

Farmington Avenue Comprehensive Community Plan

A Framework for Action

Community Forum

September 21, 2015

Presented by the

Hartford Business Improvement District and Hartford Preservation Alliance

Partially funded by a grant from Connecticut Main Street Center and the 'Preservation of Place' program in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Department of Economic and Community Development with funds from the Community Investment Act of the State of Connecticut.

Welcome, Introduction

- **Rating the Neighborhood—collected**
- **Welcome and Introduction**

(Frank Hagaman)

Terms for Smart Growth on the Corridor

- *Placemaking*
 - Planning, design and management for public space
 - Improve public health and safety
- *Transit Oriented Development (TOD)*
 - Create a community centered around public transport stations
 - Utilize CT Fast Track at Sigourney
- *Tax Increment Financing (TIF)*
 - Redevelopment and Improvement through tax revenue money
 - Improve blight on Farmington Avenue
- *Form-Based Codes (FBC)*
 - New approach to zoning that concentrates on building form and character rather than use
 - Emphasis on public space and mixed use
- *Complete Streets*
 - Streets for all modes of transportation, not just cars
 - Walkable neighborhoods

Session Goals

Session Goals

(Francine Christiansen)

- Clarify a common vision
- Create an preliminary action plan

Getting Started Questions

- Did you drive down Farmington Ave. today between Sigourney & Woodland St.?
- Do you think this corridor has the potential to be vibrant, pedestrian friendly, architecturally cohesive and attract a diverse mix of retail and residential?

Forum Agenda

- 1** **Context:** Situational Analysis Review (20)
- 2** **Great Places Today:** Where the Corridor is today (10)
 - How did you rate the neighborhood?
- 3** **Great Places Tomorrow:** What the Corridor might be tomorrow (60)
 - Focus on individual blocks in the Corridor**Break**
 - Focus on Marshall Street---a concept to consider
- 4** **Branding the Corridor:** Name options (10)
 - Your ideas
- 5** **Putting it All Together:** Next Steps (15)
 - Emerging Action Plan for the Corridor

So.....What Would It Take?

To create a vibrant, pedestrian friendly and safe
Farmington Avenue Corridor
between Sigourney and Woodland Streets

With a high quality and diverse mix of
commercial, cultural and residential offerings,

And with a cohesive identity
where commercial and residential buildings
complement the rich architectural heritage?

***“All the ingredients are there,
and there are plenty of places that have done this.”***

Toni Gold, Planning Consultant

***“You could pour endless money into properties and get nothing.
Rather you need a better front door or streetscape;
then the neighborhood will be primed for investment.”***

David Panagore, Urban Planning Consultant

Project Goals

1. **Establish a common vision**
2. Create an action plan
3. **Establish a community and redevelopment capacity**

Characteristics of Successful Community Development

- **Shared community vision**
- **Redevelopment capacity Investment**
- **Public-private partnership** to convene, engage and manage ongoing development
- **Transit** with-in ½ mile radius
- **Residents** with disposable incomes to support retail
- **On-site owners**—residential and commercial
- **Diverse mix** of market-based retail and commercial options
- **Cohesive identity**—look: signage and streetscape
- **Walkable and bikeable** with adequate parking
- **Gathering places/opportunities to connect**—e.g.: restaurants, community events
- **Safe and the perception of safety**

It requires an entity to coordinate, manage and advocate

A Neighborhood of Contradictions

Fragmented Cluster: Within this 6-block area, in one of the nation's poorest cities but one of the richest regions, there are:

- **The Aetna & The Hartford:** among the nation's most important insurance companies
- **Harriet Beecher Stowe Center and Mark Twain House and Museum:** two world renowned cultural institutions
- **Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center:** a major medical center and an anchor in Asylum Hill
- **Immanuel Congregational Church, Trinity Episcopal Church and St. Joseph's Cathedral:** three historic churches
- **Educational Anchors:** Lincoln Culinary Institute, Hartford High School and the Classical Magnet School

So what can realistically be done now?

How can the community leverage these assets?

Further Contradictions

- **Lack of Neighborhood/Visitor Friendly Streetscape and Retail** do little to invite people to stop, shop or stay. Yet this is one of the state's most traveled corridors.
- **Lack of Cohesive Community:** The Asylum Hill neighborhood has 12% Caucasian, 28.7 % Hispanic/Latino, 47.1% Black/African American, 8% Asian and 3% other. Yet, this rich ethnic diversity has not translated into a cohesive community. (2010 census)
- **Safety Perception Challenges:** HBID district initiatives are making a difference in safety. Crime has actually decreased. Yet, the perception that this is not a safe place discourages people from spending time on the Corridor.
- **The CTfastrak Game Changer:** Many believe the launch of the CTfastrak this March, is a potential “game changer.” However, now that they have built it, how do we get people to come and do more than pass through the area?

So what can realistically be done now?

How can the community resolve some of these contradictions and leverage the CTfastrak opportunity?

Assets

- **Historic Buildings**
- **Committed Partners**
- **Strategic Location** as a connector
- **Compact** with good access and scale.
- **Convenience**
- **Ethnic Diversity**
- **Retail Tenants** with little turnover
- **Transit** as the state's busiest bus corridor
- **Traffic:** 1000's of cars pass through daily
- **Employees** with 1,000's working daily— with untapped disposable income.

Gaps

- **No Economic Development Voice**
- **No Reinvestment Ability**
- **City of Hartford**--Robust commitment to community development
- **MDC Road Project**--completion dates.
- **No Cohesive Brand/Destination Coordina.**
- **No Pedestrian Friendly Streetscape**
- **Cuts to Police Patrols**
- **Perceptions that this is not a safe place**
- **Absentee Commercial Owners**
- **Small Homeownership Base**
- **Challenging Retail Mix.**
- **HBID District:** funding doesn't include Gillett to Woodland Streets.

So what can realistically be done now?

All the raw ingredients are here....

How can we address these gaps and leverage key assets?

Conclusions

- **Economic Development Potential:** The potential for economic development is present on Farmington Avenue.
- **Regaining Trust:** At the same time there have been many studies and groups that have worked to move this area forward with minimal results, so people are cautious and skeptical about new attempts.
- **New Initiative Considerations:** Any new initiative must consider the challenges of getting the city to fund and complete streetscape work, absentee landowners, the lack of home owners and market-rate renters, the perception that this is not a safe or inviting place to live work and walk.

The Most Critical Success Factors:

- 1) Develop a **shared community vision** and
- 2) Identify a **community development organization** to coordinate, manage, advocate and identify resources.

Recommendations

- **Create vision and action plan and Convene a Comprehensive Community Action Plan Task Force** to refine and implement this action plan.
- **Identify a community development organization** to coordinate, manage, advocate and identify resources. This is the most critical success factor.
- **Create a redevelopment capacity** to develop at least one mixed-use project to set the stage for future development.
- **Enhance on-foot police presence** to help change perception about safety.
- **Enhance streetscape** by engaging the city to support and implement a comprehensive streetscape plan—to create a better “front door.”
- **Introduce form-based zoning** so it is less complicated to get projects started but maintains the historic integrity of the Corridor.
- **Introduce redevelopment incentives** to encourage economic investment.
- **Brand and promote the Corridor** as an entity.

**Today we will consider some redevelopment options
and potential corridor names**

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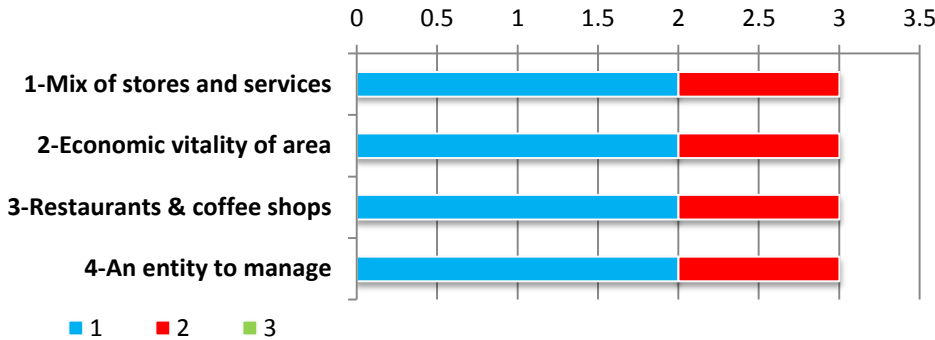
Break

– Focus on Marshall Street---a concept to consider

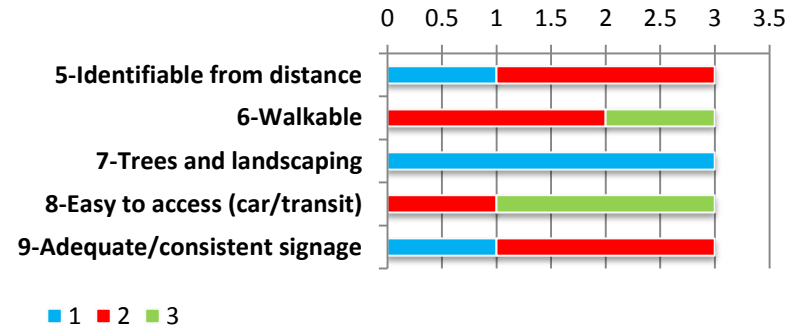
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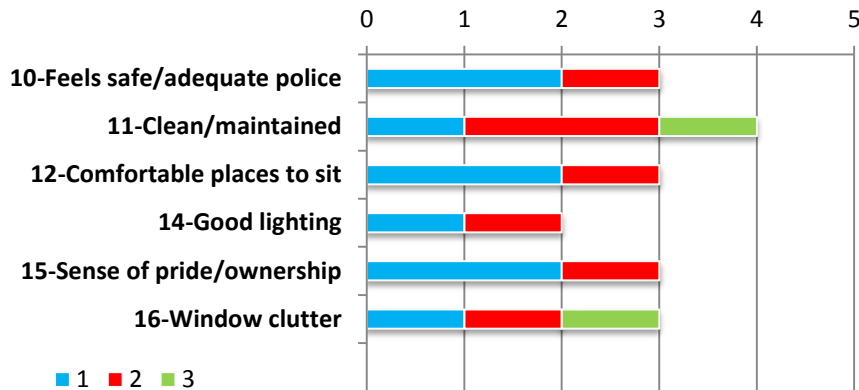
Redevelopment Capacity



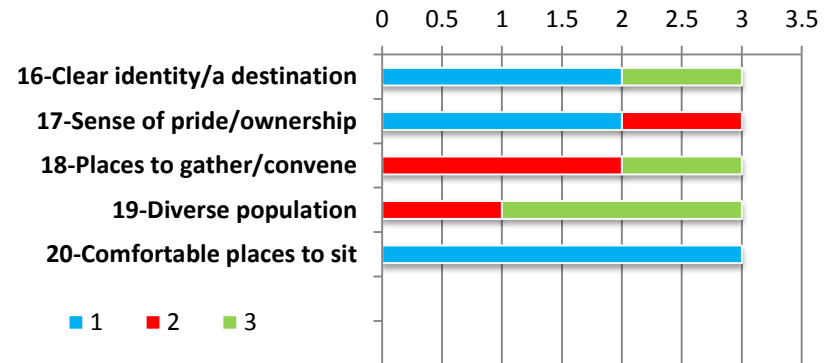
Streetscape



Brand and Image



Community Engagement



20 surveys: Blue=poor; Red=Average; Green=Excellent

So It's Complicated!

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Table Discussion

At your table

Discuss things that are missing or that might be enhanced—on your individual street (*note them with sticky notes and place them appropriately on the street map*)

As a group: Report out

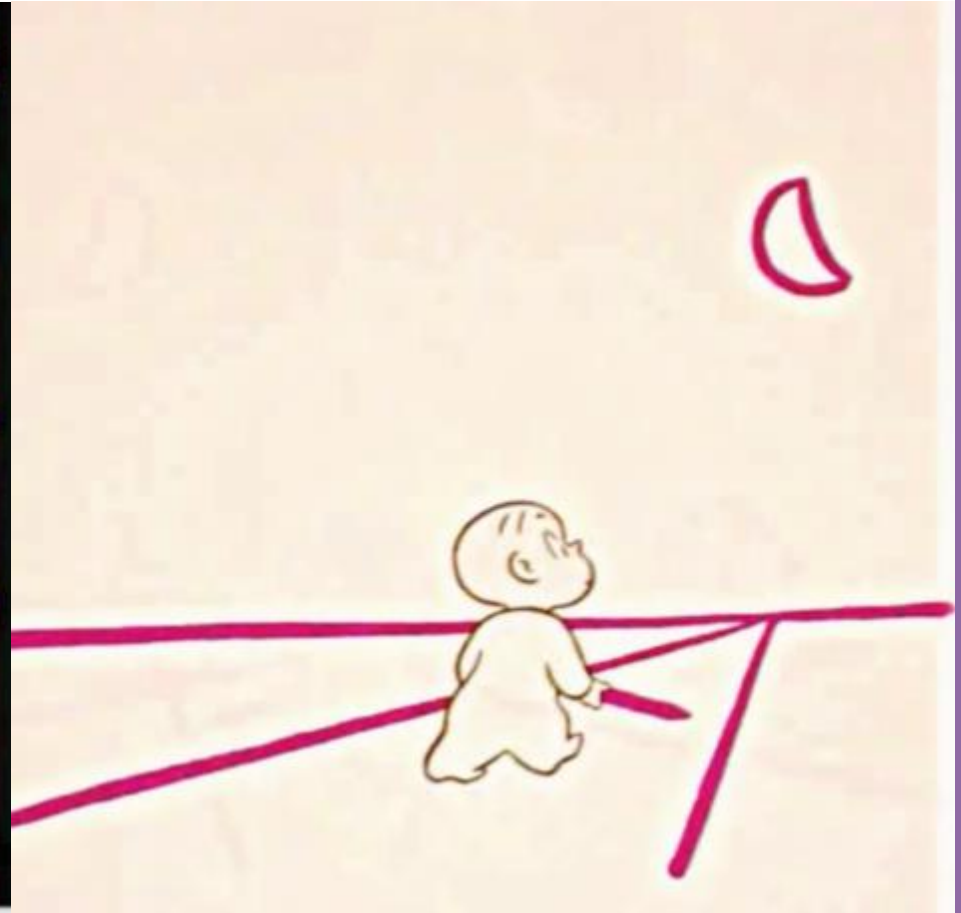
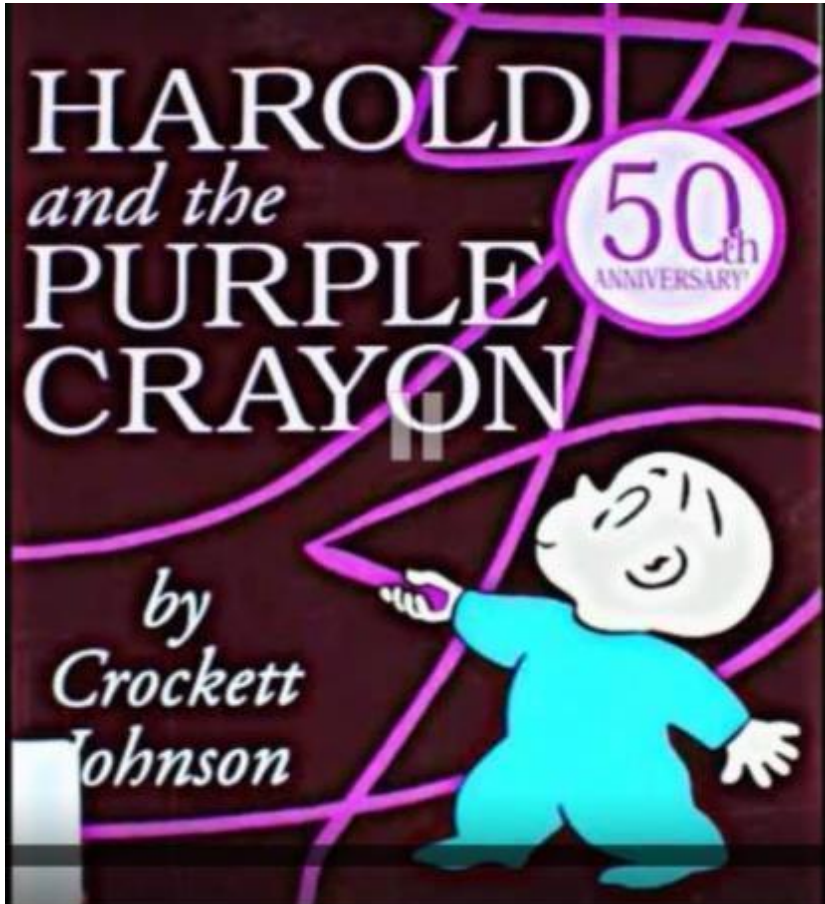
[See Table Maps](#)

Focusing in on Marshall to Laurel Streets



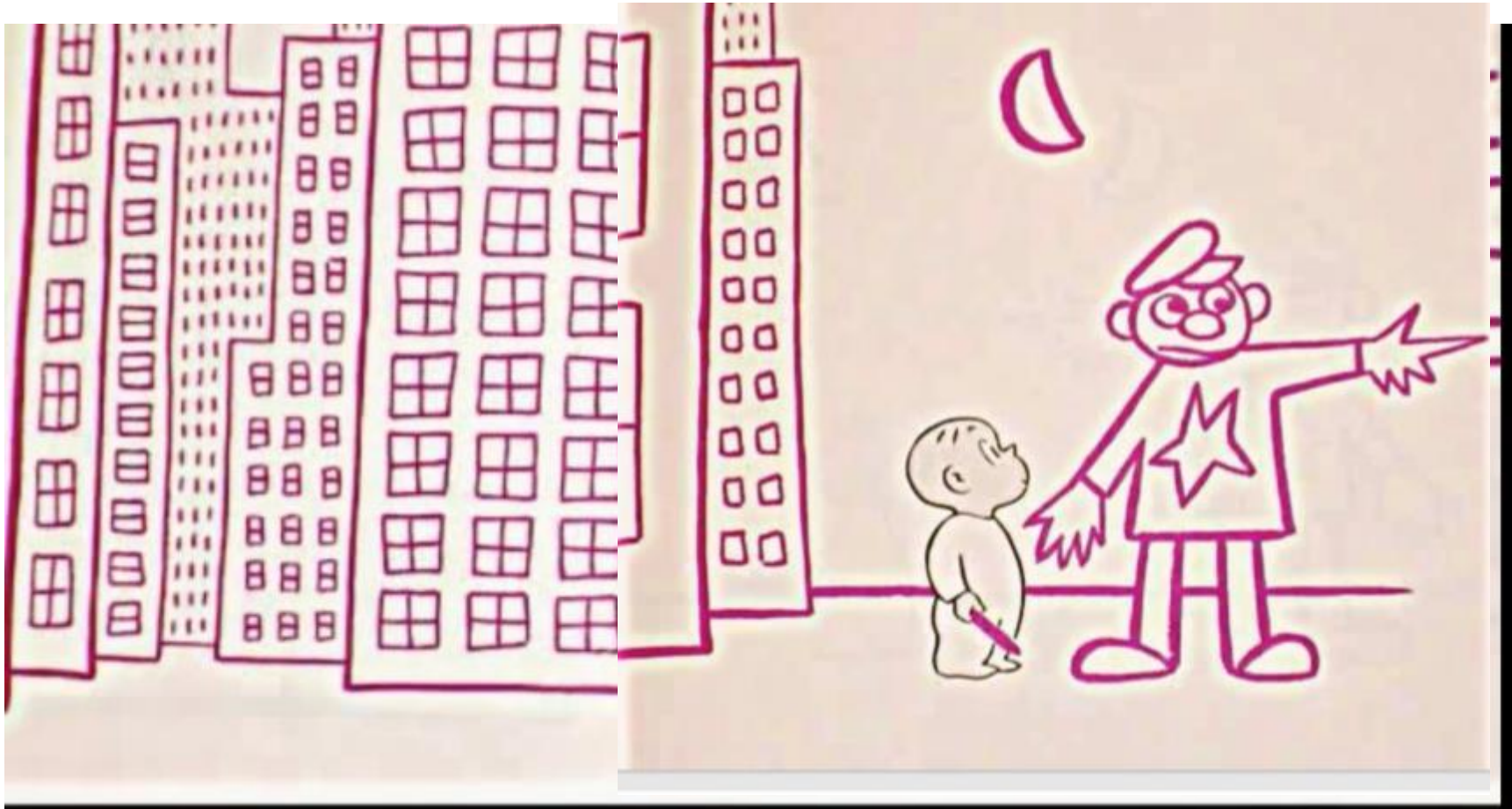
Your Keystone to the Future
BREAK

Focusing in on Marshall to Laurel Streets



**Just as Harold mapped his journey....
We too can map our “purple crayon” vision**

Focusing in on Marshall to Laurel Streets



A concept to consider!

Architect Slides:

To be presented

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Emerging Name Ideas

1. Nook Farm Gateway

2. Nook Farm-ington

3. Cultural Enterprise Zone—on Farmington Avenue

4, Farmington Crossing

5. The Insurance Mile

6. Avenue on the Hill

7. The Writers' Blocks

8. *On the Avenue*— added below any one of the options

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14,

15.

Your Name Ideas?

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9 Things That Could Make a Real Difference

1. **Community Vision:** Develop shared vision
2. **Comprehensive Action Plan:** Develop action plan
3. **Community Action Plan Task Force:** Convene TF to implement vision/action plan
4. **Community Development Capacity:** Identify an entity to proactively manage
5. **Brand:** Create an image for the Corridor by naming and promoting it as an entity
6. **Police Presence:** Increase # of police walking the Corridor particularly S. Marshall St.
7. **Streetscape:** Develop a consistent look and a better front door for the neighborhood
8. **Zoning:** Introduce a simpler zoning code
9. **Introduce redevelopment Incentives:** To encourage economic development incentive

**Mapping the 9-Step Action Plan
PLUS a few additional items**

Farmington Avenue Comprehensive Community Plan

Emerging Framework for Action

Vision

To create a vibrant, pedestrian friendly and safe Farmington Avenue Corridor
--between Sigourney and Woodland Streets--
with a high quality and diverse mix of commercial, cultural and residential offerings, and with a cohesive identity where commercial and residential buildings complement the rich architectural heritage?

Leadership

Farmington Avenue Comprehensive Community Plan Task Force
HBID, HPA, The City, Aetna, The Hartford, St. Francis, CRDA, Immanuel Church,
Cultural Organizations, AHNA, FAA, Business Owner, Resident

Development Capacity

To coordinate, manage and achieve the action plan

Community Development Capacity

To market and advocate for the vision and action plan

Redevelopment Capacity

- Develop one project
- Develop Redevelopment Plan
- Explore development incentives

Streetscape

- Complete defined projects
- Complete defined roadwork
- Enhance Lighting
- Renovate bus shelters

Branding/Image

- Name/Brand the corridor
- Enhance on-foot police patrol
- Extend scope of BID District—to include Gillett to Woodland
- Install cameras
- Change burned out lights
- Fix potholes

Community Engagement

- Work w/ partners to develop Community Engagement Plan to
 - Encourage art/music activities-on street/fastrak station
 - Encourage on-street market/food carts at lunch
 - Encourage gathering places: restaurant/coffee shops etc.

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“It will take a shared Vision.”

Frank Hagaman

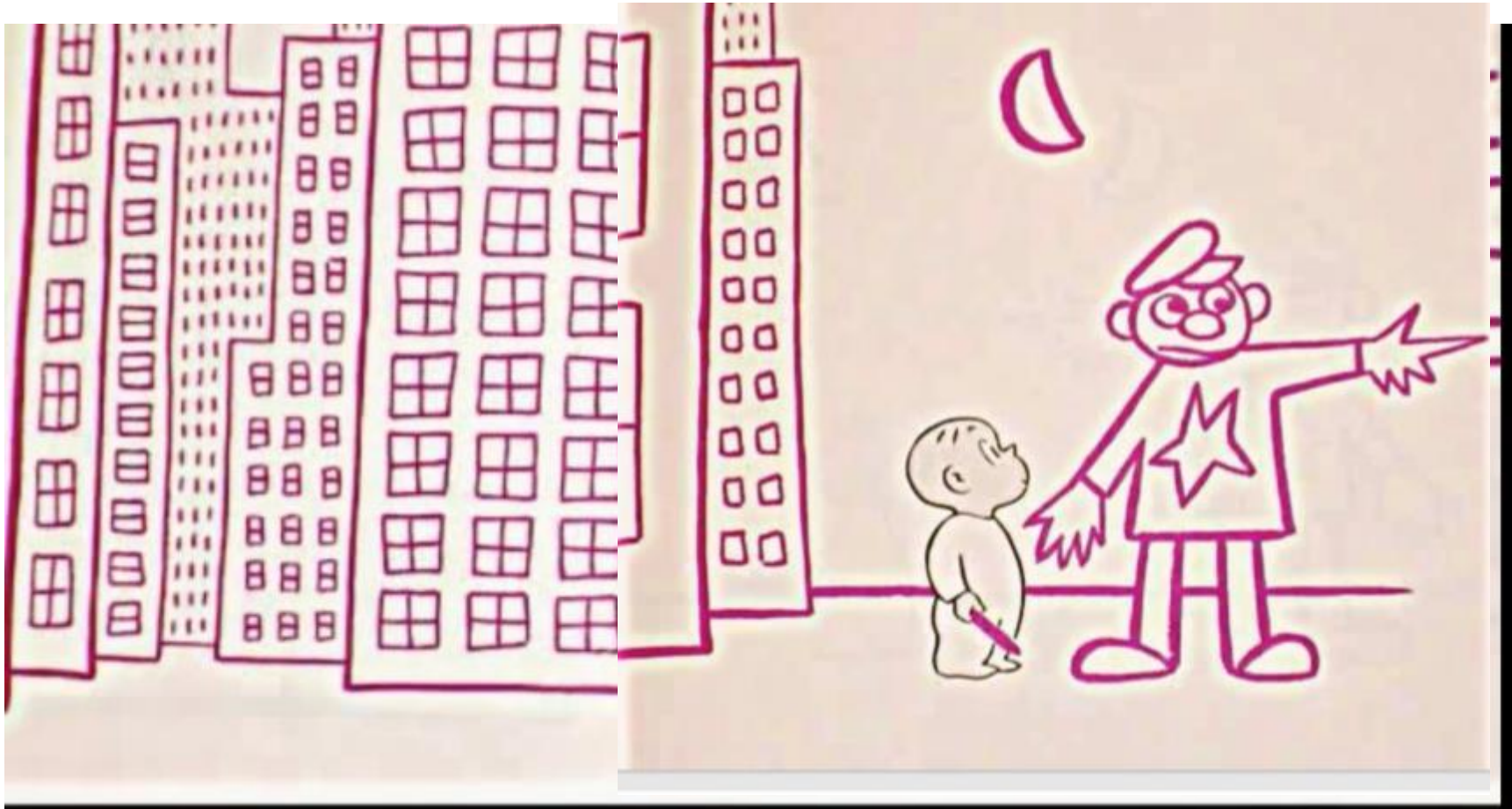
“People need to believe it’s a great place...We need a positive campaign.

Then perceptions and perspective will change.

***When we do this folks will believe in the potential, have a sense of pride
and invest in the area’s future.”***

Floyd Green, Aetna

It's Doable—if we believe



The people who can make it happen are in this room.

So.....What Would It Take?

Session Closing—*Frank Hagaman*