

Canal Pride: When the Public Sector Drove Downtown Development

Lynette A. Taylor^{1 2} and **Troy A. Kennedy**³

¹Department of History, IU School of Liberal Arts; ²Department of Philosophy, IU School of Liberal Arts; ³Department of Public Policy, IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs

The Indianapolis Downtown Canal was originally meant to connect Indiana to flows of commerce and trade as part of an interstate canal system. During construction of the canal in the 1830s, the state of Indiana faced an economic recession and the canal was then turned over to the state's creditors. Over a hundred and fifty years later, in the late 1980s, new political leaders in Indianapolis stepped up and refused to let this historical feature continue to deteriorate. To mitigate the damage caused by years of neglect, combined with a desire to make Downtown Indianapolis more attractive to residents and tourists, the city made it a priority to revitalize the waterway. This transformation from murky, litter-ridden eyesore into one of Downtown's greatest assets spanned multiple mayoral administrations, bringing together public sector project leaders with private sector interest groups. This research team focused on residential and commercial redevelopment along the downtown canal to show how one of Indianapolis's greatest follies turned into one of the top reasons to visit or live downtown.

Mentors: Susan B. Hyatt, Department of Anthropology, IU School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI; Drew Klacik, Department of Public Policy, IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs, IUPUI