

Portland State University

**PDXScholar**

---

Ernie Bonner Collection

Oregon Sustainable Community Digital Library

---

1-12-2000

## Portland downtown plan (2)

Ernest Bonner

Follow this and additional works at: [https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl\\_bonner](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl_bonner)



Part of the [Urban Studies Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

### Recommended Citation

Bonner, Ernest, "Portland downtown plan (2)" (2000). *Ernie Bonner Collection*. 258.

[https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl\\_bonner/258](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl_bonner/258)

This Memo is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ernie Bonner Collection by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: [pdxscholar@pdx.edu](mailto:pdxscholar@pdx.edu).

## **Planning in Portland in the Seventies**

A project for the first decade of the New Millennium

On January 18, 1970, the Portland City Planning Commission denied a request from the Meier and Frank Department Store for a 12-story parking garage on the site of what is now Pioneer Courthouse Square. On appeal from that decision, the Portland City Council tabled the matter for a year and by that action set into motion a privately-funded effort by a small group of downtown businessmen to develop a parking plan for the central area of Portland. That plan was to become the Portland Downtown Plan.

Just about a decade later, on November 8, 1979, the City Planning Commission adopted the first comprehensive land use and transportation plan for the city since the middle fifties.

Between those two dates, the plans and specifications for the Portland we know today were crafted. It was easily the greatest collection of planning efforts in any decade in Portland's history.

### **The Project:**

This project is about those plans and those times—about the people who hoped, dreamed, fought and worked at setting a direction for this great city. It includes Mayors, Commissioners, planners, engineers, architects, attorneys and citizens. It draws from them not just what happened, but who contributed and why.

Most of all, the project seeks to remind Portlanders (and others) that the Portland we know and admire today did not just happen. It is the result of the efforts of those who were working for a better Portland 25 years ago. It stresses two main themes: Good citizens are the riches of a City and The Portland of tomorrow will be the result of what the citizens of Portland are working for today.

The proposed project has 3 elements:

- Oral history interviews with those who participated directly in planning in Portland in the 70's, for archiving in the Oregon Historical Society and at the City Archives. These tapes and transcriptions are the primary product of the project, as they will provide an important base of information about the planning of Portland during the 1970's—a data base in which historians and others can search for the genesis and meaning of the Portland Planning Experience.
- A web site ([www.pdxplan.org](http://www.pdxplan.org)) where these interviews, the response and comments of others in Portland, photos of the city and the dates of important events in the decade are presented for the wider community (particularly the younger generation), both here in Portland and across the country; and
- A series of 4 videos covering each of 4 major decisions made in the decade, for educational use.

### **A Request:**



Ernie Bonner initiated this project in the expectation that he, alone, would be able to complete at least the oral history interviews sometime before his death. Since beginning the work in February of 1995, he has produced the first half of a listing of the major planning events in Portland Planning during the 1970's, and has recorded and transcribed over 20 interviews. We have a list of about 100 additional individuals who should be interviewed, and surely this list will grow as we complete the planned interviews. (See Attachment 1 for a list of those already interviewed, along with a draft list of those still to be interviewed. See, also, Attachment 7 for a copy of the letter sent to interviewees.)

We would like to complete all of the interviews over the next 5 years. To do so we will need to conduct, and transcribe, about 20 interviews each year, at an annual cost of about \$6,000.

We are also requesting financial assistance in making the results of these interviews available widely to Portlanders and others. As a first step in this, we have recently posted a web site with the idea of publishing the results of our study of the seventies. [See ([www.pdxplan.org](http://www.pdxplan.org)). This site features planning events 30 years ago, interviews with those who participated directly in the planning of Portland, and commentary from Portland citizens on the decade as well. In its first two months of operation, the site was visited over 600 times. Update and maintenance of this web site will cost about \$200 per month, or \$2,400 annually. As the site expands its subject matter, and deepens its information base, this annual cost will increase.

Finally, we would like to produce some educational materials on the period, for use by history teachers, by urban affairs professors, by other planners in other cities, and by others. A first step is the proposed production of 4 videos on the decade, highlighting 4 major planning decisions:

- the decision to turn down the Meier and Frank proposal for a downtown parking garage and the subsequent development of the downtown plan;

- the decision to withdraw the Mount Hood Freeway from the interstate highway system, and build MAX instead;

- the decision by the state legislature to establish state land use goals and guidelines and the subsequent decision by Metro to establish an urban growth boundary in the Portland region and by the City of Portland to adopt a comprehensive land use plan for Portland; and

- the decision by the City of Portland to incorporate neighborhood comment and opinion officially into land use decisions of the Council.

These videos will cost an estimated \$75,000 each. A guarantee of the full cost of production will be sought from individuals, foundations or other granting institutions. Sales of the video series, and proceeds from broadcasting revenues would offset a portion of the cost of the productions.

### **Applicant Organization:**