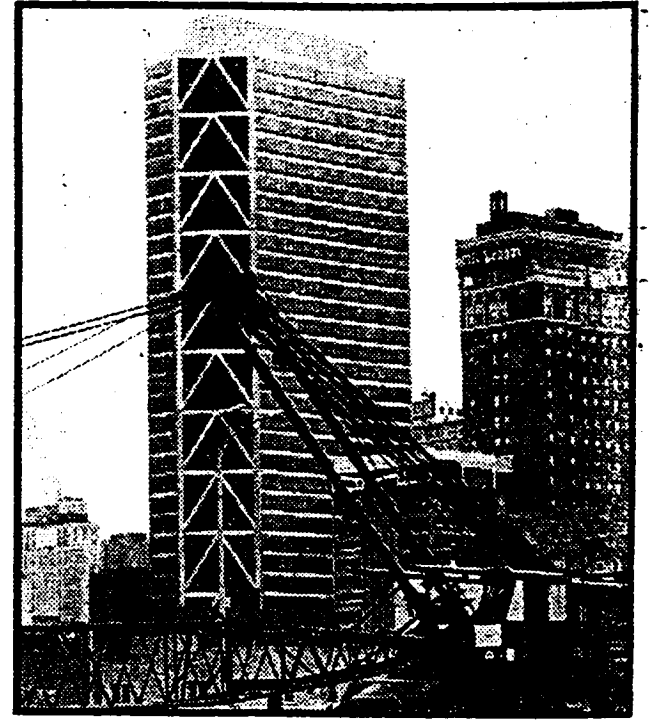


The Nation Continued

Two cities with similar urban troubles, because of history, geography and local government, have fared differently.



Construction around the new St. Louis convention center and the new Sheraton Hotel.

In St. Louis Even the Old Bricks Are Leaving Town

By ROBERT REINHOLD

ST. LOUIS — There is one impressive statistic local boosters don't ballyhoo much. After Chicago, St. Louis is the nation's leading exporter of used bricks. Great neatly stacked piles of weathered red bricks stand by the railroad tracks that hug the Mississippi River. It is said they are shipped to places like Savannah to restore historic buildings and to Texas to make patios for the new houses springing up around Houston.

It is the supreme indignity. Having taken so many of its people and jobs, the so-called Sunbelt is now even carting off St. Louis itself. Once the fourth largest city in the country, a vital manufacturing and commerce center astride the great transportation networks that made it the natural 19th-century gateway to the West, it is now the twenty-third, a ghost of its former self. Even as the flatbeds heavy with brick trundle off, bulldozers are pushing down other buildings. Local officials hope that the last tenant to leave an abandoned building will vacate sometime between Monday and

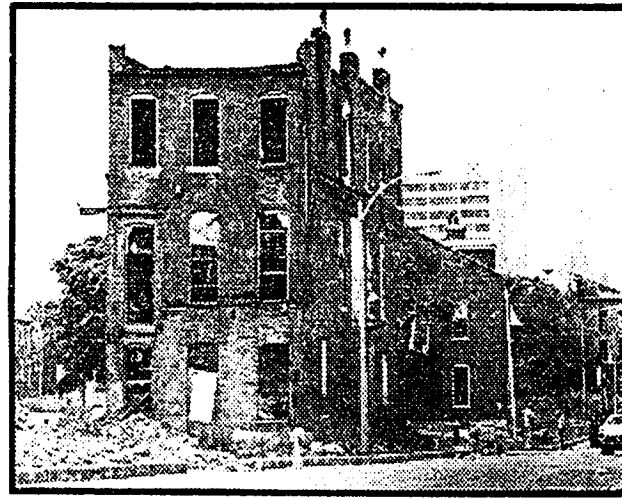
Thursday; if it's on a Friday, the building will be vandalized beyond saving before it can be boarded up on Monday.

Still, there are signs of hope. With infusions of Federal and private money, downtown is booming again after the construction of a new convention center, new bank towers, a stadium and the restoration as restaurants and shops of the 11 blocks of riverfront buildings called Laclede's Landing. Indeed, officials were astounded last week when an Independence Day crowd estimated as high as 400,000 turned out for jazz and fireworks along the waterfront, where few would tread until recently.

Affluent young couples with a taste for the Victorian are salvaging the neighborhoods around Lafayette Square and near the old Souard Market. Not far away, the Ralston Purina Company has bought up and is rehabilitating dozens of homes near its headquarters, and a bold black group, Jeff-Vander-Lou, Inc., is making a viable neighborhood again out of a small section of the North Side that resembles nothing so much as Dresden after the fire bombing.

But by almost any objective or subjective standard, St. Louis is still the premier example of urban abandonment in America. The city has lost 40 percent of its inhabitants and a quarter of its dwelling units since 1950. Even blacks, mostly the more affluent, are departing, at the rate of 5,000 to 7,000 a year, leaving behind the old folks. Over 300 manufacturing companies have shut down or left town in the last decade. Even the St. Louis Club is no longer in St. Louis; it moved to suburban Clayton a few years ago. The darkened hulks of abandoned apartment buildings along Pershing near the lovely Forest Park, the disastrous West End "Urban Renewal" area, mile upon mile of boarded up factories and stores along Olive, the desolation of the North Side, — all stand in sharp contrast to the glittering new downtown with its graceful Eero Saarinen arch and its well-kept South Side white neighborhoods.

The reasons behind St. Louis's fall and the uncertain speed of its determined efforts to recover tell much of the story of the new urban reality. If its decline was steeper than most, St. Louis may also help show how cities can get along



Gateway Arch, top, and awaiting reconstruction in St. Louis.

by adjusting to being smaller and less important. To a large extent, St. Louis's decline was the result of inexorable economic, social and geographic forces that no government, no matter how vigorous, could have halted. It hit its apogee around the turn of the century, and World War II and armaments and aircraft manufacture rescued its economy from decay. But in the late 1940's the flight to suburbia began in earnest. Today, suburban St. Louis County has a population of 1 million, nearly double that of St. Louis.

Like so many older cities, St. Louis is trapped geographically. The city spreads like a fan from downtown along a bend in the Mississippi and is confined to 61.2 square miles within borders fixed 102 years ago. This means that those fleeing St. Louis found easy refuge and lower taxes in the county, and helps explain why St. Louis still struggles while

its metropolitan area thrives. Beyond that, the city's capacity to respond forcefully to new needs is undercut by a system of government that is the outdated product of "progressive" reforms meant to root out political corruption earlier in this century. Under the 1914 city charter, responsibilities are parceled out among more than 50 different boards and commissions. Only the other day, for example, Mayor James F. Conway's efforts to save millions by trimming the bloated police force by 250 officers was blocked by the Board of Police Commissioners. Four of its five members are appointed by the governor, and the board is controlled by the largely rural and suburban state, which has never been overly concerned about the city's plight.

Moreover, the civil service's merit system provides the mayor with little political patronage to use in horsetrading. "So when you come down to it, the mayor has a remarkably weak structural position," said Prof. George Wendel, head of St. Louis University's Center for Urban Programs. "It makes it," he added, "a lot harder to bring about a unified renewal strategy."

The city's strategy is based heavily on the hope that St. Louis can find a new economic base, founded on service industries rather than manufacturing. This depends in part, says John Danforth, head of the Danforth Foundation and president of Washington University, on attracting bright young people. Despite a phenomenally low cost of living — \$75,000 still buys a palace — St. Louis has difficulty making itself seem attractive to this breed. "You don't find Ph.D.'s waiting on tables the way you do in Boston," says Mr. Danforth. "But it's a very nice place to live."

All and all, there is potential for change. Real estate values have fallen so low that it is now worth the while of developers to reclaim old buildings for condominium conversion. Further, Frank Avesing, a demographer at St. Louis University, says the population loss seems to be slowing and the racial makeup stabilizing at about 45 percent black. The great influx of poor rural people, black and white, has ended. "The pressure is off," he says. "Recovery is now in sight." Finally, the things that once made St. Louis great, its central location, its proximity to the farm belt, plentiful water and transportation facilities, may start to matter again in an age of rising costs and scarce energy and water. "The economic factors are going to take care of the social problems," argues Charles Houghton of the Regional Commerce and Growth Association.

Robert Reinhold is a reporter in the Washington bureau of The New York Times.

A Renovated Waterfront, Cleared of Rotted Piers, Has Changed Into a Spectacular Recreation Area

In Baltimore Renewal Has Become a Way of Life

BALTIMORE — It would come as a surprise to the generations of travelers to whom Baltimore was a grimy pit stop on the road to Washington, but this old pumpkin of a port has turned into a magnificent carriage. Urbanologists from all over the world troupe here to learn how superannated metropolises can be recycled. Its once moribund downtown hums with vitality, its renovated waterfront draws throngs every weekend and its old ethnic neighborhoods, formerly the butt of derision, are now viewed as a source of cultural richness.

There are, to be sure, those who argue that Baltimore's rejuvenation, with its emphasis on edifice and historic restoration, has bypassed the black and the poor, that the public schools and other social services remain deplorable, that there is as much public relations as substance to the celebrated revival.

But by most yardsticks, the transformation of the city over the last decade must be a source of inspiration for those who believe there is still a future for aged Eastern cities. A boat ride through the spectacular inner harbor, cleared of its rotted piers and turned into a recreation area, is a treat. White-sailed pleasure craft bob underneath I.M. Pei's World Trade Center; delicious odors waft over from the National Molasses plant, mingling with the smells of pepper and basil from the huge McCormick spice plant.

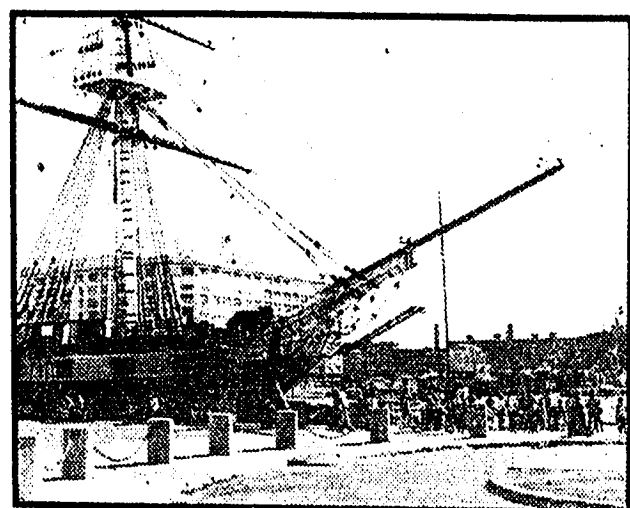
Not far from downtown, the stunning Coldspring development designed by Moshe Safdie to attract the middle class back to the city, has its first residents. In older neighborhoods such as Federal Hill, Fells Point, Otterbein and Bolton Hill, ambitious young people, mostly whites, are finding a gold mine in restoring abandoned old houses. For the poor, Baltimore has attracted national attention by rehabilitating single-family houses and turning them into public housing for families as an alternative to high-rises that are reserved only for the elderly.

Why has Baltimore been able to move so much faster than other cities of its generation?

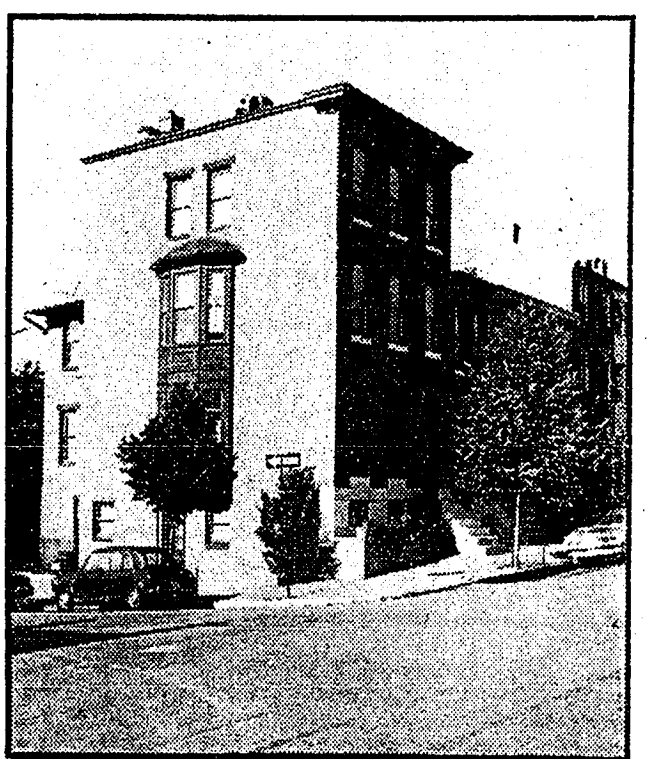
For one thing, it simply never fell as hard as some other places. The city's historic position as a seaport opening to the midlands of the country made it the closest door to an expanding Middle West in the 19th century. The port still thrives today. Since 1950, Baltimore has lost only 13 percent of its population, compared with 40 percent for St. Louis. Although badly blighted, it never suffered housing abandonment on the scale seen in St. Louis and elsewhere.

It had unusually good business, then, later, political leadership. In 1955, the Greater Baltimore Committee, made up mostly of leading businessmen, was formed. William Boucher, the committee's director, and Walter Sondheim, head of the housing and community development agency that is responsible for harbor and downtown renewal, pushed through Charles Center, the \$180 million office, hotel and shopping complex that is the focus of downtown renewal.

Ultimately, city government picked up the ball. There has been a succession of strong mayors, including the incumbent, William D. Schafer, a bachelor who lives with his mother and makes the city his single passion. Much credit is



Fireboat display, top, and U.S.S. Constitution in Baltimore.



Restored homes in the Federal Hill area.

daring use of Federal housing tools available to all cities, and helped it overcome tax advantages enjoyed by residents of suburban Baltimore County, which surrounds the city. For example, the city bought and remodeled 1,500 abandoned houses at an average of \$30,000 each, and then sold them for only \$16,500, on the average, to moderate-income families as a means of promoting ownership rather than renting. Urban homesteading works in Baltimore in part because it is concentrated in small areas, and in part because public money is also sunk into accompanying neighborhood improvements, such as street lighting.

The city tends to step in wherever it sees the need, rather than wait for private enterprise to take its course. It was the city that put the new roof on the historic old Otterbein Church, and helped convert the old Railway Express terminal into indoor tennis courts. It is the city, not banks, that is giving low interest mortgages to middle-class home buyers in Coldspring. And it is the city that holds the mortgage — and is losing money — on the downtown Hilton.

For all Baltimore's success in making the city appealing and livable for the middle classes, its record of helping the poor and underprivileged is not so clear. A recent study by the city itself found that while Baltimore's municipal finances were the strongest of the 11 cities compared, the city ranked near the bottom in terms of poverty, education, overcrowded housing and other indicators of social health. The percentage of black population hovers around 50.

Many black Baltimoreans, such as Homer Favor, head of the urban studies program at Morgan State University, believe that inordinate amounts of precious public funds have been spent on building showplaces for the privileged. "There is some question about who the city is being revitalized for," Mr. Favor says.

Some city officials agree. Walter Orlinsky, president of the City Council, argues that for all the housing rehabilitation and redevelopment, black youths are just as idle, the economy is listless, the retail district is moribund and population continues to decline. Baltimore has made enormous progress, he says: "But to prescribe our blueprint to other cities and say if you do all this the Garden of Eden will appear in your urb is just wrong."

— ROBERT REINHOLD

also given to the imaginative leadership of the city's recent housing commissioners, Robert C. Embry Jr. and his successor, M.J. Brodie.

But it was more than just the right people. For all its erstwhile dinginess, Baltimore had the physical ingredients of urban revival, starting with basically sound intown housing stock, mostly in the form of small row houses that lend themselves nicely to home ownership. There are almost no apartment houses. As Mr. Brodie puts it: "Here you can do something in a few blocks and it registers — the scale has something to do with it."

The structure of the city government helps too. As a big city dominating a small state, Baltimore has managed to gain considerable authority over its own affairs, ridding itself of the many special commissions that decentralize authority in so many other cities. Municipal government is strongly centralized, even authoritarian. The mayor controls three of the five votes on the Board of Estimates. Similarly, all housing, commercial development and urban renewal functions are concentrated in one superagency, the Department of Housing and Community Development, controlling permits, housing finance, zoning and licenses. That structure made it easier for Baltimore to make