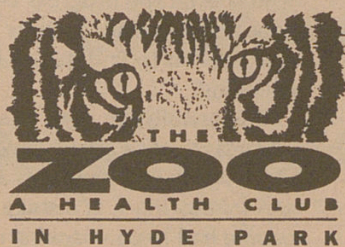


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compete with the suburbs as well as other cities. The complexity of downtown's needs had surpassed challenges of days gone by and, possibly, the progress committee's resources, he says.

"To be perfectly candid, (the committee's efforts) didn't work very well," Strauss says.

### Volunteer vs. paid staff

Greiwe says this progress committee was not set up for success because it was a volunteer group, it was not accountable for results and it did not have a results-oriented, paid staff such as the one DCI is building. He says that business and city leaders finally got the message that such a concerted effort was needed when threats, such as the Bengals leaving town and Lazarus moving its headquarters, captured their attention.

"All these institutions were saying: 'Hey, downtown isn't happening for me anymore,'" he says. "I think it woke up the business community and City Council."

Still, the end of the Cincinnati Downtown Progress Committee and the beginning of DCI and The Vision are not evidence that the city has found itself playing try-and-try-again, says Mark McKillip, supervising development officer in the city's Department of Economic Development. In fact, he says, downtown development and the progress committee made great strides under the 2000 Plan and others that came before it. Those plans all were designed to be implemented during specific time periods, and all were designed to be revised as the time period was approaching its end and as economic or business trends inevitably changed.

Likewise, McKillip says, such plans, which detail specific development goals, should not be confused with The Vision. While it contains some specifics such as locations for retail and entertainment districts, The Vision was meant to be a general picture that will guide specific goals.

"(The Vision) was a plan that was based on community input," McKillip says. "It's a high standard to shoot for, but if you don't set a high standard to shoot at, you're never going to get there."

So, as DCI and city officials try to get there, DCI will be re-evaluating the 2000 Plan, recommending changes that are needed to guide downtown into the next generation. That does not mean DCI will be reinventing the wheel, Greiwe says — DCI and The Vision are simply new people and new leadership carrying out a new charge.

To answer that charge, DCI has a

board of directors — 57 business and government leaders — who have a vested interest in downtown's success. It has a budget for three years: \$400,000 a year from the city and \$600,000 a year in private donations; attempts are being made to raise another \$750,000 annually. Greiwe emphasizes that DCI also has a paid staff that will do nothing but work on downtown.

But, like any long-term project, DCI's efforts to make The Vision reality will have to endure intermittent controversy — whether over development indecision in Over-the-Rhine or a lawsuit filed last month by non-union contractors against the city.

"All of us need to understand the ingredients needed for a successful downtown," Greiwe says. "Not to have people on the same team will certainly make the progress slower."

Some controversies will certainly change The Vision — such as with Cincinnati Councilmember Charlie Winburn's change of heart and vote that killed plans for a conservatory on Fountain Square West. That change did little to threaten The Vision, however, says Dwight Hibbard, chairman of the board at Cincinnati Bell who served as chairman of the Vision Committee.

"I don't think that the conservatory by itself is a fundamental building block in the vision," Hibbard says. "The fact of the matter is, though, that vision anticipates that it takes more than retail to bring people downtown. We didn't specifically say it must be a conservatory. But what we said in The Vision is you're making a big mistake if you just stick with retail. Retail alone won't compete with the suburbs."

While a suitable replacement might be found for the conservatory, no one denies that The Vision will have to clear some taller hurdles, one of which might be the lawsuit filed last month by non-union contractors. They are claiming that City Council's ordinance that imposes union rules on the \$29 million Lazarus/Fountain Square West project unfairly restricts competitive bidding. Last week, Lazarus announced it would scrap the project if council did not repeal the ordinance. Council was to reconvene Oct. 10 in an effort to resolve the problem.

"It's worrisome that we have an ordinance now that forces the city into court at a time that's critical for Fountain Square West," Hibbard says. "City Council passed this ordinance, and I can only react. They've created a barrier now that is going to make it difficult for the time schedule to be met." The store is supposed to open in the fall of 1996.

And by the year 2020, it's supposed to be the cornerstone of a bustling retail district along Race Street. ©

For more information on Downtown Cincinnati Inc.'s plans, contact DCI at 511 Walnut St. (23rd Floor), downtown, or call 744-4444. To contact Cincinnati City Council members, call City Hall, 352-3000.