

# 106 SUCCESS STORY

## Consultation Develops Downtown Plan with Preservation Benefits

Indianapolis, Indiana



“After construction began in 1989, and for the next few years, Downtown Indianapolis was a maze of massive holes and building façades held up by steel girders. When Circle Center Mall Indianapolis finally opened, it became the centerpiece of the revitalization of Downtown. ... It’s the most significant public-private partnership ever for a regional project; it’s unprecedented.”

— INDIANAPOLIS HISTORY  
Circle Centre Mall

### THE STORY

In 1853, the world’s first Union Station opened in Indianapolis. Merchants took advantage of the rail access and established buying and selling operations in the area surrounding the station in what would become the Wholesale Historic District. Listed in the National Register in 1982, the Wholesale Historic District demonstrates the impact of the railroad trade on Indianapolis and its resulting economic boom. However, by the late 1970s, the downtown core of Indianapolis was suffering the aftereffects of urban renewal, resulting in population loss and significant vacant retail space. The City knew it needed to revitalize the downtown area but struggled with developing an innovative plan that utilized the existing historic resources.

### THE PROJECT

After much consideration, the City decided to construct a downtown shopping center by connecting two existing retailers (L.S. Ayers & Co. and William H. Block) and creating new retail space that would attract shoppers and retail tenants. The City worked with shopping center developer Melvin Simon and Associates and developed a number of plans for the mall with shifting footprints and scope. Ultimately, the proposed plan included the demolition of 14 contributing buildings from the Wholesale Historic District. To help fund the cost of acquiring land, demolition, and new construction, the City obtained Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

### THE 106 PROCESS

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that federal agencies identify historic properties and assess the effects on those properties of the projects they carry out, fund, or permit. Federal agencies also are required to consult with parties that have an interest in the historic property when adverse effects may occur. The law establishing the UDAG program delegated that responsibility to HUD’s grantees, so the City undertook compliance with Section 106. A task force consisting of the City; Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer; the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation;

Photos: Above, Indianapolis Union Station (HABS photo); Right, art in the mall (Qsthomson Wikimedia), Indianapolis Artsgarden (Xnatedawgx Wikimedia)

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Photos: Above, South Meridian Street (HABS/Library of Congress), Right, the *Indianapolis Star* moved into the mall in 2014. (Momoneymoproblemz/Wikimedia)

Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana (Indiana Landmarks); Historic Indianapolis, Inc.; and the Central Indiana Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians worked closely to develop a Memorandum of Agreement that resulted in three preservation benefits: reconstruction and preservation-in-place of seven façades that had been marked for razing; reconstruction of a cast-iron façade salvaged by Historic Landmarks from a separate, unrelated demolition; and a commitment to the “urban” character to the new mall structure on its exterior with materials and scale to pay deference to the existing historic structures. Later in the consultation process, the City agreed to restore the historic interior of the Ayres department store first floor instead of stripping it out for a department store tenant, as initially proposed.

## THE SUCCESS

Circle Centre Mall opened in 1995 with much enthusiasm and fanfare. It was a good example of an urban shopping center that integrated historic properties and façades into the mall’s design. The mall has added great economic benefit to the city, creating jobs and improving downtown property values. The Arts Garden, a glass domed section of the mall which serves as the pedestrian connector between the mall and local hotels, is the home to hundreds of artistic and musical works each year. It also serves as the City’s Cultural Concierge, providing tourist maps and local cultural information to visitors. Circle Centre was a critical downtown revitalization project and continues to be a focal point for family and evening entertainment.

The mall recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, causing the City to re-evaluate the mall’s successes and future direction. Consumers’ changing patterns and trends in shopping have caused some storefronts to close, leading again to a higher than average vacancy rate. The City is now considering expanding the mall to include other social services and benefits, such as office space, a grocery store, or fitness club, to reflect the needs of a pedestrian-focused population living in the downtown area. As part of this effort, the *Indianapolis Star* newspaper moved its headquarters into Circle Centre to encourage other local businesses to move into this historic building. The building’s historic significance and location are major benefits, which will allow it to be re-used for years to come.

## ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

401 F Street NW, Suite 308, Washington DC 20001

Phone: 202-517-0200 • Fax: 202-517-6381 • [achp@achp.gov](mailto:achp@achp.gov) • [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)



### Consulting Parties:

City of Indianapolis (HUD  
Responsible Entity)  
ACHP  
Indiana SHPO  
Historic Indianapolis  
Historic Landmarks Foundation  
Central Indiana Chapter of  
the Society of Architectural  
Historians

For more about Section  
106 and the ACHP go  
to [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)



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