and when there are subjects that I think they need to know about. Today I try and keep my name out of the paper. But sometimes whispering in their ears is helpful.

10-00:13:51

Holmes:

Oh, wow. That's one of the questions I had, regarding what was your strategy in public relations? And really that starts here with handling the press. Right.

10-00:14:02

Chappell:

Yeah. Sometimes when you're fundraising or talking to potential new members, they're essentially saying, "What did you do for me this week?" And often the most important things are things that didn't happen, things that we headed off at the pass and never made it to the Board of Supervisors or never made it in the press.

10-00:14:38

Holmes: Oh, that's interesting. Yeah. I think that's something, too, that when people think of the contributions and the work that SPUR does, I think that the public relations aspects are usually kind of just not looked at—

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Chappell: Yeah. And city departments are starting to have public relations officers today, and they get very criticized for that by the public. "If you were doing good work you wouldn't need a PR guy," which is crazy. It is so good that they have people who are experienced in public relations and handling the press. You have to be doing something good, and you have to be truthful about it, but get the story out there. Early on at SPUR we had a board member from Bank of America, and they sent me to a press training that they provide for their, I don't know, junior execs probably. And that was very valuable, because it's standing in somebody else's shoes and what is it that the newspaper or the TV reporter needs. They need a "hook" or otherwise it's not news. So when we'd come out with a new white paper or something, we'd have a press conference, and nobody would come. It was always very hard to initiate and get them interested in policy because it needs a hook. Matier & Ross learned to never bother calling up SPUR, because, they come to SPUR once a year and they flat out say they're in the entertainment business. That's what they're doing. It's just like Dear Abby. She doesn't provide advice, it's entertainment. And we don't give them the zingers. They want something outrageous. And we give them a factual explanation and that doesn't fit their model.

10-00:17:00

Holmes: Well and to think about how that changed, how the perception of SPUR changed when we think about the reporting. A lot of that is also credence to—which moving forward to thinking and discussing—your time here at SPUR. It's funny I say that. We've done just that for nine sessions now, right, in many regards. But I think stepping back and looking at how you built and helped build the organization where it's at now, which it wasn't in that same kind of condition in 1994 when you came. Can you discuss that a little bit?

10-00:17:37

Chappell: Yeah. So I started in December 1994 as executive director and then after two years they changed my title to president. Today the job is president and CEO because of the multiple offices. But in 1994 SPUR had under a thousand members. The budget was \$278,000 a year. And at our monthly board meeting the treasurer, volunteer board treasurer, would announce how many days cash we had in the bank. Three days cash. Five days cash. Two days cash. It was really close. And there were 20 business members who gave between \$500 and \$5,000 a year, the same amount they had been giving for 30 years. So the first week, I'm looking at the dues roll, and I saw that Potlatch was in arrears on their \$5,000 dues. So I called up Richard Madden, who was the CEO, and he says, "Yeah, we're not going to do it this year." He says, "Most of our employees are in," I don't know, "Idaho," or somewhere. "For \$5,000

we can support a classroom in a school for a year. Goodbye.” And I thought, “Oh, boy.” So it was working on really building membership at all levels. And after three years, ’95, ’96, ’97, things were in much better shape and we had a lot to show for it. We could say, we’ve done this, and we’ve done this, and we’ve done this. And so I went to see David Coulter, who was CEO of Bank of America and told him what we’d been doing and said, “You’ve been giving \$5,000 a year since SPUR started. Could I ask you to give \$15,000 and to get a group of other CEOs together and form this \$15,000 club?” And he said, “Sure.”

10-00:20:11

Holmes: Oh, wow.

10-00:20:11

Chappell: And he said, “Let me call my friend Warren Hellman.” And he picks up the phone and calls Warren and says, “Warren, will you do this, too?” And Warren said, “Sure.” And David Coulter knew at that time he was selling the bank, and that’s why he was really passing it on to Warren. But Warren became a great friend of SPUR because he’s a smart policy guy who was always doing things in the community and doing them in a completely selfless way. I can remember one meeting sitting with Warren in his office, Gabriel and I, and we were talking him through an issue, and as we were getting agreement of the three of us, what our strategy would be, Gabe was on his phone texting the chair of the Board of Supervisors, who was holding a hearing at that moment, scripting him to say the right stuff.

10-00:21:18

Holmes: Oh, wow.

10-00:21:21

Chappell: So Warren’s been—it’s a big loss to the community in many, many ways.

10-00:21:26

Holmes: And it really goes to show that rebuilding, reestablishing that relationship with business and the business community of San Francisco—some may read this transcript and think, “Well, that’s just business as usual of what SPUR’s done.” But I think it’s important to really stress how difficult that can be, particularly here in San Francisco when you’ve had almost a business exodus out of the downtown.

10-00:21:52

Chappell: Right, right. Yeah. In the ’60s and ’70s, many of the corporations were formed here. The CEO’s name was on the door of the company and they were very invested in it. And then there were several decades when a lot of these companies became corporate, were sold, the CEO was a hired gun who is here for a few years until they got fired. They never lived in San Francisco. They lived in Piedmont or something. When SPUR started, the CEO of the Bank of America was on the SPUR board. Well, CEOs don’t do that anymore. And so that was a lot harder. Interestingly, in the last few years, the last five, ten years,

it's coming back, now that there are all of the tech firms that have started here. I sit on my roof deck and I look down on Evan Williams' house, who was the co-founder of Twitter, and I look up at Mark Zuckerberg's house. Many of the tech entrepreneurs live here, they're involved in the community, they're raising their kids here and participate in SPUR. The other bad thing that's happened, though, recently is—I say bad for all nonprofits—is the consolidation in the A&E business. There used to be a lot of architecture firms of 20 people and now there are firms that go around buying all these firms. And where you once had five potential board members and five potential donors, there's one. That makes it tough and I know all nonprofits feel that.

10-00:23:56

Holmes:

Yeah. If we look over the decades it has been that steady wave within the larger business community as a whole, that kind of consolidation, the rise of conglomerates and these kind of things. Bank of America is a good example, right. I think Bechtel has to be one of the few rare examples of being here for so long, refusing to, I guess, sell, right. Who is going to buy them? They're too big. But of really being still that kind of cornerstone or foundation of San Francisco's business community.

10-00:24:23

Chappell:

And they are just becoming incredibly more generous, even though they have relatively few employees in San Francisco. They're spread around the world. But the family's here and the family's devoted to the region.

10-00:24:55

Holmes:

So coming to SPUR in '94 and having to spend those first few years, the first three years, getting financially stable and the organization finding its legs again, can you talk a little bit about that, and then your goals of the future, of what you wanted to do.

10-00:25:12

Chappell:

Yeah. Of course, we're a purpose driven organization, and by nature I'm just very pragmatic. And so it took a good three years to get things, on what I say is, an even keel. When I came I figured it would be one year but it really took three. But still, you can see it was a real slog because one year you get in 300 new members, but 200 don't renew. That's just life in membership organizations, no matter what you do. But by 1998 we had 1,300 individual members and we'd gone from 20 to 120 businesses. We had a budget of \$625,000—so more than double. Had a staff of six. And we renewed our lease at the World Affairs Center that year, and it went up a lot. I could see the handwriting on the wall. We need big meeting spaces at SPUR and they're economically inefficient, whether it's a theater or a church or a SPUR meeting room. You don't use it 40 hours a week. So we carry a lot of real estate relative to our budget.

So in the summer of 1999, I put together a SPUR Futures Taskforce, and that was the year of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the question was what do we want to



be when we're 50? Can we make a plan, a strategy for the next ten years that will really get us up over this hump, and do something dramatic. I felt we needed to do something dramatic. And being a planner, I did a paper of scenarios. One scenario was the "base case." We just keep doing what we're doing now and just keep struggling. And then the second was the "disaster scenario." What happens if we really make some mistakes and people stop supporting us, or if the city goes into a prolonged downturn and there just isn't the money. Then the third scenario was to become a "private citywide planning agency." The Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council is that kind of organization, that sponsored the Burnham Plan at the turn of the last century, and sponsored another plan ten years ago. And at this time, remember, the San Francisco Planning Department wasn't really producing any plans. This was before we got them to restart neighborhood planning. The Planning Department was acting mostly as a regulatory body. So that was a scenario. Another scenario was becoming essentially a "PAC, a political action committee." San Francisco Tomorrow is a political advocacy group, and supports politicians as well as issues. The problem with that is when your person's elected you do well and if the other guy's elected you don't do so well. And then we looked at should we be a "research institute," a Battelle Institute or something where we hire a bunch of PhDs to do original research on planning.

The last scenario then was what we call "going public," to get out of the fifth floor office space that had no visibility, and get to be a destination for people who were concerned about the city, and concerned about planning, and where they could gather in a very public way and make a statement. This is the Urban Center idea. And that's the alternative that the board chose. They said, "We like who we are. We want to keep doing this," and that is, research, education, and advocacy for good government and good city planning, "but we want to do it in a much more public and transparent way." And we had some models. The primary model was the Pavillon de l'Arsenal in Paris. But at this time we also had a number of board members who were architects going to China, and every major Chinese city has a planning center, and many of the art museums there have a planning department, where you can really see everything all laid out and get an understanding of, "Oh, my gosh, there *is* a plan for the city. It's not just happening." And the board decided that we still want to be this board driven organization. We don't want to just be a fundraising board. We want to be involved in doing the work, but do it in a much more public way.

The Urban Center has been up and running now for six years. It's totally transformed SPUR's effectiveness. Everybody who's concerned with the field knows where the Urban Center is, and that it's a place to come and participate and be a part of and learn. It's made a great deal of difference in terms of fundraising. Just having a building, everybody knows you're going to be here forever. It just upped the visibility. One of our criteria was we wanted to be on the ground floor. And, in fact, in San Jose, and in Oakland now, they're

ground floor storefronts. Those are both rented spaces. This one we built and own. But you want people to be able to see in, and see what's going on, and attract people off the street into the space. The coffee shop we have here is a great attractor. That was always part of our scheme. We had relatively few directions to our architect, but one of the things we said was, "we want the building to be as open and transparent as planning should be," so you can see in, you can see people working, you can see what's going on.

10-00:33:11

Holmes: Hence the glass doors and windows.

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Chappell: Hence the glass doors. That's right. So it took ten years from the time we wrote that paper to the building opened. It was a long and hard process, but going through that process strengthened the organization. Not surprisingly, it just made us much better at what we do, and built future constituencies that hadn't previously existed.

10-00:33:52

Holmes: Well, there certainly seems to be a power of place involved, right?

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Chappell: There sure is. Yeah.

10-00:33:57

Holmes: I think some of your notes were saying that, and in other conversations, that just building the Urban Center not only put SPUR on the map, literally, but also among San Francisco's population, that they understood. The place gave it more resonance. Gave them something that, when they read about SPUR in the newspaper, there's more of a connection. And then it also even helped the membership, correct?

10-00:34:27

Chappell: Very much so, yeah. And it's interesting. One, we were raising money for the Urban Center. People who knew the old SPUR said, "Well, why do you need a building? You can write papers anywhere. You just need an office and you've done fine. Why change?" And that was surprising to me but, from my architectural background, I understand the *power of place* and knew it would be absolutely transformative, and our board knew that also. In the month before the Urban Center opened 400 people joined SPUR, and today there are five or six thousand members.

10-00:35:27

Holmes: Yeah. So the power of place really did work.

10-00:35:30

Chappell: Really did work. Yeah. There were lots of people involved in this, and I'm going to touch on each of them. Gabe Metcalf, Diane Filippi, Dave Hartley, Oz Erickson. Gabe started here as a volunteer in 1996. He worked at the Bay Institute and he came in and said he wanted to volunteer. He was the volunteer

front desk receptionist. That lasted almost no time because he was obviously so good. I've never had a secretary or a front desk receptionist because I always found the brightest people I could, and they'd be here a couple of months, and they'd be writing policy papers. They were too good to have a clerical job. So that was 1996. Then in 1997, I hired him as development associate, so the junior fundraising person. And at some point in his career he had a choice. We had another opening. I said, "Do you want to go down the fundraising track or do you want to go down the planning track?" He decided he wanted to go down the planning track. I made him program director and while he was here he went to Berkeley and got his master's in planning. Ultimately he became deputy director, and then in 2005, executive director while I was president. Then when I left in 2009, he became president. So in twelve years he worked in essentially every job at SPUR. So it was a seamless transition. And, of course, at this time, he's a young husband and father, and having kids and going to school and having a life. It's a remarkable story and it's the way things should work.

10-00:37:56

Holmes: Yeah, exactly.

10-00:37:59

Chappell: When he started, it doubled our policy staff from one to two. We could split up who did what committees. I did some committees, but I was also building the organization, and managing the board, and fundraising, and doing public relations and partnerships and speaking engagements and so on. He freed me to do a lot of that. And then over time we really developed a great partnership because we were fairly different. He's young and bright and left-leaning when he started, and I was in my 50s at this time, and experienced and well-known, but more center of the road. There would be board members who'd refer to Gabe as my "left-hand man." But this was very valuable, both to have the balance, but also, as the city is becoming more progressive, to move SPUR in that direction, and he could attract more progressive board members and get a better balance.

10-00:39:26

Holmes: Well, I'm sure that also helped the organization navigate that progressive territory a little bit better.

10-00:39:33

Chappell: Yeah. He had, and has, access to people that I didn't have access to. It really worked so well. I always had in mind my experience at the Unitarian Society in Denver, that you don't stay too long, and have your successor in place when you leave. My goal was to leave after eight or ten years. And I still think that's the right time for the head of a non-profit voluntary organization because you don't want it to take on the personality of the leader. You want to be an organization for everybody. When we got to that eight and ten-year period, we were in the midst of the capital campaign and I couldn't leave. So it was 15 years, but then as the building opened I gave it to Gabe.

Getting the building built was not an easy process. It started out as just one more thing to do, and I had other things to do. Early on, John Jacobs signed on to lead the capital campaign. John had been deputy director of SPUR in the '60s and then executive director in the '70s and early '80s, and then went on to be executive director of the chamber of commerce. And he was very well known in the business community, very well known in social circles, had an ability to raise money from people that probably none of the rest of us had. And, unfortunately, in 2002 John got sick and died very quickly—in July of 2002.

In August 2002, I then hired Diane Filippi as—ultimately her title became Director of the Urban Center. And Diane was a principal in the planning firm of SMWM, the people who did Pier 1, the Ferry Building, and the Main Library. Diane had been head of Friends of the Library and was involved in making the library happen as board chair; she understood fundraising. She's a marvelous connector. She knows everybody and knows how to get people working together. So public relations, marketing, fundraising—she'd been the rainmaker at SMWM. About this time she was looking for some new challenges. And we started talking and we both honed in on the l' Arsenal in Paris, that that's exactly what San Francisco needs, is a place that's all about planning. She knew the Center for Architecture in New York, which was just a couple of years ahead of us in starting, and that's an organization that comes out of the AIA but very similar to SPUR. She brought those people out. So she started out as half time. As we all know, there's no such thing as a half-time job. She was working full-time from the beginning and after six months we just made it full-time. She put together a site selection committee, she put together a building committee. Her partner from SMWM, Peter Winkelstein, headed the building committee. She put together an architect selection committee and the committee selected Peter Pfau. It's now called Pfau Long Architecture. And she put together all of the procedures of how you go about putting together a major physical project and building. Selected Nibbi Brothers as the contractor. And she set some ground rules. One was that there wouldn't be any change orders during construction. The other thing was that there would be no lawsuits. Something that a lot of people don't know is that virtually every project today ends up in lawsuits, and everybody suing everybody. And nobody wins.

10-00:45:02

Holmes:

Now, is this between contractors and owners and residents or is this also—

10-00:45:07

Chappell:

Contractors and owners. Yeah. And suppliers and architects. Once a lawsuit happens everybody gets sued, because they're looking for a deep pocket. Things go wrong. Shit happens. And Diane says, "When that happens we're going to work it out. We're just going to work it out." So everybody's got to know from the beginning nobody's going to sue. And things went very, very

well. I think it was a good experience for everybody despite the fact that we were tight on money all the way through.

When we started out, the late David Robinson, who was an architect on the board, developed the building program for us—10,000 square feet, looking for a small building to remodel. And it turned out finding a small building is very tough in this city. There aren't a lot of 10,000 square foot buildings downtown. And we did a member survey of what kinds of facilities do you want, where do you want it to be, and it was a very interesting conversation of whether we would be north of Market or south of Market. SPUR, for many years, had always been in the Union Square neighborhood, and been on Sutter Street, Sutter and Grant for several decades at this point. And the older people wanted to be north of Market; couldn't imagine going south of Market. And in 2002, that was still early in the development of south of Market. But the young people all wanted to be south of Market and that has been so correct a decision. It's so much livelier here. There's so much more interesting street traffic, more interesting places to have lunch. And, of course, the whole center of the city continues to move south. We also said we wanted to be on a street that had a potential of being a nice street, which meant an east/west street, not the north/south streets that are traffic sewers to the bridge. We also said we did not want to be close to city hall, which is a funny criterion of what you don't want to be. But the closer you get to city hall the weirder things get.

10-00:47:54

Holmes:

Oh, really?

10-00:47:57

Chappell:

Yeah. We don't want to be able to run back and forth to city hall all the time. Yeah. Whenever you go to city hall, you see the same people walking the halls all the time, doing their politicking, and that isn't the way we want to work. We want to interact, we want to advise, but we don't want to be a part of that. So we wanted to have a different constituency. In 2004, Oz Erickson became board chair. He's the guy who had led all our housing work, and he actually stayed for three years as chair because we were in the capital campaign. Oz is just a remarkable civic leader, a remarkable person. Focused, determined. He never took his foot off the accelerator in getting this building built. When we were at the title company signing the purchase agreement, Oz looked at me and said, "We're pregnant now." And boy, he never let himself forget that. When we started out, the campaign was going to be \$10 million, including a \$3 million endowment. Before we hired Peter Pfau, a board member, John McNulty, did a conceptual rehab plan for the building that was on this site to use for fundraising. But, as I say, without John Jacobs, fundraising didn't go the way we thought it would. And as the architects and engineers really got into the building they said, "Eh, seismically we're not so sure; it would be much safer to do a new building, and it could also be more functional than rehabbing this old building." Our eyes were bigger than our stomach and we increased the program from 10,000 square feet to 15,000 feet,

and the budget ended up ultimately at \$17 million with no endowment. It was at a time when there was a great increase in construction costs, as there is today. The economy was very hot when we signed the construction contracts. But Oz really became the *de facto* fundraiser, which he is very good at and is still doing it today for all kinds of other causes.

10-00:51:17

Holmes: Is he a developer, as well?

10-00:51:20

Chappell: He's a developer. But he has great entrée into the world, then, of contractors and architects and so on. One of the reasons he's a successful developer is he's very convincing. I'm remembering when we were getting a loan, and we did the *pro formas* about how much money we were going to make in rent from renting out this room a year. I thought, "Oh, my God." And we far exceeded it. Oz knew. He just knew. He's relentless. I think it took him years to recover, as it took me years to recover, from the fundraising. Diane and I concentrated on foundations and individuals. Oz concentrated on businesses and individuals in his circle of influence. Oz led a delegation to the Kresge Foundation in Detroit, and Detroit actually sent money to San Francisco.

10-00:52:47

Holmes: Wow.

10-00:52:48

Chappell: We got a \$900,000 matching grant from the Kresge Foundation. Oz found money nobody else knew existed. Diane was this great connector. And, again, very, very convincing. For each of us, many of the gifts were personal gifts. I hadn't realized that when we started it. The first major donor I went to see, after I made the pitch he said, "Promise me you're going to stay until the building is done." And there were a lot of gifts that were personal gifts, and I'm sure for Diane and Oz also. I never took credit for a single gift. It was either Oz or Diane. They were fabulous in terms of raising money.

We didn't do this like most people do it. There was a model of another small project in the city that had been done, and they started out with a \$10 million lead gift that was half of their campaign. We never had a lead gift. This building was put together with \$100,000 donations. That's hard.

10-00:54:25

Holmes: Piece-by-piece. Yeah, that's difficult.

10-00:54:27

Chappell: That's hard. The largest gift was a million dollars, and we didn't have many of those. There were three board members—Oz and his wife Rina Alcalay, Vince Hoenigman and his wife Amanda, and Anne Halsted and her husband Wells Whitney—who really stepped up with huge board gifts. But these are not the kind of people who give \$10 million gifts to symphony and opera. We just don't have any people like that. But, as I say, I can't say enough for Oz

Erickson, and I say he just continues to be a great SPUR leader and a great community leader.

Our fundraiser at that time for SPUR was Dave Hartley. And Dave had come from *Sunset* magazine, and then he had been a fundraiser for a hospital down the peninsula. But he'd been on the San Francisco Landmarks Board, he knew SPUR, he knew the city very, very well. And, wow, was he a good fundraiser. He was here from 2000 to 2005, on staff, and then he joined the board after he retired. But I think the budget at that time went up several hundred percent. And every year he would set a goal. We had Silver SPUR, the big annual luncheon, the biggest non-political luncheon in the city. We had a Bay Discovery Cruise, another fundraiser, and then membership. And he would set goals for himself every year. I thought, "He's crazy. He'll never be able to do this. Why would he set himself such high—" Every year he exceeded.

10-00:56:42

Holmes:

Wow.

10-00:56:43

Chappell:

When he left I made a graph of the finances, and I'm sorry I don't still have that because it was really unbelievable.

10-00:56:56

Holmes:

If he was at *Sunset*, does that mean he also knew the Lane family? Did he work with *Sunset* under the Lane brothers?

10-00:57:04

Chappell:

Yeah, right.

10-00:57:05

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

10-00:57:07

Chappell:

And, of course, they had been SPUR members, and BCDC, and Coastal Commission I think. So all the time we're raising money for the Urban Center, Dave was raising money for SPUR operations. In all that time the organization continued to grow, add staff, budget increases through good times and bad. How we did that I'm not sure, but the more good work we were doing, the more convincing the organization became. A fundraising consultant would tell you, "Take two years off. Don't do anything else. Just raise money for the building. Put your programs on back burner." But we didn't do that.

And when Dave got ready to retire, it was clear that we needed to bifurcate this position. I split off and took the leadership on fundraising for the building, and the development director did everything else. So that's when I made Gabe executive director because I really needed to focus just on the building. But, again, this was just then the ideal situation because Gabe had been deputy director, and it was just very logical that he should become executive director.

10-00:58:57

Holmes: And what year was that?

10-00:58:58

Chappell: That was 2005.

10-00:58:59

Holmes: 2005. Yeah.

10-00:59:00

Chappell: When I left it was just seamless. And, again, the Urban Center has just made everything very different for SPUR. It was that giant leap that I knew we needed to make. We're no longer that hidden gem. SPUR now has a national presence, and Gabe is as apt to be quoted in the *New York Times* as he is in the *Chronicle*. And fundraising for the building also opened a lot of doors with foundations. SPUR had always been primarily member-supported and we were the envy of many other nonprofits who have to depend on foundations who come and go. But members hopefully contribute every year. But a lot of foundations learned about us as we went through the capital campaign process. And I remember Diane and I went to San Jose to see the Knight Foundation—Knight Ridder newspapers. They only gave money in cities where they had newspapers or had had newspapers. They wouldn't do San Francisco, but they got very interested in SPUR and they were interested in urban things. Diane and I kind of showed them how they could do even more. And it ultimately took five years, but they're the people who seeded the SPUR San Jose.

10-01:00:53

Holmes: Well, that's what I was going to ask you. Knight Ridder probably wouldn't be involved in San Francisco but San Jose surely would be that opportunity.

10-01:01:01

Chappell: Yeah. And SPUR now gets a lot of foundation money that it never did before, which is great.

10-01:01:09

Holmes: Oh, that's great.

10-01:01:12

Chappell: So the groundbreaking was in March 2007 and the building opened in June of 2009.

10-01:01:25

Holmes: Wow.

10-01:01:27

Chappell: I stayed till the end of 2009, and then when I left I said, "I'll be a consultant." Isn't that what everybody says when you don't know what you're going to do? And I had no idea what I was going to do, if anything. The *Business Times* wrote an article and my phone was ringing off the hook of people wanting to hire me. And I basically had three kinds of clients. One are nonprofits. So



nonprofit management, board development, fundraising. I really believe in the nonprofit sector, and it becoming increasingly important as government reneges on some of the contract. And nonprofits aren't always well run, and I really believe they should be well-run, and that a non-profit isn't any different from a for-profit, except you reinvest your profits. You never take your profits out. And hopefully at the end of the year you've brought in more than you've spent. The other thing, of course, is who pays and who benefits are different people in a nonprofit. You're not directly paying for service. So I've done a bunch of that.

A number of developers have also asked me for advice. "How do you get things done in San Francisco?" Especially as people come in from out of town. They can't believe it. And what they need to learn, and what I tell them is, "Standards are very high here. You have to give back to the community. The neighbors need to feel that they're getting something and that you're not just taking. Nothing gets done without the advice and consent of the public," and as it should be. So in general the caliber of developers who succeed here are very, very high. Well, I would say the caliber of developers who succeed here is very high. Not everyone succeeds.

10-01:04:29

Holmes:

That's true.

10-01:04:30

Chappell:

And it's different from the way things are done in other places. Many years ago, when I was a consultant, before SPUR, I was working on the Apple world headquarters in San Jose for Steve Jobs. And I walked into the Planning department, and the planning director said, "Our job is to expedite Development permits." Well, that's San Jose. That's not San Francisco. The third thing I've done, and something that I really believe in, is the forming of community benefit districts. While I was at SPUR we helped form the Union Square Business Improvement District. When we bought the property here, I helped form what became the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District. And so I teamed up with a SPUR board member, Mary McCue, who is a genius in activating public space. She manages Yerba Buena Gardens. Then through that she has gotten into the business of forming Community Benefit Districts. So she and I did Civic Center, Central Market, TransBay, Rincon Hill, and another new wrinkle, which is called a green benefit district, first one in the country—Potrero Hill, Dogpatch—where the neighbors get together and setup a district to develop and maintain open space.

10-01:06:35

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

10-01:06:36

Chappell:

And the idea on these districts, it's the ultimate in grassroots democracy, in that a group of property owners, residents, businesses get together and decide what services they would like in their community in addition to what the city

provides, and then we help them figure out what that's going to cost, and then they ultimately form a legal corporation, a nonprofit corporation, to collect assessments on the properties and to provide services. Safety services, extra cleaning services, marketing services, working with the city to be sure you're getting the services that you're supposed to be getting. It becomes legislation passed by the Board of Supervisors, and is, essentially, a contract with the city about what the city's going to do and what you're going to do.

10-01:07:46

Holmes: Oh, wow—that's putting local governance into action.

10-01:07:48

Chappell: And this is the way cities are increasingly going to be managed in the twenty-first century when everybody votes "no" on all taxes, but they vote "yes" on these districts because—it is the ultimate in democracy. You're deciding what you want, you're deciding what you're going to pay for, how you're going to do it.

10-01:08:12

Holmes: And you're able to visibly see the benefits of what your payments actually provide.

10-01:08:18

Chappell: That's right. And you know who the executive director is, and you have his phone number or her phone number, and if they're not doing their job you can fire them. Unlike a government agency, they want to be called, they want to know when there's a problem, because that's how you know what you need to be doing.

10-01:08:40

Holmes: Yeah. I was going to ask you about when you retired from SPUR, and then to listen to how you were talking about consulting, because one of my original questions was what was the emotion like after leaving SPUR? After building it up and being here for so long, and then you leave. But then it sounds like, even with the consulting, you're still doing almost the same kind of work but you've let somebody else run the ship of SPUR.

10-01:09:07

Chappell: Right. It was hard, but I knew it was the right thing, and I could see right from the beginning—SPUR has advanced tremendously under Gabe's leadership. It was easy in that I knew it was the right thing to do and I could just see that the right things were happening and SPUR—

10-01:09:33

Holmes: It also seemed to be like the right time.

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Chappell: That's right.

10-01:09:36

Holmes: Like a new building, there was some good closure. Outside of your consulting, you've also been busy in other aspects, as well.

10-01:09:46

Chappell: Right. So yeah. My friends say I've failed retirement. [laughter]

10-01:09:51

Holmes: [laughter] By the looks of it, I think so.

10-01:09:54

Chappell: So I'm active on three boards, and the one that is taking the most of my time these days is, I'm board chair of Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture. Fort Mason is a former army base and we operate it as an arts center, performing arts, other arts, and provide subsidized rent to non-profit arts groups. And there are nine buildings, 300,000 square feet a building, 25 different venues, 15,000 different activities a year, 1.2 million visitors. It's the biggest visited place of anywhere in San Francisco other than the Civic Center.

10-01:10:59

Holmes: In the area, yeah.

10-01:11:00

Chappell: Bigger than MOMA, bigger than the de Young. But it's many different, completely different things going on there. The immediate past chair was Gussie Stewart, who is a very accomplished businessperson, is married to John Stewart, who is a SPUR board member, and that's how we got to know each other. I saw this as a real culmination of a lot of things that I've done in my life and a real opportunity. And we're in a transformative phase. We're really looking at Fort Mason, at how we do things, and who is there, and how can we make it a better experience, and what's our mix of tenants. It goes back to architecture, it goes back to urban design, it goes back to my experience with the Shared Center in Denver, it goes back to my experience at SPUR, at the World Affairs Center, and then putting the Urban Center together, and experience with government. Our landlord is the National Parks Service. There's a terrific executive director, Rich Hillis, who was in the mayor's office, and I think I've mentioned him. We've worked on a number of projects over the years, and he thinks of himself as the mayor of a small town. He's pushing it forward with great vigor. So if I live long enough, we're going to see a very different place for the next 30 years than it's been for the last 30 years.

10-01:13:06

Holmes: Which is interesting. As you work there at Fort Mason, you mentioned all the different aspects that it kind of dovetailed with, right. From an outsider's view, who's sat with you now ten sessions, it also seems like Fort Mason is—you're a true architect and you like to build things.

10-01:13:27

Chappell: I do.

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Holmes: And it's not just buildings, it's also organizations and places.

10-01:13:29

Chappell: That's right. Yeah.

10-01:13:31

Holmes: And it really seems like the Fort Mason project in a lot of ways really fit that niche.

10-01:13:38

Chappell: Yes. I never thought I would be an executive director for as long as I was because I'm not an executive director, I'm a builder. But yeah, I was building SPUR the whole time I was here.

10-01:13:51

Holmes: And now you've moved to a former army fort-now-turned community artist enclave.

10-01:14:02

Chappell: And you will be amazed when you see the changes even in the next year that are coming up.

10-01:14:07

Holmes: Oh, wow. Well, that really gets us touching on some time that we like to do in our last sessions of a bit of reflection. One of the aspects within your notes is that you knew it was time to also step down to let the next generation take over. That you'd been doing this long enough. And that Gabe is kind of that example, as well, of the next generation coming up. How do you hope that your work at SPUR, and in the other organizations, how do you hope that inspires that next generation of planners such as Gabe?

10-01:14:52

Chappell: Early in my career, as I looked at different career paths, I was never interested in working for a planning department, that really is regulating. I wanted to be in a position of proposing. It's like, doing an environmental impact statement is not very interesting, because you're evaluating someone else's proposal. I want to help invent the future. When I talk with young people, I always say, "Get a variety of experiences. Work in different venues, even if you know you want to stay in the private sector or in the public sector. Work in both sectors because the constraints and the opportunities are so different." And we see in planning departments all the time people who have gotten out of school and worked for a planning department who don't know the opportunities and constraints on a private developer, and how to really make things happen. They don't know how to make things happen. And I hope that's one of the things that SPUR does, because SPUR is purpose-driven and is about making things happen, whether it's a housing policy, or a new Muni line, or the Urban Center. I think this is how we progress.

- 10-01:15:57  
Holmes: And it also seems to be community driven, as well.
- 10-01:17:00  
Chappell: That's right.
- 10-01:17:00  
Holmes: Like the community involvement in all the projects.
- 10-01:17:03  
Chappell: Yeah, yeah. Nothing happens without the community.
- 10-01:17:10  
Holmes: In going back to some of our conversations over the last few sessions, in thinking of the younger generation, I wanted to get your thoughts on the importance of civics in staying informed. You've ran across this. In some of our discussions you've touched on this a little bit, particularly when we think of the flip side of community involvement—meaning that some community members are really informed on what's going on, and what they're voting on, and what they're discussing, while conversely others are not.
- 10-01:17:48  
Chappell: Yeah. It's getting harder and harder, with the demise of general purpose newspapers, and just the specialized blogs, that we each only read the one that we're going to agree with their conclusions. What passes for news in this country isn't news at all. I had a friend from Switzerland visit a few years back, and he said, "There isn't any news in this country. It's all just 'rapes and fires'. Where's the news?" And certainly television, where most of the older generation gets their news, it definitely is just rapes and fires. If it's not photogenic, it's not on television. 40-character tweets that the young people are getting their news from, or the single-issue blogs—it's a real concern. We're in this situation where one of the major political parties is able to nominate someone who doesn't have any idea what the constitution is about, and 50% of the population is going to vote for that person. It's a serious worry. It goes back to education. But if we have several generations of teachers now who don't really understand civics, I wonder how do we get better participation at city hall? The planning commission meets at 12:00 noon, and some of the same people are there every week. Who can spend their afternoon and evening in a planning commission meeting?
- 10-01:20:03  
Holmes: That's true.
- 10-01:20:06  
Chappell: They're not people who look like you and me. And yet that's who we listen to. Whoever shouts the loudest. It's a worry for our whole society.
- 10-01:20:23  
Holmes: Yeah, Well, in connection with that, in thinking of that kind of limited view, I guess, that very specialized view that we see developing today among the

younger generation, but even among the older generation increasingly. When we apply this to planning and policy, what room would you like to see for that kind of broader understanding of regionalism, of a public commons, of sharing a city—yet we don't talk to each other anymore because we're too busy on our iPhones.

10-01:21:08  
Chappell:

Yeah. I got to hope that technology is going to help us with new techniques of communicating. There was a measure on the ballot last June that was actually written by college students to allow online participation in public hearings. This particular measure had a lot of problems and wasn't going to work, but I got to think that somewhere along the way somebody's going to crack the code on that.

10-01:22:05  
Holmes:

Well, and that gets to the public planning commission you were just speaking of, who can leave work or whatever they're doing at noon to go sit in this. But if there's another way to participate, perhaps that offers a solution?

10-01:22:17  
Chappell:

Yeah. The Urban Land Institute has a wonderful program that they call Urban Plan, and it is a game that professional planners, architects, developers train themselves in, and then go out to high schools. In this game everybody's assigned a role. So you're the developer; you're the next-door neighbor; you're the city councilman. And you play that role and then see what pursuing your goal does to everybody else's goals, and then try and work that out. Clearly this is something that could be scaled up electronically. But it's a wonderful way of teaching kids. One of the other groups I've been involved with for a long time is the Architectural Foundation of San Francisco. In fact, when we were raising money for the Urban Center, they were our tenant in the old building for a few dollars a month for a couple of years. They use architecture to teach children, high school children. And they're not teaching them to be architects, but they teach "reading, writing, arithmetic" through architectural kinds of projects. They work in the public schools of San Francisco and tend to be mostly disadvantaged kids, kids who don't learn in the standard way. I remember there was one student who was about to get thrown out of school, out of the public school, and he said, "I suck at arithmetic." And what we saw in that program was he didn't suck at arithmetic, he sucked at numbers. But he was brilliant and had already made a video for a major rock star, and he was able to program complex geometry on the screen, which is mathematics. I don't know if you ever took mechanical drawing in high school, when you draw a gear or something, in those days a T-square and triangle. Well, this kid was not only imaging these shapes and drawing them, but on the computer where they're spinning around and morphing and changing through space. Brilliant. He was about to get thrown out of school, out of the regular school.

10-01:25:49

Holmes:

Wow! It shows how to expand our own frame of teaching. In thinking of the architecture, the role-playing, which I know has been on the rise in classrooms, how important that could be for also teaching civics, to understand there has to be compromise.

10-01:26:05

Chappell:

Our elected leaders in the city, and probably everywhere, don't get any training on how to be, for example, a supervisor. In fact, they are insulted and won't ask because they don't want to show that they don't know something. There have been some notable examples of supervisors who, when they were elected—when Mark Leno was first appointed to the Board of Supervisors he said, "Send me every SPUR newsletter for the last five years." And he read them. He came in and wanted to learn. And there have been several others that have done that. There's a lot happening out in the world and every year the SPUR board takes a trip to some other city. There are great things happening. And we try and take some planning commissioners and some supervisors, and some of them simply aren't interested. Not interested. And likewise, planning staff, the more you see, the more places you go, the more you read—if I were planning director I would try and require the staff to each belong to some community organization, whether it's SPUR or the neighborhood NIMBY organization. I don't care, but be out there, put yourself in somebody else's shoes, see what it looks like from the other side of the coin.

10-01:28:06

Holmes:

I can see it's a valuable experience.

10-01:28:07

Chappell:

And certainly reading. I've always wanted to give all the planning commissioners subscriptions to the various planning and architecture journals. Even if they just look at the pictures, that's fine. Architects look at pictures a lot. But just see what's going on.

10-01:28:28

Holmes:

Well, there's some nice pictures. Historians don't always have pictures.

10-01:28:32

Chappell:

Right. See what's going on other places.

10-01:28:36

Holmes:

Speaking of those kind of different experiences, I wanted to ask about landscape architecture. I know you've mentioned your affinity of landscape architecture, and it was something that you were thinking about, maybe traveling a little further down that road than you did. How do you feel your work in a lot of the parks, and the public space, and the open space that SPUR has helped develop and promoted here in San Francisco, how do you think that shaped the city? And was that also driven by your affinity for landscape architecture? Did it kind of whet your appetite for being a landscape architect?

10-01:29:17  
Chappell:

So certainly, it's maybe the subject I most naturally relate to and really love. Like so many other things, my focus in that has changed from design to management, because the key thing about public space is it has to be managed. Any place that there are a lot of the public in, has to be managed. I mentioned working with Mary McCue, who manages a number of these spaces. She and I did a report for St. James Park in San Jose just in the last couple of years. The first time I met her I was in her office, before she was on the SPUR board, and there were pictures of clowns all over the walls. I said, "What are they?" She said, "I'm getting new uniforms for the guards at the Children's Garden and I only hire clowns." Not guards in clown costumes, but she hires clowns to work with young kids. Brilliant.

10-01:30:44  
Holmes:

That is. Wow. Well, in management, that's one of the hidden things. When we think about developing, it is usually just build it and then you move on. But managing, thinking through the various ways of management, of site management, is so important.

10-01:31:02  
Chappell:

In a way, with a light touch, the public doesn't feel it. You never want the public to know you're there or that they're being managed. Last night I was in a Walgreen's buying greeting cards and there was somebody that the clerk thought was a suspicious character. And the clerk was standing there right over the guy, watching the guy going through the rack of greeting cards. It's like I didn't want to be in that store. He obviously didn't want a shoplifter shoplifting but that's not the way you do it. And certainly public space belongs to everyone. Everyone. I don't care who they are, showered or unshowered, everyone has the same right to be in a public space. It's behavior that you manage, not who it is, and you want to do it so people feel welcomed.

10-01:32:17  
Holmes:

You were mentioning the annual SPUR trip, of getting out and seeing things outside your own bubble, your own environment. Throughout your life, you could say you've traveled around the world, in many respects, and seen a lot of different aspects that proved both inspiring and enlightening. In those trips, in thinking of urban planning, what are some of the model cities that you've come across that have really inspired you? And what do you think that San Francisco could perhaps learn from them?

10-01:32:58  
Chappell:

Cities need to be legible. You should be able to understand them. That you're in them once and you know where you are. You can find your way through a city. They need to be legible. You should be able to intuit where the center of the city is, or where the different pieces are, and then once you've done it, it should be memorable. That means there should be a structure. There has to be some structure that anybody will understand, whether it's a little kid finding their way from home to school and back, or an architect. And so when I look



at cities, I look for that structure. I think of Amsterdam, series of concentric canals. Suzhou, the same thing, that one in a rectangular plan, but a series of concentric canals. Imagability. Paris is the ultimate city in imagability, where there is a great pattern of streets and parks, and then nodes at the end of these great streets. A city even better than Paris, in my mind, is St. Petersburg, which was 50 years before Paris. It is this same series of great boulevards with churches with spires. There are government buildings at the end that leads you through. And then it's overlain with a series of curving canals. It was built in a swamp so it's got the charm and small scale of Venice. Being in a place where it's dark much of the year, many of the buildings are pastel colors, there is a very southern feeling to it. And all the spires and domes are in gold leaf, so it glimmers in the sun even when the sun is horizontal.

In this country, William Penn, in designing Philadelphia, his five squares plan that created neighborhoods around parks. And a hundred years later James Oglethorpe in Savannah did that even more in that it was an interconnected system of parks, and roads, and sidewalks that all worked with each other, and was a module that could be continued. The plan of Savannah continued from 16—whatever it was—to the Great Depression. They just stamped out this plan on a relatively flat ground. Has wonderful neighborhoods, and every park has a place for a public building on it and a place for a market. It works as well today as it worked a couple hundred years ago. Of American cities, Chicago is a great model in my mind. The beginning of the twentieth century, Daniel Burnham did a plan for Chicago that was taught in the public schools up until the Second World War. So people in Chicago know there's a plan. They know what it is. Every taxi driver in Chicago can tell you who the architect of different buildings are.

10-01:37:46

Holmes:

Oh, wow.

10-01:37:48

Chappell:

There's a real sense of a civic identity.

10-01:37:54

Holmes:

Yeah, of place.

10-01:37:53

Chappell:

Vancouver, BC—

10-01:38:02

Holmes:

You've mentioned Vancouver a number of times.

10-01:38:04

Chappell:

Yeah. They had the advantage of having a big slug of public land so the planning could be done right, that there was enough land to have good sized open space along the water. And instead of cramming that space with low buildings, they built point towers. One of the things they did is they picked out the most important public spaces in the city and their views. Those public

spaces tend to be parks on hilltops. And then what view is important from those places; which mountain peak, largely, do you want to be able to see from where. And they then projected a cone so the high-rise buildings could be located so they didn't impact these dozen important view places. So people didn't feel bad about losing their precious views. People here, they say, "Oh, I've lost my view of the Bay Bridge because of all these high-rises." Well, if someone had stood in Dolores Park and projected a view cone to the Bay Bridge it would be very simple to adjust the buildings accordingly.

10-01:39:44  
Holmes:

Indeed. That's really insightful in thinking about those kind of plans. The lines of vision. Well, as anybody who visits and knows people who live in Manhattan, they understand how those lines of vision get crossed and changed constantly. Because we've talked a lot about planning—in your time here at SPUR you obviously had to deal with city government and negotiating those kind of relationships. And not just with policymaker, but also with a very large cast of citizenry, right, and occupations. What are some of the ways in which you've been successful in negotiating those relationships, and sometimes those relationships with very prominent and important people, while also staying true to SPUR's mission, as well as your own personal ideals? In a sense, what was the secret of Jim Chappell's art of balance, which it seemed like in your position you needed to master?

10-01:40:55  
Chappell:

Yeah. Well, you have to do it carefully and quietly. So no grandstanding. No talking to the press on things. And also having data. Politicians will never be interested in data when they're at the dais making pronouncements, but sometimes in private you're saying, "Look, here's what it looks like is happening. Can we find a way to change things? Otherwise this is going to happen and I don't think you want that. You're a responsible leader. You're trying to get to the right thing." Any politician who uses data gets laughed at. Anybody who shows a graph of something, how silly that is. That's different some places. In the Soviet Union, if you looked at the papers, and there were many papers other than *Pravda* there, they're full of graphs and charts. SPUR does a lot of graphs and charts. But yeah, I think I've said before, tell the politicians everything I know on both sides of the issue, and tell them they can do with it as they need to do, and I will never embarrass them in public. Sometimes you win, sometimes you don't. I guess that's the other thing. Today you're on opposite sides of the issue. The next time maybe you'll be on the same side of the issue. Never be personal. It's not about that. Everybody has their job. Sometimes your job will cause you to make a different decision than somebody else. Be allies today and when you can't be say, "Next time we will be."

10-01:43:44  
Holmes:

I wanted to ask you, too, in thinking about developers, as well, because SPUR has to deal with a lot of development, do you take the same tact with

developers and even neighborhood organizations that you do with policymakers?

10-01:44:02  
Chappell:

Developers are very creative people. They look at a piece of dirt and they imagine 500 apartments there. With both developers and community organizations, I think it's getting them to see the other side of it. You're going to invest \$100 million, that's a pretty serious thing, and you're focused on getting that done. The neighbors, on the other hand, are focused on more traffic, more kids in school, noise during construction, loss of views. How do you get them to walk in each other's shoes a little? It's always personal. It's always in small groups. We have to go testify at the planning commission and the Board of Supervisors, because you just have to, but that's theater. Very seldom does anyone's mind get changed in a public hearing. People are there to play the same song that they want to play. Perhaps once in a while a hundred people show up that weren't expected and that can politically force the decision-maker's hand. But usually it's all decided before those meetings. So you're performing for the other people in the audience, for the decision-makers, and they know it. Public hearings took a turn for the worse when they started being televised in San Francisco. Now, in a way that sounds like a great idea because everything is transparent, everyone can see and hear what's going on. But people are acting. The supervisors, each one has to give a speech, even if the issue's decided, everybody knows, they certainly know. All the lines are laid out but everybody gives a speech and they're performing. And people in the audience are performing. They're showing off.

10-01:47:07  
Holmes:

And speaking on those similar notes, on the topic of gentrification. Now, we've broached this a few times during our discussions. And this is certainly something, when we think of SPUR, its very long history, we think of urban planning and its long history, the not so pleasant history of urban renewal in this city and cities across the country. As one who's an expert in planning, one who has worked with SPUR, how do you see the decisions a city makes? How do you see gentrification, and how does SPUR communicate with the public about those kinds of issues?

10-01:48:00  
Chappell:

Yeah. It's complicated and it's tough. This isn't going to be a one-minute answer, okay. But I think probably the most important thing to understand is that gentrification is the effect, not the cause. It's the effect of the disparity of incomes in our society, which is great, as we know, and it's an effect of the imbalance of supply and demand that pushes people from one place to another. And in this country it's made much worse because of our history of racism. It's whites in, blacks out. And that has to affect everything we talk about.

In terms of the disparity of income, well, as we know, that problem is getting worse and worse. We're on the cusp of a huge change, probably as huge as the change from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy. And that was

based on changes in technology. Now there are other changes in technology, whether it's self-driving cars, robots, remote control cameras. There are going to be millions of jobs that go away, or just online purchase instead of going to the store. The demise of cash. All of these things. Bus drivers, taxi drivers, automobile manufacturing, City CarShare. 20 people share one car and then when there is no driver, all of those drivers. Body shops. How much money and effort goes into fixing your fenders that you bang up and that's not going to happen with self-driving cars. Stanford Shopping Center has little R2D2s running around for security instead of people. Somebody's watching a screen in a room with 50 screens in front of them, watching what's going on. So there are going to be far fewer of these jobs. And of course, as we know now, computers are doing not just repetitive jobs, but approaching thinking. They could eliminate our jobs. And what's coming down the line is Universal Basic Income. This is very exciting. It's being tested now in Utrecht and Lausanne. Y Combinator is going to be testing a program in Oakland...where the pay you get isn't related to the work you do, but that everyone will get paid. In European countries, a lesser form of this has existed for a long time. In Switzerland, everybody gets a month's vacation, a paid vacation a year, whether they work or not. And as jobs are eliminated here, we become so much more productive that we'll generate the money hopefully to pay for this. And what happens at city hall or what happens at SPUR, this is not effecting that. That's a much bigger change.

But in terms of gentrification, cities are always changing. There's no such thing as an idler gear when it comes to cities. You're either growing or you're going down in population. In 1930, Venice had a population of 165,000. Today it's less than 60,000. In 1950, Detroit was 1.8 million people. It's now 700,000. San Francisco was 635,000 people in 1940. 150,000 people came to San Francisco during World War II. From 635,000 to 775,000. There were then 20 years where the population decreased by 100,000. It's now being going back up again. And we're now over where we were in World War II. Considerably in the last few years. While some cities, when the Detroit of the world are dying, we're bursting at the seams. And that's a problem in itself. Has anybody solved that problem? In the USSR, you used to have to have essentially a domestic passport and you couldn't change cities, jobs, housing, you had to find someone else in the other city to switch with. If you had a girlfriend in Seattle and you wanted to move there, you had to find somebody in Seattle who had a boyfriend here. Clearly that did not work there, would never happen here. China today, your health benefits and education benefits largely stay with the county you were born in, and as all of these people move to the cities, their kids stay back in the village with the grandparents because that's—

10-01:55:00  
Holmes:

Would you say that, at least here in San Francisco, the push for affordable housing has probably been the biggest instrument to deal with that effect that you're describing?

10-01:55:12  
Chappell:

Right, right. There are other causes, too, that are going on. Until the last five years, I would say the biggest cause of housing shortage was the excess of births over deaths. And that is we are all living much longer than we used to live and family size, 1950, was 2.7 people per family in San Francisco. Today it's two. If you just looked at the people over 18 and didn't count the children, many households are one. I live in a flat, two bedrooms, that was built in 1920 for mom and dad and two kids, and I'm one person squatting in this flat. That's creating a shortage. All of this, even if we did not have the rapid increase in jobs and the run-off.

So then the question becomes: you have a "poor" neighborhood and a new building gets built. That building, unless it is subsidized, is for a level of income person that's different from the people who were there before. And what does this do? It increases tax revenue to the city. It restores old buildings, restores old neighborhoods, puts in new infrastructure and decreases crime. But these benefits are accruing to the newcomers, not the oldcomers, and thus gentrification. Property ownership is a factor, too. Bayview-Hunters Point, African American community, had, maybe still has, the highest home ownership in the city. That the African Americans who came in to work in the shipyards bought their houses. And so over the last 20 years, they've been profit-taking and moving to the suburbs and getting a better house in a better neighborhood with better schools and better parks. But they're people with choice. And when you choose it, it's very different from when it's imposed on you. But even then it hurts neighborhood institutions. The black churches in the city, very important institutions, are hurting because of that. How long are you going to drive from Antioch to San Francisco to go to church?

10-01:58:47  
Holmes:

That's not happening.

10-01:58:48  
Chappell:

Not all that often. Right. Chinatown is a very different example. The Chinese are a culture that really values land ownership and don't sell their land. Once they own it, they own it. My in-laws family has a house in China that nobody's lived in for 50 or more years, and that's very common. In Chinatown those buildings are never sold, so there is not gentrification there. The downside of that is that there are couples living in a room that's eight feet by eight feet. Some gentrification might help. That's very different from the Mission. And that's where most of the talk about gentrification in San Francisco is today. The Mission is not the historic Latino neighborhood of San Francisco. You may know that they got off the boat in the wharf and came up Broadway. If you talk to Mexican-Americans in their 70s and 80s, that's where they lived. That's where our Lady of Guadalupe Church is on Broadway. Mission Dolores has never been a Mexican church. It was built by the oppressors of the Mexicans, the Spanish, and then the neighborhood became Irish. Until very recently, the pastor at Mission Dolores has been Irish. They have the first Latino pastor just in recent years. Right across the street

from the Mission is the Lutheran church that still has Sunday mass in German. And the Mission was a German/Irish working class neighborhood. There's a great book, Brian Godfrey's book, *Neighborhoods in Transition*, came out UC Berkeley Press 1984, so it's way, way out of date. But it traces the migration of different minority groups in the city, longitudinal, from 1960 to 1980.

10-02:01:30

Holmes:

Yeah. That was a great use of census data in that book.

10-02:01:33

Chappell:

It's a great book. Needs to be done some more of. What can we do? We need to obviously work on income equity. We have such a disparity in our society. And part of that is education. This is why I have taught at UC Extension and not UC Berkeley, and why I've been a big supporter of City College. I was on the bond oversight committee for many years at City College. Because these are the stepping-stones for first-time college-goers and immigrants into the middle class, where they will then have the economics that they can empower themselves more. Certainly universal basic income is a complete game-changer.

You ask about affordable housing. San Francisco builds more per capita than any other city in the country. And the question is how much can you afford to build? Those units are no less expensive than another unit to build. In fact, they are more expensive for some very good reasons. One is the non-profit affordable developers, they're going to own the building forever, so it's well built. They're not going to flip it in six months or six years. Second, those populations have a high service need, especially if you're taking homeless people and helping them reenter society. So you'll find many public spaces in those buildings, meeting rooms for classes, for counseling, and so on. All that costs money. And the third thing is they're very hard to finance. Instead of going to one lender, and having one mortgage, and one lawyer or two lawyers, the typical affordable housing project in San Francisco now has twelve sources of funding. It takes years to put that together. And twenty-four lawyers instead of two. Then to get them to all close at the same time. It's very difficult. There are many causes of homelessness. One of them is not enough housing. So the city has built some projects with homeless housing and there's 100 percent Homeless Project, Rene Cazenave, Folsom on Rincon Hill. And those units cost \$400,000 per unit. That's not including the land, not including the architect, not including the financing, not including lawyers. That's just what it costs, the construction cost on that unit. And the city has said we can never do another one of these because we don't have enough money. That's a setting of priorities, but that's bigger than the city. If we didn't spend so much on armaments, oh, we could do it.

10-02:05:41

Holmes:

Perhaps.

10-02:05:45  
Chappell:

So there's a very smart developer by the name of Patrick Kennedy of Panoramic Interests. He was the guy who pioneered lofts here in the Bay Area and a number of other things. And he has designed a project where the homeless unit, where they're made in a factory out of steel and completely furnished in the factory, wrapped up in plastic, brought to the site and assembled and you can stack these about four stories tall. He has a proposal to put these on public parking lots, on a podium over parking lots so the land would be essentially free. He believes he can do these for \$240,000 each instead of \$400,000 each. This is a game changer. He actually has a sample of these sitting at 9<sup>th</sup> and Howard that just showed up last week, and taking people on tours through it. They have a kitchenette, bathroom, and shower. They're totally soundproof, flood-proof. Flooding is a problem in homeless housing. Smoke proof, rodent-proof, because they're this own unit. Big windows. Nicely designed, nice furniture. It can be done. The unions are not in agreement and we'll see how that works out. Ultimately, it will make more work for the unions. The cost of the module is one-third of the cost of the whole building by the time you do the foundations and set it up, and connect all the plumbing and electrical and so on. We talked last week about all the different programs we have for affordable housing. But the biggest thing is, "show me the money." That we have to tax ourselves more to do this. We have to do more bonds. That's the only way it's going to happen. Private developers can do so much, and you can argue how much is so much. But they can't do it all. It's bigger than them.

SPUR supports housing and development for a lot of reasons. One is it's the right thing to do. We simply need the housing. It also pays taxes. San Francisco's very service rich. We love our public services, whether it's Muni, which is now free for children and for seniors, or whether it's homeless services. We now give all homeless people a cellphone. How are they going to make their doctor appointment? How are they going to find a job? It's absolutely the right thing to do. It costs money. So I don't know that this is an answer. If you are living in a relatively poor neighborhood and a new building is built next to you, will that increase other values in the neighborhood? Yes. The theory is if this happens citywide and enough, we will get ahead of the supply/demand problem. When we went to Vancouver and we talked with the leaders there and we said, "Well, what about rent control?" "We don't need rent control. We have more supply than demand." "What about corporate hoteling and apartments?" "We don't care. We have more supply than demand." "Well, what about vacation condos?" Turns out a lot of San Franciscans have vacation condos in Vancouver.

10-02:10:55  
Holmes:

Who knew?

10-02:10:56  
Chappell:

Who knew? Right. We don't care. The purchasers are setting the price, not the developer. And we have seen this in San Francisco just in the last year. I was

interested to pick up my neighborhood newspaper yesterday, which tracks rental prices in the neighborhood and house sales and condo sales. And for the first time, they've admitted that prices are going down. They have these charts every month and the charts are showing it. Up until this month they've had an explanation that this isn't really happening, you're just imagining it. Well, it is happening. We have, in this little blip, out-built the supply. In the recession in 2008, rents in San Francisco went down twenty percent. That's a lot.

10-02:12:01

Holmes: That is a lot. Yeah.

10-02:12:02

Chappell: And that wasn't because we upped the supply. That was because we killed 60,000 jobs and demand went down. But it's the same thing.

10-02:12:20

Holmes: That's interesting.

10-02:12:22

Chappell: I don't think we can eliminate gentrification, but if we can shave off the worst of the bad effects, both by raising people's incomes and providing more subsidized housing.

10-02:12:47

Holmes: I wanted to ask, before we're out of time, because it is an election year and you have been busily working still for SPUR, or on behalf of SPUR, with your ballot measure analysis. As one who's had to deal with city hall so many times here in San Francisco, which as far as governments go is really probably one of the most challenging you can imagine, I wanted to get your thoughts on good governance. To work in urban planning, to work in the city, what is your best ideals for good governance?

10-02:13:44

Chappell: I think the first thing is transparency. We have, at least to some degree, eliminated the smoke-filled rooms. When you think of the broad history of American government in cities, whether it's Boss Tweed, or what—and I don't know that we've done that because we're so brilliant, but the web has been just huge on that. Just the research I do every day is now so easy compared to what it once was. And there's big data out there that anybody can get their hands on. But how we take the next step. We could certainly have evening meetings instead of daytime meetings. That would help. But how we get the next step of electronic communication in a way that's fair, because electronic communication can be anonymous. If someone sends in an email to comment on something, they could be anywhere in the world and you don't know if they're a legitimate constituent or not. I don't know how that gets solved. Transparency's the first thing. And the second thing is education and training of elected leaders, who get essentially none. So you get all levels of person with all different motivations, and even if they're all well motivated they're not equally well schooled in how government can and should run, and



what the city charter says and why it says that. And then staff likewise. We all know that in every institution people get promoted to exceed their abilities. You're good at what you do and you get made a manager, but you're never taught to manage. This happens a lot in government, where there just isn't training. The other thing that happens in government is jobs get posted. You see the next job up the step. You apply for it. Whether you've been in your past job for a year or ten years, or whether you're in the middle of a project or not, and what happens continually in government, and I see it at the National Parks Service now as well as city government, is that people are flipping every year. No project gets done in a year. And so you just think you're making some progress. The superintendent of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area was here a year and a few months. Right now there's no superintendent, there's no deputy superintendent, and there's no public affairs officer. A private business would help you on a plan. But you can't just expect to go to the next best job because there's an opening there.

I had a friend who worked for the Copenhagen Planning Department, and there in the city people rotate their jobs on a four-year basis. You get good in something, and then you get good in something else again and get the broader picture. In government, either people are moving every year or they rust in the position they're in, and are there way too long. This kind of setting of goals. I think we as voters should try and hold our politicians to goals. Okay, you have a four-year term. What are you going to accomplish over those four years? Where do you want the city to be and how can you help it get there? And I think every employee needs that kind of goal, too. It's longer than a year. Maybe it's not four, but it's longer than a year. And then I look at finance. Whether it's the tax collecting—the whole finances of the city, and the legal department of the city, need to be really well done. I've seen it sometimes when they are and sometimes when they're not. You really need to hire the best people for those jobs. Because the public gets irate at high salaries—you can't expect an attorney who can make half-a-million dollars a year in the private sector to work for the city and make \$120,000 a year and expect you're going to get the best attorney. I see working with private attorneys on some of these deals and see the deals that the city does, and there's a disparity in law, in finance. Sometimes, not always. There's fabulous people who work for the city. The level of people that we deal with, a lot of them are just fabulous. Absolutely as dedicated. But you've got to pay them, too.

10-02:20:53

Holmes:

Yeah. Shanna, do you have any questions?

10-02:20:56

Farrell:

Do you have anything else that you want to add?

10-02:20:59

Chappell:

I just want to say what a great experience this has been.

10-02:21:02

Holmes: Oh, it's been a pleasure.

10-02:21:05

Chappell: Probably in my 30s, or maybe my 40s, I kind of looked back on what I'd accomplished in my life and I saw so few projects that had actually happened, which was very discouraging. Projects take ten years, anyway, for any major project to happen. And now I hadn't looked back in a long time, but in the process of thinking about this, wow. A lot has happened and there are accomplishments. I just always try to subscribe to the campground rule, you leave it better than you found it, and I hope I've done a little of that.

10-02:21:57

Holmes: Well, I think you have, Jim. I think you have. Thanks.

10-02:22:03

Chappell: Yeah.

[End of Interview]