ROUTE 66, WHERE ARE YOU?
FOUR CITIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SHARED CULTURAL RESOURCE

by

ANNE CLAYTON DODGE

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ABSTRACT

Although small towns, rural areas, state organizations, and federal programs are all pursuing the redevelopment of the Route 66 corridor, this paper focuses on how four urban communities currently are engaging with this cultural resource: Albuquerque, New Mexico; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Rancho Cucamonga, California; and Flagstaff, Arizona. More specifically, the paper answers two central questions; have urban places along the Route 66 corridor engaged in the preservation, development, and interpretation of the route, and if so, how and why have those forms of engagement differed from one another. Four case study chapters describe how engagement has taken different forms in different cities depending upon the city’s overall economic and political context, the city’s other redevelopment efforts, and the degree to which the city’s built fabric has survived the last twenty to thirty years of the corridor’s economic decline. Each chapter concludes with site-specific recommendations for each city.

After examining several local contexts for corridor redevelopment, the paper analyzes Route 66 as a national cultural resource and recommends strategies for local and interstate development and interpretation. Currently, Route 66 preservationists, advocates, and planners view states and cities as the route’s primary “units of preservation”, since these are the units in which preservation activity most often occurs. An alternative approach encourages Route 66 advocates to focus on regional and cultural themes as units for corridor redevelopment. This approach would emphasize the corridor’s connectivity by treating Route 66 as an interconnected network of places that interpret a common history. For the Route 66 corridor to reach its fullest potential both on the local and national level, it must be developed as a continuous place, in which each of its components contributes to the overall corridor’s success.

Thesis Supervisor: J. Mark Schuster
Title: Professor of Urban Cultural Policy
Route 66, Where Are You?
Four Cities and the Development of a
Shared Cultural Resource

by Anne Dodge
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Prologue
The Route 66 Renaissance

I first learned about the “Route 66 Renaissance” in the spring of 2005, when I was browsing the Internet for a research paper subject. To complete the course Urban Design Policy and Action, I needed to find and analyze a government action that related to urban design and the built environment. Being a lover of history and the American West, I began my search with the National Park Service and discovered the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, a grant-making and advisory program run by the NPS for the preservation and development of the eight-state Route 66 corridor. After interviewing the administrators of the NPS program and reading about the program’s grant recipients, I began to wonder not just about the NPS’s involvement in Route 66, but about Route 66 in general – what was it, exactly? Where was it? Who was working on it? How were they trying to “develop” it? And why?

My first step in answering these questions was to get out on the road and see for myself what, exactly, Route 66 is. This was easier said than done – the former U.S. Highway 66 has not existed as a continuous road since the 1960s, when it began to be decommissioned. As the Federal Highway Administration began building the modern Interstate system, this new highway replaced the old U.S. Hwy 66 as a means of commercial and recreational transportation, and what was once “Route 66” was fractured into a series of state and local two-lane roads. At the same time, the federal government decommissioned older roads like Route 66 in a piecemeal fashion, taking down the Highway 66 signs and leaving the roads to be relabeled and renamed by the states. Some of these roads were far from the Interstate and continued to connect communities and cities to one another; others were paved over by the Interstate, and in these places Route 66 ceased to exist completely, except in some cases as an Interstate service road. So when I decided to drive Route 66 last summer, it was a tricky proposition – how does one do it? Is the road marked? Does it even exist as a continuous piece of roadway? And what, exactly, could I expect to see?

In August of 2005, I recruited former DUSP student Ariel Bierbaum on my Route 66 discovery tour, which happily coincided with her cross-country move from New Jersey to San Francisco. A month before we left, I began researching the Route 66 corridor and assembling a binder of all the sites that, according to a slew of internet testimonials, we simply could not miss: the Rock Café in Stroud, Oklahoma; the Gemini Giant statue in Wilmington, IL; The Petrified Forest and Painted Desert National Park in Arizona; Ted Drewes Frozen Custard in St. Louis; the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook, Arizona; the El Rancho Hotel (“Hotel of the Stars”) in Gallup, New Mexico; Meteor Crater near Leupp Corner, Arizona; the Big Texan hotel in Amarillo with its Texas-shaped swimming pool; a scale replica of Stonehenge in Rolla, Missouri; the famous Cadillac Ranch outside Amarillo. And this is only a partial list of the Route’s natural and manmade wonders, all of which are extensively photographed and written about all over the Internet, in a variety of languages. For a now nonexistent highway, Route 66 has an enormous cult following in both the US and abroad, and I was immediately impressed with the vast amount of information – both accurate and speculative – available online about Route 66 and its artifacts.
Above, the Rock Cafe in Stroud, Oklahoma. Below, the Cadillac Ranch just west of Amarillo, Texas. Source: Author.
So we began our trip – slowly at first, since we had only a vague sense of how much time we would want to spend at each landmark, whom we might meet, and what we were looking for. By then, I knew that Route 66 would be the subject of my master’s thesis – how could it not be? It was such an interesting, surprising, bizarre “place”; I was irresistibly drawn to it. And I wasn’t alone – everyone I met on my drive, those who worked on Route 66 and those who traveled it, was drawn to it too. Of course, I had formulated an initial and simple theory for why people (including myself) were interested in Route 66 – it was kitschy, eccentric, and literally quite far from the beaten path, and there will always be people in any culture who are drawn to its fringes. But to many people I met, Route 66 also epitomized a better time, a simpler era in American history before WalMart, before the social upheaval of the 1960’s, before computers and cell phones and global warming.

This was one of my initial fascinations with Route 66 and, later, with its aficionados – their conviction that the Route represents a better and more “American” America. Of course, I am not a student of sociology or American studies or even psychology, so this thesis does not attempt to unpack the notion of nostalgia and its role in Route 66 preservation. However, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my interest in this subject and my observation that these ideas – nostalgia, idealization, sentimentality – are active in the minds of many Route 66 advocates. This is particularly noticeable and important when questions of interpretation arise along the redeveloping corridor. These questions arise most frequently in the road’s many museums and interpretive centers. Although these buildings serve several purposes within their communities, their fundamental task is to communicate versions of the past to audiences in the present, and I fear for the future of Route 66 if its interpreters do not concern themselves with the questions of whose history they are telling and why they are telling it.

What this thesis does address is the planning and development of Route 66 in the urban areas through which it passes. The Route is a 2,400 mile-long corridor of cultural and architectural resources, winding from Chicago to Los Angeles through eight states and ten metropolitan areas. Of these ten cities, four have begun to engage with the development of the Route in the last five to ten years, with varying results. But to understand the role of Route 66 in each of these case study cities, it is important to understand the Route as a whole – where it came from, where it has been, and where it might be headed.

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1 These ten cities include Route 66’s two points of origin. The Route’s ten major cities are: Chicago, IL; Saint Louis, MO; Springfield, MO; Tulsa, OK; Oklahoma City, OK; Amarillo, TX; Santa Fe, NM (a part of Route’s original alignment – it was rerouted in the 1930’s to bypass Santa Fe); Albuquerque, NM; Flagstaff, AZ; Los Angeles, CA.
Introduction
With this research, I will answer two central questions: have urban places along Route 66 engaged in the preservation, development, and interpretation of the route, and if so, how and why have those forms of engagement differed from one another? To approach these questions, I begin by describing the history of Route 66, the present-day Route 66, and the historic roads “movement” in the United States. I am also including a brief background on the ownership patterns and market forces that affect the future of motels along Route 66, because motels have been such an important and illustrative part of my research in three of the four case studies. I conclude the Introduction with a description of why I chose to focus on urban activity along Route 66 rather than rural and state-based initiatives, and how I identified my case study cities.

What Is Route 66, and Where Did It Come From?

In 1926, the Federal government’s Bureau of Public Roads launched the nation’s first numbered and organized highway system. This action followed years of lobbying from commercial organizations, agricultural business interests, bicyclists, and rural Americans who formed the backbone of the “Good Roads Movement” of the early 20th century. From the early 1900s until the 1930s, paved roads were still uncommon outside of urban areas, and agricultural businesses interests were beginning to advocate for good quality roads to connect agricultural areas and urban markets. This coincided with the expansion of Rural Free Delivery by the U.S. Postal service; it was not until 1913 that both US Mail and Parcel Post could be delivered directly to rural households. Therefore, both government and corporations had an interest in the paving of rural roads, since

Route 66 road workers outside of Flagstaff, Arizona, 1926. Source: Northern Arizona University.
existing dirt and gravel roads were unreliable at best, and impassable at worst. Even urban dwellers began to lobby for stronger roadways connecting the city to the country and cities to one another, since the growing popularity of the automobile highlighted the limitations imposed by poor roadways.

Many of the roads that became part of U.S. Highway 66 were first paved by volunteer community labor. This system worked well in the vicinity of towns and cities, but connecting these roads to one another posed a difficult challenge. In 1926, the federal government attempted to meet this challenge with the establishment of the U.S. Highway system. Due in part to the efforts of Tulsa native Cyrus Avery, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Public Roads, U.S. Highway 66 was declared a federal highway in the first round of designations; at the time, less than 25% of the newly designated highway was actually paved. What would become Route 66 wound 2,400 miles south from Chicago, through Saint Louis, Missouri, down through Tulsa and Oklahoma City, across the southwest via Santa Fe, New Mexico, and ended in downtown Los Angeles. Because Route 66 began as a series of interconnected, local roads that were built out from the center of countless towns, it was the “Main Street” of most of the towns and cities that it passed through. This feature, a direct result of the corridor’s historic origins, earned Route 66 one of its most popular nicknames, the “Main Street of America”.


2 For more on Cyrus Avery, see Chapter 4, “Tulsa, Oklahoma: The Best-Laid Plans”. This itinerary describes the 1926 Route 66 alignment; later alignments bypassed Santa Fe for Albuquerque, New Mexico.
It took ten years for a combination of federal, state-based, and local efforts to finally pave the entire length of Route 66. By then, the Route’s year-round accessibility and the boostering efforts of the newly-formed U.S. Highway 66 Association had made Route 66 one of America’s most well-known and well-traveled highways. Over the next four decades, the Route would see three distinct eras, characterized by different users and the businesses that sprung up along the corridor to serve them. In the 1920’s and 1930’s, Route 66 was the primary migration route for dustbowl farmers abandoning the arid fields of Oklahoma for agricultural work in California. While poor and usually short of cash, these migrants supported a string of Route 66 automobile service businesses and camp-sites, some of which later became full-fledged Route 66 motor courts and motels. In the same era, the Works Progress Administration was responsible for the construction of some of the Route’s most distinguished architectural features, like the state fairgrounds in Albuquerque, New Mexico. During the 1940’s, the Route served as an east-west thoroughfare for the transportation of military supplies for WWII, and many of the Route’s most well-known diners and truckstops date from this period, like the Rock Café in Stroud, Oklahoma. The last era of Route 66’s life as a cross-country thoroughfare was the 1950’s and early 1960’s, before the construction of the Interstate highway system, when families and tourists drove Route 66 westward to sightsee America’s built and natural wonders. This was the golden era of automobile tourism, when traffic backed up each day at sunset along Route 66 as tourists piled into the Route’s cities and towns, looking for a motor court to spend the night before another day of driving and sightseeing.

After the construction of the Interstate, the use of Route 66 as a means of travel from place to place disappeared. Some businesses, like diners and gas stations, survived by focusing on the needs of local clients instead of travelers. But other businesses, like motels, did not fare as well, since the market for their services practically disappeared. This left Route 66 in a state of decay, more vulnerable to abandonment than to redevelopment by the chain stores and big box retail that populate the Interstate. The last portion of Route 66 was decommissioned in 1985 in Arizona, although the road had long ceased to function as a continuous commercial and tourism thoroughfare. Then, in the late 1980s and early 1990’s, aficionados of Route 66 culture began to emerge. The first of the eight state-based Historic Route 66 Associations was founded in 1987 in Arizona, and within a few years all other seven states founded comparable organizations. Michael Wallis, the author of the best-selling *Route 66 – The Mother Road* (published in 1990), calls this period the beginning of the “Route 66 Renaissance” – a period of preservation, advocacy, events, organization, and self-expression celebrating the corridor and its history.

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3 For more on the Rock Café (built in 1939) and its friendly owner, Dawn, see http://www.rockcaferoute66.com/, as well as Chapter 4, “Tulsa, Oklahoma: The Best-Laid Plans”.

4 While today’s traveler would find it hard to believe that there was ever traffic along Route 66, I was told by several interviewees of the traffic jams that used to happen on the edges of Flagstaff, Albuquerque, and Tulsa as tourists would pull into the city for the night, looking for affordable, clean lodging.
Route 66 Today

While I would not presume to call myself a serious Route 66 “roadie”, I have driven the length of the corridor from Chicago to Los Angeles, and I stopped to see as many of the road’s must-see sights as possible during my limited three-week trip. Then, several months after my first drive, I revisited each of the case study cities in order to gain a better understanding of their patterns of engagement with Route 66. From these first travels along Route 66, I was left with an overwhelming impression of the corridor as a half-formed, nascent resource – a destination just beginning to understand its own potential. The road was punctuated with small oases of recreated history, such as the Odell Gas Station in Odell, Illinois, where it was clear that a small band of zealots had poured years of money and effort into the pristine preservation of one small piece of their shared history (see picture). And there were other places, like Central Avenue in Albuquerque, where a concentration of decayed, restored, and completely re-imagined buildings and signage created a patchwork of the past and the present that epitomizes what Route 66 could become, if fully realized. In between, there were hundreds of miles of deserted road, abandoned service stations, breathtaking vistas, and small town Main Streets with empty storefronts. These silent places have a static beauty of their own, but Route 66’s identity relies on the corridor’s nodes of activity, more than its long stretches of silence.

In “The Ballad of Route 66”, journalist Christopher Hitchens describes his drive on Route 66 as an assault of on his cultural and aesthetic sensibilities. “You hear a lot about the standardization of America, the sameness and drabness of the brand names and the roadside clutter, but you have to be exposed to thousands of miles of it to see

The revamped Odell Gas Station in Odell, Illinois. The station no longer sells gas, but visitors can see the interior of the original station and service bays, upon request. Source: Author.
Two present-day incarnations of the Route 66 roadbed. Above, a section of original Route 66 paving in rural Illinois. Below, a section of unpaved, gravel Route 66 in Arizona dating from before the road became a continuous, paved highway. Source: Author.
how obliterating the process really is. The food! The coffee! The newspapers! The radio!
These would all disgrace a mediocre one-party state, or a much less prosperous country, he wrote of Route 66 in 2002. For an observer who expects culture to jump up and grab him by his white-collared shirt, perhaps Route 66 is a bit of a disappointment. First of all, its scale is so large that Route 66 can be difficult to comprehend as a discrete place. In total, the corridor covers 2,400 miles of roadway with only intermittent punctuations of human settlement and pedestrian activity. Also, Route 66 was built and developed around the car; therefore, in order to experience both the road and its communities, a roadie must know not only where to drive, but also where to stop and find some interesting conversation. I suspect that Hitchens spent too much time hopping on and off the Interstate (or as the roadies call it, the “SuperSlab”), since I found no shortage of fascinating locals and fellow travelers from all over the world on my road trip – Dutch, German, Japanese, Australian, even a Briton walking around the world via Route 66 to raise money for cancer research. The meaning of Route 66 is very much in the eye of the beholder, and in Route 66’s current incarnation, the eye must be sharp enough to perceive the corridor’s many small incidences of community, commemoration, and celebration.

In addition to its physical presence, present-day Route 66 has a cultural presence that reflects decades of music, television, literature, advertising, and other cultural products that have celebrated the road. All of these associations deepen the traveler’s Route 66 experience, since they comprise a reservoir of shared associations and meaning. Although this thesis does not focus on the sociology of Route 66, I do want to address the questions of what makes a physical place meaningful, and what are the economic, social, and cultural barriers to preserving and developing these meaningful places. To address the first of these questions – what makes a place meaningful – I look to history, memory, and emotional resonance, all of which Route 66 has in abundance. Associated with this are the actual structures that make up the Route’s built environment, particularly the commercial architecture and signage that situate the Route in a specific period of America’s built history. The route is also a place lined with spectacular natural beauty, like the Grand Canyon and the Painted Desert National Park. But Route 66’s meaning is not solely derived from its built and natural environment and the history that they represent. Meaning also resides in the cultural products associated with Route 66 – the song (“Get Your Kicks On Route 66”), the “Route 66” television series, The Grapes of Wrath (the novel and movie), and other media from the route’s period of significance that reference the Mother Road. It is perhaps due to these cultural products that Route 66 has emerged as an internationally recognizable icon. People from all over the world who may not know where the actual Route 66 roadway exists still recognize the Route 66 brand; currently, “Route 66” as a brand is used by at least two companies with no affiliation to the road itself (a line of clothing at Kmart and a GIS software company based in the Netherlands).

5 Christopher Hitchens, “The Ballad of Route 66”.
6 Another well-used term among roadies is the “Insipid Interstate”, or just “The Insipid”. Regarding the Worldwalker, Mark Cundy, I spotted him walking on the Interstate 40 service road (“Old Route 66”) outside of Amarillo, Texas, and stopped to have a chat with him and offer him a bottle of water, which he accepted. To read more about his walk, see http://www.worldwalker.co.uk/.
7 As a Federally designated highway, Route 66 existed from 1926 to 1984, when the last segment of the original highway was bypassed by the Interstate in Williams, Arizona.
A Context for Corridor Preservation

To contextualize my inquiry into Route 66's redevelopment, I have looked at other heritage corridors in the United States to get a sense of how communities, states, and the federal government have engaged with similar resources. I restricted my background research to the United States because, unlike other parts of the world engaged with preservation such as Western Europe and Asia, the United States only has about two-hundred years of built history to preserve. Like our built heritage, our culture and national identity are also of recent vintage, and I believe that this distinguishes historic preservation in the United States from preservation in the rest of the world. Therefore, the preserved and redeveloped linear corridors that I can compare most meaningfully to Route 66 will most likely be found in the United States.

To begin with, I examined planning initiatives surrounding other historic roads, like the Lincoln Highway and the National Road, and then looked at canals and other industrial corridors. Efforts to preserve and plan for these corridors in the United States began in the 1980's with a flurry of activity surrounding industrial canal and railway corridors, particularly in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York. Chief among these corridors was the Erie Canal, which runs from the Hudson River in New York to Lake Erie. In 1992, perhaps fifty years after the canal ceased to be economically relevant as a trade corridor, the New York State legislature transferred the Erie and other state canals from the state's transportation department to the New York State Thruway Authority. This action followed a decade of grassroots efforts to preserve the locks, bridges, and ports along the canal, many of which were located in the historic commercial centers of small industrial towns. The New York State Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the Thruway Authority, now manages and develops the canals for recreational and tourism use. Like Route 66, the Erie Canal runs through multiple towns that depended upon the canal for their economic survival during the canal's period of significance in the mid 1800's. Both Route 66 and the Erie Canal represented feats of engineering that forged new pathways for travel and commerce. Also like Route 66, shipping along the canal was almost completely replaced by trains; Erie Canal towns were "bypassed" by the railways much like the towns along Route 66 were bypassed by the Interstate. However, the canal's period of significance predates the Route's by a century; this gave Erie Canal preservationists in the 1980's and 1990's a greater time-distance from which to observe the canal's historic importance.

In the 1990's, northeastern communities engaged in the preservation of other industrial corridors as well. These included the East Broad Top Railroad Corridor, the Allegheny Ridge corridor, and a number of other smaller initiatives, many of which are

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8 An important exception is the archaeological preservation work related to early (Native) American settlement. However, in terms of urban settlement and its associated structures, Americans did not begin to construct buildings, monuments, and infrastructure until the late 18th century.
10 http://www.canals.state.ny.us/welcome/index.html.
now combined and designated as U.S. National Heritage Areas and Corridors. To date, the National Park Service has designated 27 of these National Heritage Areas throughout the United States, many of which originated in shared transportation and commercial routes like Route 66. However, all of them date their period of significance to the 19th or very early 20th centuries, periods that pose a set of preservation and interpretation challenges very different from those arising from Route 66. For example, preservationists of 19th century waterway corridors do not have to address the conflict between creating a tourist-oriented, pedestrian environment and preserving automobile-scaled historic architecture, as do preservationists along Route 66 (see Albuquerque Case Study). Also, industrial corridors define themselves by a single shared experience – the development of a particular industry in a particular place. This lends these areas a thematic cohesiveness that Route 66 lacks.

The Route 66 Renaissance might be better compared to the resurgence of interest in historic American automobile highways, like the National Road and the Lincoln Highway. Both of these long-distance roads, as well as other historic highways, have been at the center of national preservation efforts beginning in the 1990’s. In 1991, the federally-sponsored National Scenic Byways program was created to recognize the “archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities” of America’s roadways. A few years later in 1996, the first biennial “Preserving the Historic Road” national conference was held under the auspices of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This conference addresses issues particular to historic roads, as opposed to scenic byways, which can be designated based solely on the beauty of the roadside’s natural landscape. Although both of these initiatives reflect a growing national interest in historic roadways, road preservation advocacy tends to begin at the grassroots level before engaging local, state, and federal government.

For example, the modern-day Lincoln Highway Association, which incorporates twelve individual state-based Lincoln Highway organizations, was formed by a group of advocates in 1992 to “identify, preserve, interpret and improve access to the Lincoln Highway and its associated sites.” This organization acts as an inter-state communications clearinghouse about current events, festivals, and preservation initiatives along the Lincoln Highway, and it organizes an annual conference specifically for advocates, residents, and preservationists along the corridor. It is important to note that the Lincoln Highway’s period of significance (1920 to 1940) predates that of Route 66 by almost twenty years. The highway was not an all-season road like Route 66 and was never designated by the federal government as a numbered highway, as Route 66 was in the

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11 The National Heritage Areas program is a National Park Service initiative that designates places, “where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.” See http://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/FAQ/INDEX.HTM.
13 This year’s “Preserving the Historic Road Conference” was held in Boston; it was here as a volunteer organizer that I first heard roadies use the term “movement” to describe the rising tide of interest in historic road preservation and tourism.
15 http://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/about/.
1920’s. As a result of these and other circumstances, the Lincoln Highway never gained the cultural prominence of Route 66. However, the present-day Lincoln Highway preservation movement benefits from a very active, multi-state association that keeps a regularly updated website of all activities relating to the corridor.\(^\text{16}\)

In contrast, Route 66 does not have an effective, national-scale, non-profit organization. Organizationally, Route 66 does have a “Route 66 Federation”, an institution that nominally represents the unified voice of each of the eight state-based Route 66 Associations. However, the Route 66 Federation currently does not have active leadership or membership; functionally, the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Program performs most of the functions that the Route 66 Federation does not—specifically, facilitating communication between different states, cities, and towns; organizing conferences and workshops; and providing a national vision for the corridor’s development.\(^\text{17}\) The Route 66 Federation’s inability to meet this need, as compared to the Lincoln Highway Association, may simply be a matter of the scale of preservation activity. Route 66 has a much richer stock of historic commercial architecture than comparable historic highways and as a result generates much more preservation activity and advocacy in the public and private sectors.

The quantity and quality of Route 66’s roadside architecture also represents one of the corridor’s most complicated and unique preservation challenges, a challenge particular to Route 66’s period of significance. Other historic highways and canals date from a period of building construction in which architects and builders relied more heavily on native materials and local building practices. As Anthony Tung asserts in his book *Preserving the World’s Great Cities*, buildings made of local materials using pre-modern construction techniques are becoming increasingly rare in the world’s building stock and are emerging as a preservation priority because of their scarcity. This is true both in the United States and abroad and will pose a conundrum for Route 66 preservationists, since much of the Route’s most interesting and characteristic roadside architecture was not built to last.

Unlike other linear corridors, which date their significance to the mid and late 1800s, Route 66 dates its period of significance to the 1920s, through the Depression and WWII, to the early 1960s. Many of the corridor’s most interesting structures were built during WWII, when building supplies were scarce and expensive and construction standards were compromised by shortage of labor and materials. Others were built after the war until the early 1960s, when modern construction methods and materials began to homogenize the American landscape. Certainly, Route 66 has its share of pre-war motels built with solid-block construction, like Pauline Bauer’s La Puerta Lodge, as well as beautiful, handmade WPA projects like the Chandler Armory in Chandler, Oklahoma, which is made of native Oklahoma stone. However, other landmarks may not fare as well in the Route 66 preservation movement since they were built of modern materials that were neither indigenous to the area nor particularly durable to begin with. Some are still insulated with asbestos, like Tulsa’s “Rose Bowl” bowling alley, built in 1961 along

\(^{16}\) http://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org/about/.
\(^{17}\) http://www.cr.nps.gov/rt66/.
11th Street in Tulsa. The architecture that sprung from the building patterns and materials in vogue during the Route’s period of significance will continue to complicate both the techniques and the priorities of preservation as the Route develops. But the passage of time will undoubtedly reframe the importance of different styles and methods of building construction, as Route 66’s heyday retreats further into history.

I first learned of the “Rose Bowl” from Dennis Whitaker, a planner in Tulsa, who told me that the building is filled with asbestos and that the current owner purchased the building from the city in the hopes of reselling at a profit. The building is currently listed on Ebay with a starting bid of $499,000.

Below, the Rose Bowl today, boarded up and for sale to the highest bidder. Source: www.ebay.com
Motels – An Area of Focus

In my travels and research, I discovered that some of the most exciting, eccentric, and threatened properties on the Route 66 Corridor are its numerous motels and hotels. Hotels on Route 66 take on a wide range of fascinating forms, including wigwams, converted Harvey Houses, detached cabins with garages, and most commonly, drive-in courtyard motels. In this thesis, I have looked closely at the preservation and rehabilitation of motels, since they represent some of the Route’s most eccentric and most vulnerable architecture. They have also found themselves squarely in the crossfire in many cities, as local government (particularly in Albuquerque) has tried to crack down on motel-related crime. Lastly, motel owners represent one of the largest and newest Route 66 “demographics” – Indian and Pakistani immigrants who have become the primary owners of these historic resources.

To explain how this phenomenon began, it is important to understand how “bypassing” affected Route 66 businesses. Motels were the first businesses to feel the loss of commercial and tourist traffic when the Route was bypassed in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, as they were supplanted by newer, cleaner, and cheaper chain motels off the exit ramps of the Interstate highway system. This decommissioning and relocation of the hotel client base opened up a huge market of older motels for purchase; some of these motels were purchased by East Indian and Pakistani immigrants, many of whom moved to the United States in order to purchase and run these businesses. Newer motels (mostly chains) were opening up along the interstate, taking away business (and also reducing sale prices for a generation eager to leave the sputtering roadside motel business). So a trend began, and for many of these owners, this was only a stepping stone toward owning an established chain motel in a better, higher-traffic location. When these properties began to change hands in the 1970s and 1980s, they were only twenty or thirty years past their prime – old enough to have suffered from neglect or simple wear and tear, but too young to appear “historic” even to those concerned with preservation of Route 66. This new group of owners may not have even known that they were buying properties with any particular significance in the American landscape – not surprising, since Route 66 in the 1980s was a landscape of abandonment and deterioration, a string of bypassed communities with fading architecture, broken neon signs, and only the occasional lost or curious traveler to make up the dwindling tourist market.

According to the Asian American Hotel Owner’s Association (AAHOA), Asian Americans, mostly Indians, “own more than 20,000 hotels [in the United States], which have 1 million rooms representing over 50 percent of the economy lodging properties and nearly 37 percent of all hotel properties in the United States.”20 In other words, half

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19 The Harvey House chain was the first hotel and restaurant chain in the southwestern United States, built by entrepreneur Fred Harvey in partnership with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad Company. The Harvey Houses are credited with bringing the first “civilized” services to westward-bound train travelers, and have been immortalized by the movie-musical The Harvey Girls and Judy Garland’s rendition of the famous song Johnny Mercer song, “The Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe”. For more about Harvey Houses and Harvey Girls, see The Harvey Girls: Women Who Opened the West by Lesley Poling-Kempes.

20 www.AAHOA.com.
of the “economy lodging properties”, which include motels and other budget accomodations, are owned by Asians. In addition, the AAHOA estimates that 6,300 of the 20,000 Asian-owned hotels are non-franchise properties like the majority of independently owned motels along the Route 66 corridor. Clearly, this population represents a substantial economic and cultural presence on the American highway landscape.

A tangle of factors has contributed to the creation of this cultural/economic niche, including immigration patterns, the development of the American highway system and its roadside economy, and the live/work arrangement that comes with motel ownership. In an article in The New York Times, one Indian motel owner attributes the trend to a few simple factors; “Technically, it’s easy to run. You don’t need fluent English, just the will to work long hours...And it’s a business that comes with a house -- you don’t have to buy a separate house. Another important thing is the cash flow. We like that.”

The article also asserts that many new Indian immigrants have an informal financial system of friends and relatives from whom to borrow the initial down payment for the purchase of a motel property. “That...is one key to how this particular niche was captured. The down payment was seldom a problem for a prospective Indian purchaser, who was often able to turn to a network of relatives and friends to help him out.”

The down payment is only the first hurdle of motel ownership, however. The real problem is making a living off of such a sluggish business, a problem that in some cases has led to laissez-faire rental practices and even outright negligence in the management of older motels along Route 66, regardless of the owner’s background or experience. In an interview about the fate of motels, Johnnie Meier, the former president of the New Mexico Route 66 Association, recalled a conversation with an Albuquerque motel owner: “Some of these guys are being offered $200 a night by someone to be left alone, versus the asking price of $19.95. How can they resist when they can barely pay their mortgages?”

In other cases, the motel owners stay in business by keeping prices affordable for local, regular tenants, who provide a somewhat reliable source of cash flow. The hazards of this market, however, are the same as those of any low-income renting market, but without the security (from the landlord’s perspective) provided by a long-term lease.

The strange forces at work in semi-rural America during this time have led to a confluence of events around the motels of Route 66 – a wave of East Indian/Pakistani ownership, and at the same time, a new trend in the illegal drug market that made low-profile motels the perfect spot for the production of methamphetamines. The number of Route 66 motels that have hosted meth labs may not be calculable, but in the city of Albuquerque alone, more than 40 of the city’s motels were identified by the local paper as meth lab sites. In Albuquerque, this trend was recognized in the late 1990s and addressed by the city in the form of advisory committees, panels, and a wave of code-violation shutdowns and demolitions of some of the city’s most historic motel properties.

Oklahoma, Arizona, California, and New Mexico have all had their share of methamphetamine-related motel incidents. The drug can be cheaply produced from over the counter cold medicine and household chemicals; its chemical production is relatively cheap and can be performed within an area as small as the trunk of a car or a motel bathroom. The drug has plagued semi-rural America for the last decade, as its in-home

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22 Tunku Varadarajan, “A Patel Motel Cartel?”.

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production has enabled local populations to create and distribute the drug cheaply and with little formalized networking. Although crime and motels have been bedfellows for years, the meth lab trend has had a particular impact on older Route 66 properties; they provide the perfect combination of cash-poor owners and managers and a don’t-ask-don’t-tell population of fellow renters who are not likely to jeopardize their own anonymity by complaining about the strange smell coming from the room next door.

Still, the motels that survive on Route 66 have done so by filling affordable housing gaps in their respective cities. This is the only “adaptive reuse” that has enabled the original motel structures to survive, unlike the situation with many diners and gas stations. The corridor is littered with cafes sporting a Route 66 theme while catering primarily to local clientele, who provide the bulk of the restaurants’ daily commerce. The counterpart to this market in the motel economy is local tenants who rent on a weekly or monthly basis. These tenants can rent a motel room for between $300 and $500 per month, on a month-to-month basis, with cable, telephone, and electricity included. For some populations this is an attractive deal, despite the occasionally decaying condition of the motels. Tenants may not have adequate credit to order their own utilities, or they may only be temporary residents of the city in search of work or other sources of income. However, motels in places like Albuquerque, Tulsa, or smaller towns along Route 66 must make a living catering to long-term tenants, despite the crime that often plagues these populations, since these are often the only customers available. Sometimes, these populations cannot afford cash rent, but the anonymity of the motels allows for unorthodox forms of payment; one study from Northern Arizona University showed that older motels in Holbrook, AZ, near Flagstaff, often exchanged rent for repair and remodeling labor when tenants were not able to pay cash.23

While many owners run motels that serve relatively stable populations, such as veterans and the homeless who have housing vouchers or other forms of reliable public assistance, others find themselves catering to transient populations that are more likely to engage in on-site illegal activity. Unfortunately, the ubiquity of east-Indian motel owners has coincided with the economic and social factors that have marginalized older motels and left them vulnerable to vice. This coincidence has resulted in pure and simple racism on the part of some community members and Route 66 supporters, and this is one of most complex and under-acknowledged aspects of Route 66 preservation and advocacy. The most overt indication of this racism is the use of the slogan “American Owned” on motel signs, along Route 66 and across the country. This designation is meant to distinguish white-owned motels from Indian-owned. In 2002, The New York Times covered this phenomenon in a brief article about Winslow, Arizona, and two Route 66 motels that neighbor one another – one owned by a naturalized American, Navin “Nick” Bhatt, and one owned by Candy Moore, a white American. Ms. Moore’s motel sign bears the label “American Owned and Operated”, which she claimed to have placed on her sign following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. “Oh, we put that up two weeks after September 11. We thought of it weeks prior but we never got around to it.”24

23 I was told about this student-led research project by Sean Evans, a librarian at Northern Arizona University. See Sean Evans interview, Northern Arizona University, January 11, 2006.
Among Route 66 preservationists and advocates, the “American Owned” issue did not come up immediately in my interviews. But once I asked people how they felt about this, most expressed discomfort with the practice of labeling motels “American Owned,” and some had even taken public stands against it. Emily Priddy, the Eastern Vice President of the Oklahoma Route 66 Association, told me that she has set up a website to promote Oklahoma’s historic Route 66 motels and that she refuses to list motels that label themselves “American Owned”. “It’s a matter of principle”, states Priddy, who has established an outreach program for the Oklahoma Route 66 Association in which she presents all motel owners with a welcome packet and an introduction to Route 66 history, in case they are not aware of their motel’s historic significance. Priddy is also at least a generation younger than most Route 66 advocates I met, which may explain some of her open-mindedness toward new Americans. Michael Wallis, the unofficial spokesman for Route 66, has also spoken out about discrimination along Route 66 against Indian-motel owners. In our interview, he put present-day racism along Route 66 into the road’s historic context. “It’s a lot like Okies and the Black experience – I can still remember seeing signs out west, no drunks no Indians. And I take that [forward] to today with the obvious racism of ‘American Owned’. It’s total backlash against Pakistani’s and East Indians on the road, some of whom are great motel managers and some of whom aren’t.”

As I learned more about the Route 66 Renaissance, I kept Wallis’s perspective in the forefront of my mind. Racism is no more endemic to Route 66 today than it always has been to Route 66 and to America at large. But still, it seems incongruous with the “Route 66” brand, which suggests a free and prosperous America with automobiles and milkshakes for all. Again, this thesis is not an exploration of the symbology of Route 66 or its place in American sociology; but questions of race, place, and meaning arose in all of my interviews with preservationists, motel owners, city planners, and other roadies. Motels illustrate the role of race in Route 66’s renaissance particularly well, since motels have presented Albuquerque, Flagstaff, and (to a lesser extent) Tulsa with their most difficult preservation challenges. Most importantly, the motel situation has highlighted what I think is one of the Route 66 Renaissance’s most dangerous flaws – the lack of ethnic and cultural diversity in the preservation movement. However, motels are not the focus of this thesis; they are only one of many types of property that communities and individuals have preserved, neglected, or demolished.

*The Thesis and the Cases*

Although small towns, rural areas, state organizations, and federal programs are all pursuing the redevelopment of Route 66, this thesis focuses on how urban communities are engaging with their Route 66 corridors, and why, now, cities are beginning to cultivate this cultural resource. I have restricted my research to urban areas because I did not think I would ever be able to understand and describe the numerous small town and rural initiatives that have been springing up for decades along Route 66. Also, there are far fewer urban areas along the eight-state corridor – perhaps only one or two sizable cities in each state – and only a handful have actively engaged with Route 66 in the last five

to ten years. I identified my four case studies with help from Michael Taylor and Kaisa Barthuli at the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. Part of their work is to help local governments formulate corridor management and preservation programs, and they directed me to the four cities that I write about here.

Certainly other cities have also engaged to some extent with Route 66. However, the four case study cities in this paper—Albuquerque, Tulsa, Rancho Cucamonga, and Flagstaff—have all distinguished themselves with conspicuous and focused planning efforts that address Route 66 as a corridor, not just as a series of individual properties. Other cities may have involved themselves with the preservation of individual properties along Route 66, but the four case study cities have claimed both the road and its built accessories as an important part of their urban fabric. Yet even though all four cities have embraced Route 66 as a linear resource, they have approached development in different ways. I have learned that these differences depend very much upon the context in which Route 66 redevelopment is occurring. Two additional factors, in particular, have been the most relevant to my contextual analysis: the quality of Route 66's existing built fabric in each city, and the city's current development agenda. The larger social and economic forces at work in the city affect both of these factors, and in the following four chapters, I describe how these forces vary from case to case. At the end of each chapter, I conclude with site-specific recommendations for each city. Finally, in the thesis Conclusion, I look at Route 66 as a national corridor and recommend strategies for local and national corridor development and interpretation.
Albuquerque, New Mexico: The Best of the Mother Road
The largest city in New Mexico, Albuquerque is nestled at the base of the Sandia Mountains and is surrounded by desert plateaus, Native American Reservations, and a generally arid landscape that is broken only by the Rio Grande River, which runs through the center of town. The city is about 900 miles east of the terminus of Route 66 in Los Angeles, and is in many ways the heart of the corridor’s southwestern region. The city is a mecca for Route 66 travelers because of its large stock of historic motels and its well-preserved neon signs. But Route 66 is only one of many historic and cultural resources in Albuquerque. Because of its historic connection to early Americans and, later, to Spanish settlers, the City of Albuquerque has a preservation-minded city government and a host of local organizations and advocates who celebrate the city’s cultural history.

Route 66 advocacy in New Mexico began in the mid-1990s, around the same time that other states began to form state-based Route 66 associations. In 1993, historian David Kammer completed the state’s National Register Multiple Property Listing for Route 66. He remembers that New Mexico’s statewide Multiple Property Listing was spurred on by National Register nominations taking place in Arizona; “I think that New Mexico had looked over at Arizona where there are some [Route 66] alignments that ran up through the Coconino National Forest near Flagstaff; they had done one or two nominations up near there, but New Mexico was the first state to try to take a comprehensive look at these resources.”

In 1995, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center received a grant to prepare a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) for Route 66; the plan for the entire state was completed in 2000, as part of the state’s National Scenic Byway nomination for Route 66. According to the 2000 CMP, the state’s goal for its Route 66 corridor was, “to utilize Route 66 as a catalyst for economic development, while carefully protecting, preserving, and interpreting existing sites and landmarks and developing design guidelines that assure that future development will enhance and protect the intrinsic qualities of Route 66.” Although the New Mexico State Route 66 Association was involved in the preparation of the CMP, the Pueblo Cultural Center spearheaded the effort. The Center had been involved with the scenic byways program since the early 1990’s, recognizing the programs potential for generating and supporting tourism around the state’s Native American reservations. The Route 66 CMP, however, required that the Pueblo Cultural Center partner with the state’s Route 66 Association, as well as the state’s Department of Economic Development and Department of Cultural Affairs. The Pueblo Cultural Center’s first attempt at creating a CMP, in 1996, spurred the revitalization of the New Mexico Route 66 Association, a loose group of 66-aficionados that first assembled in 1989. The New Mexico Route 66

1 A Multiple Property Listing is a submission to the National Register of Historic Places that nominates a group of properties with a shared historic context. The National Park Service website describes the MPL as, “a cover document and not a nomination in its own right [that] serves as a basis for evaluating the National Register eligibility of related properties.” See http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16b/nrb16b_index.htm.
2 David Kammer Interview, his home, January 26, 2006.
3 The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center focuses on culture, interpretation, and economic development for the Indians of New Mexico and is owned and operated by New Mexico’s 19 Indian Pueblo tribes. For more about the National Scenic Byways Program, see the “Conclusions” chapter of the thesis.
4 2000 New Mexico Route 66 Corridor Management Plan, p 3.
5 2000 New Mexico Route 66 Corridor Management Plan, p1-5.
Association went on to become one of the most active Route 66 State Associations in the country, issuing regular newsletters since 1996 and spearheading some of the most innovative restoration and outreach programs in all eight Route 66 states.\(^6\)

State and local interest in reviving Route 66 coincided with an active period of downtown redevelopment in the City of Albuquerque. Ed Boles, the city’s Historic Preservation Planner, spoke to me about the city’s “Vision 2010” downtown plan, created in 2000, which engaged private developers with the City of Albuquerque’s Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency in the revitalization of the downtown core. “[Downtown] reinvestment was definitely stimulated by the creation of the new plan, the creation of a Business Improvement District, and the benefits to every property owner that that brought. And also by the city’s turning over a significant bit of land downtown to the Historic District Improvement Company.”\(^7\) These activities had a direct bearing on Route 66 development, since the heart of downtown Albuquerque is also the site of the “Route 66 Crossroads”, where the road’s 1937 north-south alignment along 4th Street intersects with the more prominent 1941 east-west alignment along Central Avenue (see picture). This is the only recognized “crossroads” on the entire Route 66 corridor, since the road was typically realigned parallel to itself, not perpendicular. The city formally recognized the crossroads in 1999 with administrative initiative R-212, which designated both roads “Historic Route 66” and positioned the city to apply for National Scenic Byway funds.

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6 The New Mexico Route 66 Association’s original founder, Judi Snow, was recognized by the Association in 2000 for founding the group in 1989; however much of the association’s most notable work, such as the $50,000 statewide rehabilitation of neon signage, has taken place in the last five years thanks to the work of Johnnie Meier and other committed volunteers.

7 Ed Boles Interview, Albuquerque City Hall, January 24, 2006.
for management of both corridors. The designation was partly the result of lobbying
efforts by the New Mexico Route 66 Association, which successfully lobbied the state
legislature that year for the “Historic Route 66” designation of all of the alignments of
New Mexico’s former U.S. Highway 66 roads.

In 2000, the same year that the city published “Vision 2010”, a private owner
and the city of Albuquerque partnered on one of the city’s most successful redevelop-
ment/preservation projects, the rehabilitation of the Jones Motor Company on Central
Avenue. The Jones Motor Company is a Streamlined Modern corner building that was
built in 1939 as a gas station to serve Route 66 motorists. (See Picture) The original
owner of the gas station and accompanying car dealership, Ralph Jones, was president
of Albuquerque’s Route 66 Association and a prominent local businessman. The station
closed in 1957, and between its closure and redevelopment in 2000, it served a variety of
commercial purposes, including its stints as a Goodwill store and a furniture outlet. Ac-
cording to Ed Boles, the Bernalillo County Office had had its eye on the property as the
possible site for a community center (with a Route 66 interpretive center attached). The
county had even appropriated funds to purchase the building; however, a private owner
swept in and bought the building before the county could marshal its funds to complete
the sale. Fortunately for the city, the owner planned to convert the historic gas station
into a bar and restaurant while preserving the building’s historic character and architec-
ture. Regardless, a short struggle ensued for the recently purchased building in which the
county threatened to condemn the property in order to repossess it from the new owners
to guarantee its preservation. Eventually, the owners, the county, and the city of Albu-
querque reached a compromise; the owners would rehabilitate the building and sell the
façade to the city as a preservation easement. The owners would also grant design review
privileges to the City of Albuquerque over any changes necessary for the adaptive reuse,
and the City would designate the building a City of Albuquerque Landmark. Today,
the Jones Motor Company is the only City Landmark to have received this designation
because of its Route 66-related history.

The Jones Motor Company was Albuquerque’s first foray into public-private
participation in the preservation of a Route 66 property. In this case, both the city and the
owners appreciated the building’s historic character, and they were able to reach a satisfy-
ing agreement that stabilized the property and contributed to the commercial vitality of
the Nob Hill neighborhood. “The owners were savvy enough to realize that they had a
historic building, and that they could rehab it and get a sizable tax credit in the process,”
remembers Ed Boles. “And so they did that. They did everything by the rules, got their
tax credit, and they’ve operated the business ever since. We’ve done a little bit of design
review as they’ve done small changes to it, but they’re as interested in protecting the
character of the building as we are.” Today, the building houses Kelly’s Brewery, a
restaurant and microbrewery that anchors this commercial stretch of Central Avenue
and draws regular crowds from the nearby university and residential neighborhoods.
The restaurant preserved the original garage doors from the Jones Motor Company and
installed patio seating in the former gas station bays. The owners even added an historic

8 The New Mexico Route 66 Association Newsletter, Spring 1999, p 2.
9 The New Mexico Route 66 Association Newsletter, Spring 1999, p 2-3.
10 Ed Boles Interview.
11 Ed Boles Interview.
Texaco gas pump to the front of the building in homage to the building’s past as a Route 66 filling station.\textsuperscript{12}

Among Route 66 properties, the Jones Motor Company was an obvious candidate for a public/private preservation partnership. The building’s architecture was distinctive and the structure was relatively intact; the building also occupied a valuable corner property in a gentrifying neighborhood with a strong pedestrian orientation and proximity to the large student population at the University of New Mexico. Also, locals recognized the building as a significant piece of local history, since it had once belonged to a prominent local businessman and was designed by an architect, Tom Danahy, who had made a career out of designing high-society mansions in 1940s and 1950s Albuquerque.\textsuperscript{13} These factors combined to position the Jones Motor Company for preservation by both private and public developers. The building’s history, architecture, and association with significant local personages made it attractive for preservation to the city and county; this, plus the building’s high-traffic location and good condition, also appealed to the private developers who eventually created Kelly’s Brewery. Not all Route 66 properties can claim such marketable features, and the success of the Jones Motor Company redevelopment may not be replicable for the city’s smaller, more deteriorated, and more anonymous Route 66 motels. However, this project illustrates how competition between public and private initiatives over a historic structure can result in a rehabilitation that benefits both parties.

\textsuperscript{12} http://www.cabq.gov/planning/lucc/jonesmotor.html.
\textsuperscript{13} http://www.cabq.gov/planning/lucc/jonesmotor.html.

Nob Hill’s Renaissance: the Context for Route 66 Redevelopment in Albuquerque

Albuquerque has long recognized the significance of Route 66 as a part of its built heritage, even before the city and state began listing historic properties with the National Register. The Nob Hill neighborhood, which has seen the bulk of Route 66-related preservation efforts, addressed the need to recognize Route 66 as early as 1987 in its “Nob Hill Sector Development Plan.” This plan was initiated at the request of the Nob Hill Neighborhood Association, and was completed by the Redevelopment Division of the Albuquerque Planning Department. In the plan, the city stated that the neighborhood contains “excellent examples of the roadside architecture built in response to the designation of Central Avenue as Route 66,” and that although the neighborhood was still relatively young, by Albuquerque standards, “the area has already attracted notice as a historically/architecturally significant section of the city.” By 1985, two years before the sector plan, the neighborhood was already a part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s “Main Street” program, which selected architecturally intact historic business districts around the country for focused redevelopment efforts. At the time of the sector plan, only two properties in the neighborhood were listed on the National Register, and neither property was affiliated with Route 66. This is not surprising, since in 1987 the bulk of Route 66 properties in Albuquerque were not yet 50 years old, the minimum age for National Register designation. But the tide was clearly turning toward the preservation and listing of mid-20th century properties in Nob Hill, as illustrated by the sector plan’s “Historic Structures and Areas” map, which showed twenty-one properties along Route 66 with potential state or national register eligibility in 1987 (see picture).

Today, Nob Hill is the area of Albuquerque that engages most aggressively with Route 66. Although Route 66 (a.k.a. Central Avenue) runs all the way through Nob Hill into downtown, over the river to the “West Side” near Al Unser’s homestead and family garage, and then up and out of the city via “8 Mile Hill”, it is in Nob Hill where the icons of Route 66 are most prominent. A travel writer from The New York Times visited Albuquerque in 2003 and called Central Avenue in Nob Hill, “one of the best-preserved segments of Route 66 I’d ever seen, with a charming string of renovated tourists courts and motels, kitschy neon signs, 1950s diners and trading posts.” Michael Taylor, the administrator of the National Park Service’s Route 66 Corridor Program and one of the few 66 aficionados whose job demands an understanding of Route 66’s national significance, believes that, “Tulsa and Oklahoma City and St. Louis have some good properties,

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14 Nob Hill Sector Development Plan, City of Albuquerque Planning Department, Redevelopment Division, December 1987.
15 Nob Hill Sector Development Plan, p50. Although the city’s 2005 Central/Highland/Upper Nob Hill plan also addresses the management of historic structures, it does not number and map them as the 1987 plan does. Although the 1993 Multiple Property Listing inventories the state’s historic Route 66 properties, it also does not include a map of these properties in Albuquerque.
16 According to the 1987 sector plan, the Nob Hill Neighborhood is bounded by Washington Avenue to the east, and Girard Avenue to the west, encompassing a 16-block square area.
A map of the Nob Hill neighborhood from the City of Albuquerque's "Nob Hill Sector Development Plan, 1987", that shows the location of properties listed on the National Register at the time, as well as potentially eligible properties. Central Avenue is shown in red. **Source:** City of Albuquerque website.
but Albuquerque’s Central Avenue is the crème de la crème [of Route 66]."18 Nob Hill is also home to some of Albuquerque’s finest restaurants and a number of small boutiques, coffee shops, and galleries.

Certainly, the presence of the University of New Mexico helps give Nob Hill it’s sense of urbanity, along with the area’s large stock of pre-war homes and subdivisions that were built on a pedestrian-friendly scale. Nob Hill resident and UNM professor David Kammer thinks Route 66 is just one of many cultural features that characterize Nob Hill; “[I] always bicycle to work, we have a public swimming pool a mile away, we’ve got places to shop around here, great restaurants. This area, when you’re in it, is a very workable, great place to live.”19 Planner Ed Boles, a longtime Albuquerque resident, sees Nob Hill as one of several distinct, historic neighborhoods within the city, but one that has taken control over its image and has, to some extent, resisted changes that threaten this image. “For years now, since 1985, Nob Hill’s Community District has been marketing itself as ‘Historic Nob Hill’, and so a number of people who live there also relate to it in those terms and want to see its historic character, and by that I mean its existing character, not violated by overly large new buildings. Or by any other thing, for that matter. And in Albuquerque terms, it’s probably the third best pedestrian environment [in the city], after Downtown and Old Town.”20

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19 David Kammer interview.
20 Ed Boles interview.
Since the 1980’s, Nob Hill has benefited from the redevelopment efforts of a string of neighborhood-based organizations, including the Nob Hill Neighborhood Association, Nob Hill Main Street, Inc., the Nob Hill Business Association, and most recently, the Nob Hill-Highland Renaissance Corporation. Each of these groups has engaged with the city’s Route 66 history, but often in the context of neighborhood beautification and economic development, as well as preservation. For example, in 1999 the Nob Hill-Highland Renaissance Corporation erected two steel-framed, neon-decorated “gateways” over Central Avenue/Route 66, on the eastern and western edges of the neighborhood. The arches demarcate the boundaries of the neighborhood and pay homage to the strip’s Route 66 past through the use of neon lighting. Unlike the proposed archways in Rancho Cucamonga, which I discuss in a later chapter, Nob Hill’s arches are much more abstract and lack the icons and signage most often associated with Route 66. In fact, the city of Albuquerque characterized these arches as “public art” projects and provided funding for their construction from the city’s public art budget. In their design and siting, the arches have much more to do with the Nob Hill neighborhood’s overall identity as a self-defined and distinct neighborhood, than with the area’s Route 66 heritage. Regardless, the New Mexico Route 66 Association recognized them as a component in Route 66’s revitalization and awarded the Nob Hill-Highland Renaissance Corporation a “Historic Route 66 Award” for the construction of the gateways.

As in Rancho Cucamonga, the “gateway” concept has captured the public imagination in Albuquerque more than other Route 66-themed projects. In fact, Albuquerque’s “West Side” was so enamored of Nob Hill’s gateways that the neighborhood lobbied the city to build another set of gateways in 2004 over Central Avenue/Route 66, but on the west side of town. “In fairly recent years, say the last five to ten years, the folks on West Central have been saying, ‘What about us? We’re Route 66 too. We have some of that character – it may not be the same as Nob Hill, but when are you going to spend some

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money out here?" remarked Ed Boles. "So the city went and built a different version of
gateways on West Central...also neon lighted, spanning structures, but of a very different
character." The west-side arch, which is more reminiscent of Rancho Cucamonga’s
proposed “iconic” archways than the abstract, geometric arches in Nob Hill, cost the city
$300,000, which was provided by federal Community Development Block Grant as a
streetscaping amenity.

The city of Albuquerque has also contributed to the character of Nob Hill and
Central Avenue with the creation of the city’s most successful rapid transit program,
the ABQ Ride. While the city did not implement this transit system with Route 66’s
history in mind, the system has been a great success for the city of Albuquerque and has
contributed to the cohesiveness of the Central Avenue corridor. The city established
this rapid bus transit route along the Central Avenue corridor in 2001, and today the
“Central Avenue/Route 66” corridor is the city’s most popular mass transit route, with
over 175,000 passenger boardings per month in 2006. The next most popular route, the
Rapid Ride route, has only about 100,000 boardings per month, which illustrates the
relative popularity and utility of the Central Avenue line. The Central Avenue/Route
66 line runs through Nob Hill, past UNM, and into downtown Albuquerque, with nine
stops along the way. To complement this system, the city has proposed the construction
of a modern streetcar or light-rail system that will run along Central Avenue/Route 66,
through the Nob Hill neighborhood. However, despite the success of rapid bus transit in
the neighborhood, the community may not be prepared to develop at the higher densities
necessary to support a more aggressive public transit system.

When I visited Albuquerque in January 2006, I attended a Nob Hill commu-
nity meeting, and I was struck by how divided the community was over the issues of
high-density development, parking, and mass transit. In recent years, this debate has
overshadowed any debate about historic preservation and Route 66, although concern for
the neighborhood’s historic character underlies the opposition to transit and densifica-
tion. The community would like to see a streetcar system, but not if it calls for four-story
developments along the Central Avenue corridor, which is currently comprised of
single-story commercial properties with on-street parking. People think of these higher
buildings as out of scale with the neighborhood’s existing character, although all agree
that this “character” is rooted in Nob Hill’s pedestrian orientation as well as its history.
Ed Boles recognized this planning challenge and clarified it for me by putting it in the
context of the neighborhood’s twenty-year revitalization history; “[Nob Hill] wants to see
the sort of improvements that a more densely developed place would automatically draw,
the public investment that that many more residents might demand and be able to get.
But they want the status quo in some areas and the advantages or improvements that the
status quo actually works against. You know, Nob Hill is, in local terms, a revitalization
success story, because back in the 80s it was shelled out badly. But it really hasn’t come
up to what it might have been or might yet be in terms of low vacancy rates, really solid
businesses in every store. I shouldn’t criticize it because it has a lot of great businesses,
but there are some places where it’s still kind of marginal, in terms of retention of retail

22 Ed Boles interview.
23 Rosanna M. Martinez, “Route 66 Going Up in Light as Work Begins on Archway”, The Albuquer-
businesses and the quality of the pedestrian environment.”

Clearly, Nob Hill is a work in progress as an historic, mixed-use community, struggling with issues of transit and densification that will persist as Albuquerque grows. The city’s relatively fixed growth boundaries – Native American reservations to the north and south, and the mountains to the east – will likely result in denser infill development over time. Nob Hill is only one of many older neighborhoods in Albuquerque that will have to navigate the infill process and make long-range decisions about the relative importance of cars and mass transit in the city at large.

The debate over transit in Nob Hill was particularly interesting in the context of Route 66, an international symbol of America’s love affair with the automobile. Of the four case study cities I visited, Albuquerque/Nob Hill was the only city in which the community expressed ambivalence over the role of cars as a means of transportation on its Route 66 thoroughfare. Although Flagstaff’s planners recognized that Route 66 redevelopment should focus, in part, on automobile culture, they did not exhibit the conflicted emotions of the Albuquerque advocates and planners that I spoke with. “In [Nob Hill], it’s a place where people who have lived in urban areas, or have wanted to live in a more urban area, tend to gather,” said Ed Boles. “All the shops are side by side, and you can walk and shop and bar hop and do all those types of urban things, in a way that most of Albuquerque isn’t conducive to. So it figures that folks who choose to live and hang out there are going to have that sort of orientation about the car.”

In Nob Hill, residents I spoke with wanted cars to be subordinated to public transit, even though much of Central Avenue’s historic character is defined by its motor courts (motels), historic gas stations, and neon signage – all remnants of Route 66. The commercial architecture associated with car-oriented development is not the only impediment to creating a pedestrian-oriented commercial strip; the road has four lanes with very few stoplights between downtown and the east end of Central. As such, it is too wide and fast for safe pedestrian crossings, and much of the debate at the transit meeting I attended centered on how unsafe the crosswalks along Central were, and how the city needed to redesign pedestrian intersections to increase the street’s foot traffic. If Nob Hill continues to urbanize and successfully establishes a streetcar system, it may become the only stretch of historic Route 66, outside of the termini in downtown Chicago and downtown Los Angeles, where the artifacts of car culture are memorialized and celebrated along a corridor that no longer prioritizes the automobile.

The Motels – from Courtyards to Hot Sheets

Clearly, the citizens of Nob Hill have played a large part in their community’s development, and Route 66 is only one of many factors influencing the neighborhood’s planning efforts. However, residents have had to deal head-on with one of Route 66’s most enduring and complicated legacies, the deterioration and vice infestation of its historic motels. As in Tulsa and Flagstaff, historic Route 66 motels have become

25 Ed Boles interview.
26 Ed Boles interview.
27 “Hot Sheet” is an expression I learned from interviewee Quinta Scott, who used it to describe the hourly-rate Route 66 motels she first photographed in the early 1980s.
Albuquerque’s most widely recognized sites of illegal activity, from prostitution to methamphetamine production. More than any other case city, Albuquerque has struggled with the conflicting desires to protect these historic motels and to condemn and destroy the most egregious offenders. This is, in part, because of the large number of motels that the city supported during Route 66’s heyday, all of which were virtually abandoned after the construction of Interstate 40. “When you look at city directories from the 1950’s, you had 100-plus tourist courts. And now you’ve got maybe 30 or 35,” remembered Nob Hill resident David Kammer. 28 Ed Boles has worked as a preservationist for the City of Albuquerque for twenty years, and has seen many motels fall by the wayside during that time; “There was this big collection of motels. And obviously, when the interstate highway went through town, it took so much of the through traffic and resulted in the construction of motels associated with it. And a certain number of these motels were going to be marginalized commercially, so a sorting out is taking place. It has happened a lot over the last ten years, and it’s still taking place.” 29

As in Tulsa and Flagstaff, historic motels have proven to be a good site for methamphetamine labs and other illicit activity. By 2002, crime in the motels had become such a scourge to the city that in March, mayor Martin Chávez created the Albuquerque Community Enforcement and Abatement Task Force, commonly known as the Mayor’s Safe City Strike Force. The Strike Force’s stated goal in 2005 was “to address neighborhood quality of life and public safety though nuisance abatement actions, graffiti vandalism collections and DWI vehicle forfeiture”, although much of its work has focused on nuisance properties on or near the Central Avenue corridor. 30 Since its inception, the Strike Force has shut down and boarded up or bulldozed at least four motels, beginning with the Gaslite Motel in 2002. 31 As of December 2004, about 40 other motels had been inspected for housing code violations, forcing owners to make repairs or face a city-ordered shut down. 32 In 2005, the Strike Force reported having taken “nuisance abatement action” against 9 motels, hotels, or businesses along Central Avenue and initiating 27 condemnations. 33

While some of Albuquerque’s motels were never particularly distinguished architecturally or historically, at least two demolished Albuquerque motels were listed on the National Register of Historic Places at the time of demolition. 34 Ed Boles has been the city’s preservation planner for ten years, the period in which motels have been boarded up or destroyed; “We’ve actually lost two motels that were registered, one to just mismanagement and eventual degradation to the point where the buyer was forced by the city to tear it down after the previous owner had let it go so badly. And then the other one being an instance where a little 14-unit motel was so small that it really wasn’t viable anymore.

28 David Kammer interview.
29 Ed Boles interview.
31 Motels shut down by the Safe City Strike Force include the Gaslite Motel, The Royal Inn, The Zia Motor Lodge, and most recently, the Route 66 Inn in December of 2004.
33 Safe City Strike Force Legal documentation, 2006.
34 Being listed on the National Register of Historic Places does not protect a building from demolition by a private owner; it only prevents local governments from condemning a property. It can also delay demolition by requiring a “Section 106” review, or an impact assessment on any interventions proposed for the building.
Above, the site of the former Zia Motor Lodge, and below, the Zia in better days. Sources: Author and Route 66: Images of America’s Main Street.
The people had paid it off and they could have continued to rent it and make money, I suppose, but they wanted to put a bigger motel on their site and we approved the demolition of it. Frankly, I made a value judgment that the building wasn’t quite as strong as its registration would suggest. So we’ve got a sort of flexible standard here, where we have to look at preservation, as all cities do, in the context of redevelopment and opportunity, and where it makes sense to stand by a property and really defend it as necessary.”

To determine which motels it should stand behind and attempt to preserve and which motels it should abandon to the tide of real estate development, the City of Albuquerque relies on two inventories completed by the state of New Mexico in the 1990s. One of these inventories is a Multiple Property Listing for “Automobile Oriented Commercial Development”, which describes three types of archetypal motel architecture present in Albuquerque – the “Southwest Vernacular” style, the Spanish Pueblo Revival, and the Streamlined Moderne. This inventory, combined with an earlier MPL covering Route 66-related architecture, resulted in the National Register nomination of many of the city’s most historically and architecturally prominent motels. However, Ed Boles is quick to point out that the National Register not only fails to protect a building from private development, but that the nomination process has overlooked some of the city’s more interesting historic properties.

The most unique and important of these is the DeAnza motel, whose owner, Amir Nagji, purchased the motel in 1992. While preparing to whitewash over a mural in the hotel’s basement, Nagji put down his paintbrush after his daughter recommended finding out more about the murals before covering them up. After a few inquiries into the building’s history, Nagji discovered that the murals were painted by Zuni artist Tony Edaakie in 1951, and that they are the only Zuni murals of their kind outside of Zuni reservation land. Nagji also learned that the motel was originally built by a well-known trader with the Zuni people named Charles G. Wallace, who was later a joint-founder of the hotel network that became the Best Western chain. In the last several years, the Nob Hill-Highland Renaissance Corporation and the New Mexico Route 66 Association have rallied around the DeAnza as an important Route 66 and local landmark, but because it was not on the original historic property surveys from the early 1990s, the motel initially remained under the radar of state and local preservationists; “We realized over time, and I think the federal and state government have realized too, that the early 90s work got at most of the most important properties, but not all of them,” remarked Ed Boles. “There were some gaps, and the De Anza Motor Lodge is a perfect example, where a highly significant building with a really unusual resource, this Zuni mural, wasn’t identified in the first tier of significant motels in the state.” Since 2003, the city has

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35 Ed Boles interview.
37 The first MPL, “Historic and Architectural Resources of Route 66 Through New Mexico”, was written by David Kammer and was submitted in 1993.
39 Ed Boles interview.
been negotiating the purchase of the DeAnza motel for $800,000 with the possible reuse as a boutique motel.\footnote{The city hired an external consultant who examined the site’s zoning, architecture, and existing dimensions, as well as the tourism market in Albuquerque and concluded that the site’s best use would be as a “boutique historic motel” catering to 66-roadies and other heritage tourists. As in many motels, rooms at the DeAnza are too small to become apartments, another use considered for the site. See Diane Velasco, “Study Suggests a Boutique Hotel”, The Albuquerque Journal, January 27, 2003, p 2.}

Although the DeAnza is exceptional among Albuquerque motels for its Zuni mural and its association with historic persons, its story illustrates how arbitrary the preservation and rehabilitation process can be around the built artifacts of Route 66. Rescued and rehabbed properties are often “discovered” and championed by individuals before city and state officials will leverage their financial and legislative powers toward the property’s rehabilitation. And often, the champions of motel properties are not their owners, but others with a passion for Route 66, for commercial architecture, or for local history. This dynamic is complicated by issues of race and ethnicity, particularly in the ownership and management of older motels in urban areas where motels have long been locations of vice. For example, the DeAnza’s owner, Amir Nagji, first discovered his motel’s Zuni murals in 1992, yet the property remained off the radar as an important Route 66 resource until the last few years, when the city was entreated by Nob Hill preservationists to purchase the property and save it from redevelopment. How much of this delay was due to a communication gap between the east-Indian owner and the

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**66 Spotlight - Pauline Bauer and the La Puerta Motel**

Pauline Bauer has been in the motel business since 1941, the year her family moved to Albuquerque from Canadia, Texas. Pauline attended the University of New Mexico, the state’s most prestigious public school and one of the few universities located directly on the original Route 66 corridor. She could walk from the University to her family’s motel on Route 66, and for several years she worked in the motel and in her parents’ real estate development office. After the death of her first husband, a WWII veteran, Pauline remarried and decided that it was time for her to enter the motel business for herself. “I had just been married to him a little while, he was off with my folks up in Utah; they were on a trip off prospecting for uranium. And when he got back, I said, ‘Well I traded the house off’, and he said ‘What’d you get?’, and I said ‘A hotel.’ And I had the whole block here, the 9700 block.” The motel that she and her husband rehabilitated became the La Puerta Motor Lodge, one of Albuquerque’s most well-kept Route 66 motel properties – a fact due largely to Pauline’s continuous residence on the property since she bartered for it in 1956.

Unlike some other long-time motel owners in Albuquerque, Pauline owns, runs, and lives on the premises of her motel. She also owns the property next door to the motel, which she rents out to a used car lot owner. According to Pauline, her income from the rental of this adjacent property, in addition to other financial resources, has made it possible for her to stay in the motel business in recent years while other Albuquerque
motels have floundered. “I don’t do active marketing – mostly because I don’t need to...I turn away even more people than I take. And I can afford to do that – if I couldn’t, I wouldn’t be here. I would have gone a long time ago if my living depended on picking up people on the street.” Pauline earns more from the lease of the neighboring lot, she claims, than she makes from the La Puerta, even when it’s fully booked. This allows her to have a comfortable living and to pick and choose her tenants.

Although she rarely interacts with other motel owners, Pauline did discuss the vagaries of the Albuquerque motel business with another motel owner a few years ago, when both traveled to Santa Fe to see their motel signs added to the National Register. “And one of the men that rode with us asked, how can you run your place, aren’t you afraid, and I said, well I don’t take people that I’m afraid of. I wouldn’t take that type of person. I would just tell them that I didn’t have anything for them. And he said he just hired a manager and moved to Moriarty [a nearby town], because he was afraid to run his place. So, if you are trying to just let anybody in, pretty soon your place will go downhill.” Pauline has also taken advantage of carpentry and maintenance services provided by a former tenant. Although neither Pauline nor Jack Patel (see “66 Spotlight - Jack Patel” in Chapter 4) would admit to accepting labor in exchange for rent, both remarked that tenants with carpentry skills had been very helpful in the maintenance and restoration of their properties.

Pauline also offered a more practical explanation for her motel’s success. In addition to her financial security, which has helped her to stay in business and cater to a less marginal, more stable population, Pauline also believes that her motel’s pre-war construction has contributed to its longevity and has eased her maintenance burden. “It’s going to take a lot of money to bring [other motels] back – they might not have been too well built in the first place. Things that were built during the war, you couldn’t get good materials. A lot of those didn’t hold up too well that were built during that period. Ours is made from old cinderblock, [so heavy] that you couldn’t hardly lift a block.”

When I asked Pauline what she thought about Route 66 as a current and future tourism destination, she didn’t have a firm opinion. If anything, she seemed to see her motel as more of a local business with little potential for tourist traffic. Many of her current customers are people from rural New Mexico who come to Albuquerque for medical reasons, or for leisure. Her motel’s proximity to the Albuquerque fairgrounds, home of the New Mexico State Fair, brings her some regular clients who attend the fair as presenters or simply to see the spectacle. Some tenants are recent professional transplants to Albuquerque who stay at the La Puerta while they seek more permanent housing. If the La Puerta receives tourists, according to Pauline, very few of them are from outside the United States. Unlike Jack Patel’s Desert Hills Motel in Tulsa, the La Puerta does not draw the sentimental Route 66 tourist, despite the iconic sign and the motel’s pristine condition.

Pauline does not make any effort to market the La Puerta to either tourists or locals. She seems to keep the motel in good condition out of a combination of practicality, since it is her primary residence, and personal pride. But I was curious about the designation of her sign as a part of the National Register – was she aware of the grants she was eligible for to repair and maintain her sign? What about the motel itself; did she have any plans to have it listed as a local, state, or national historic site?
Pauline said no. She understands that the land on which the motel sits, not the business itself, is what’s economically valuable, and this is what she plans to leave her children when she dies. Although she is eligible for sign grants, she has no interest in acquiring one; “I never wanted to borrow anything – I don’t have to. So I couldn’t see any sense in borrowing money to repair [the sign] – if I want to fix it, I’ll fix it myself.”

In recent years, as Albuquerque has grown steadily and the city has absorbed ever higher percentages of the county population, Pauline has rejected several offers to purchase the motel, one by a man who owns most of the properties surrounding her two lots. She anticipates that the land will become increasingly valuable as the city grows, and she wants her children to inherit this land and do with it as they please, including selling or demolishing the motel. The motel’s beautifully hand-carved wooden door frames and ceiling beams have already been spoken for by a local man who collects Southwestern art, and according to Pauline, there is not much else of historic value on the property itself. But for now, she enjoys living on the property and spends most of her time tending orchids in her greenhouse behind the motel, and in the rock garden she created there with her second husband, who died several years ago.

primarily white local preservation advocates, and how much was simply the sluggishness of the public sector in responding to these advocates’ demands?

To its credit, however, Albuquerque has engaged its motel owners in an education process comparable to that which Albuquerque landlords must complete before renting out properties to lease-holding tenants. As part of its mission to rehabilitate Central Avenue, in 2004 the city created a mandatory “Crime-Free Rental Housing Training” program for city motel owners. The initiative requires that motel owners attend a training course focusing on screening tenants, conducting background checks, and recognizing the signs of criminal activity, particularly methamphetamine labs. This initiative is unique among Route 66 cities, although it remains to be seen how effective the program is in deterring motel owners and managers from renting to less desirable tenants who are willing and able to pay. After all, it is hard to believe that any motel owner would choose to rent to a suspicious tenant; but when these are the only clients available (and they are offering to pay ten times more than the stated rates), it is hard to blame motel owners for accepting these tenants in exchange for willful ignorance of their activities.

If anything, Albuquerque politicians are the most likely of all to benefit from the “Crime-free” training program, since it shifts the blame for motel crime onto owners, who can now no longer plead ignorance about the criminal backgrounds and tendencies of their tenants. However, since so many of these owners are new Americans, the city can pitch its “Crime-free” training as an educational initiative aimed at naïve foreigners who cannot recognize a possible criminal; in many ways, this initiative characterizes the gap in understanding between the immigrant motel-owning population and the political forces at work in Route 66 cities. As I learned through both formal and informal interviews, Route 66 motel owners, Indian or otherwise, are certainly not oblivious to crime occurring on their property; most owners are only trying to stay in business in a competitive and oversaturated market.

Significantly, in Albuquerque, Indian motel owners have emerged as some of the city’s most influential and publicly minded businessmen. Several Alburquerqueans I spoke with regaled me with stories about Indian motel owners who had distinguished themselves as thoughtful, active public citizens in the Albuquerque community. Both Ed Boles and David Kammer praised Mohamed Natha and his wife Shokathavan as civic-minded motel owners who had marketed their motels as Route 66 heritage sites while serving the needs of the local community. Natha’s motel, the Aztec, was home to several long-term tenants, including a retired professor of social work who then moved in with the Nathas when they sold their motel several years ago. Some of these tenants have left a permanent mark on the Aztec through folk-art decorations, gardens, and murals that add even more spice to the already distinctive property (see picture). Today, although the Nathas have retired from the Aztec Motel, they stay engaged with the Albuquerque community by collecting clothing and household goods in the city to bring to the Navajo reservation for people in need.

The front and side view of Albuquerque’s Aztec Motel. Source: Author.
Ed Boles, a close friend of the Nathas, also praised the work of longtime motel owner Shiraz “Sam” Kassam who ran the El Vado motel for fifteen years before his death several years ago. 42 “During the whole [fifteen years], Kassam promoted [the El Vado] to the extent that he knew how, as the best Route 66 motel remaining anywhere,” remarked Ed Boles. “And he worked that pretty hard – he wasn’t a real savvy, modern-day manager of a lodge; he should have had an online presence and done some things to really reach out broadly. But he did what he knew how to do... and he was another example of somebody who appreciated [Route 66] at some level. I think that’s true of a number of other [motel owners], even though the circumstances that surround most of these motels now make it really hard for some of these folks to stay in business.” 43

Beyond appreciating the history and relevance of these motels in American culture, the owners of safe, well-maintained motels also provide the city’s neediest individuals with safe and decent housing that they cannot find in the rest of the city; “One of the issues here in Nob Hill is this notion of Route 66 as the Whitmanian open road, and the small democratic highway,” began David Kammer, “and I thought Mohamed’s place [the Aztec] was always a reminder of that diversity. I used to think about the people living there, battered women and others, in terms of that Hemingway short story called ‘A Clean, Well-Lighted Place’, that everyone should have a place where they have some dignity. And I always thought that the Aztec gave that to the people who lived there.” 44

While some owners, like Pauline Bauer (see spotlight), have been able to rely on external financial resources for the maintenance and management of their motel properties, others have survived as best they can as small business owners in a declining market. In some ways, these motel owners are the real heroes of Route 66; they have kept these small, locally owned businesses alive for the last thirty years, despite the hazards and vagaries of these “bypassed” markets. And many of these owners have also embraced their motels’ peculiarly American history, even though this heritage was not what brought them to their motels in the first place. David Kammer described to me how Kassam and Natha would open closed or private areas of their motels on a moment’s notice for Route 66 tourists and advocacy groups; “I could call Mohamed or Sam Kassam...and they would always open up their places. And Mohamed would inevitably have sandwiches and coffee and a cooler of soft drinks, even though I would tell him not to have things ready like that,” mused Kammer.

Along with their historic properties – and just as relevant to the story of Route 66 – these businessmen have preserved the corridor’s spirit of small private enterprise and unabashed, good-natured, American commercialism. If the business of America is business, then Route 66 is the highway that leads inevitably to this most American pursuit. In Albuquerque, Route 66 and its stream of commercialism have joined the tide of neighborhood-based economic development; together, they have effected the transformation of a historic, mixed use neighborhood, and both the city and Route 66 itself have benefited from this convergence.

42 In 2003, the city began a prolonged and much publicized battle with the El Vado’s new owner over the future of the National Register property. Tulsa’s Emily Priddy (among others) drove overnight from Tulsa to Albuquerque to participate in a City Hall meeting about the property’s future.

43 Ed Boles interview.

44 David Kammer interview.
Albuquerque Conclusions

As many roadies already know, Albuquerque is the Route 66 city that has “done it right.” The city has a wealth of historic signs and properties, and Route 66 has the good fortune of running through Nob Hill, one of the city’s most vibrant and diverse neighborhoods. The city’s Route 66 corridor owes much of its success to Nob Hill’s decades of activism. Albuquerque also benefits from the presence of the University of New Mexico, which provides a built-in customer base for restaurants, boutiques, and performing arts venues. Another case study city, Tulsa, also has a University along its Route 66 corridor (the University of Tulsa), but Tulsa’s university neighborhood does not have the spatial or social cohesiveness of Nob Hill. This cohesiveness is a byproduct of the neighborhood’s history as a pre-war subdivision; as David Kammer stated in our interview, Nob Hill is one of the city’s few walkable, small-lot, historic neighborhoods. Therefore, the people who live there have chosen the neighborhood over newer, more spread out subdivisions further out from the center of town, and it is safe to assume that residents value the spatial and architectural characteristics of the neighborhood. In fact, Nob Hill residents and the city at large have recognized the neighborhood’s value for decades, even before the Route 66 Renaissance became a national movement. Today, Route 66 is only one of several components that contribute to the neighborhood’s historic character.

For better or for worse, Albuquerque is also home to a wealth of historic motels. Crime in these motels has galvanized the city, and city government (in the form of the Safe City Strike Force) has addressed this issue head-on through aggressive monitoring of code violations. However, Albuquerque has failed its historic motels and their owners in two ways: first, by failing to recognize the important role that motels play in providing affordable short and medium-term housing for Albuquerque’s neediest populations, and second, by addressing motels and their owners as sources of the vice problem, rather than as a potentially powerful business league in possession of an important resource. Given that several Albuquerque motel owners, such as Mohamed Natha, have proven themselves to be active, publicly minded citizens, Albuquerque should be encouraging their efforts through the creation of a motel-owners task force or committee. This would create a space for a meaningful dialog about crime, preservation, affordable housing, and race that could serve as a model for other Route 66 cities. A citizen-oriented motel “task force” could also serve as a model for cities like Flagstaff that are beginning to address similar issues surrounding historic motels.
Tulsa, Oklahoma: The Best-Laid Plans
Tulsa, Oklahoma considers itself the birthplace of Route 66 since it was here that Cyrus Avery, the road’s historical father figure, lived, worked, and promoted the road as the country’s first all-weather cross-country thoroughfare. Avery, a Tulsa resident and property owner, was a prominent citizen who became a road advocate in 1913 when he was made Highway Commissioner of Tulsa. These were the prime years of the “Good Roads Movement,” and in this climate of roadway advocacy and transformation, Avery became the country’s leading spokesman for rural road improvement; he was appointed leader of the federal commission that created the U.S. Highway System in 1926. As commissioner, Avery argued for the southern and western routing of what would become Route 66, ostensibly so that the road would avoid the dangerous mountain roads and climates of the Rockies but with the knowledge that this would bring the road through Avery’s hometown, Tulsa, where he was both a politician and a roadside property owner. Avery’s foresight and enthusiasm have earned him a place in Tulsa and Route 66 history unmatched by any other early Route 66 advocates and pioneers.

Oklahoma’s modern Route 66 revival began in 1989 with the founding of the Oklahoma Route 66 Association. Oklahoma was the second of eight states to create such a group, and the organization remains one of the most active in the U.S. on a statewide level, maintaining a regularly updated website and publishing an annual “Oklahoma Route 66 Trip Guide” that is distributed by restaurants, motels, and visitor centers across the state. In 1995, the University of Oklahoma joined the movement by submitting the Route 66 Multiple Property Listing to the National Register. This document emphasized the preservation of the Route 66 roadbed and bridges, as much as its roadside architecture. This focus on the roadbed and its associated structures – bridges, trusses, and service stations – reflects Oklahoma’s pride in its connection to Cyrus Avery, one of the country’s most famous road advocates. Because of this history, Oklahoma’s activists have paid particular attention to the roadbed itself and the road’s engineered structures. Activism in Oklahoma also focuses on small town and rural initiatives. Several of the state’s more well-known 66 landmarks, like the “Blue Whale” in Catoosa and the Rock Caf6 in Stroud, have been lovingly restored and maintained over the last decade through the work of individual preservationists and property owners, and in some cases, through corporate sponsors such as the Hampton Inn “Save a Landmark” program (see picture). Unlike in New Mexico and California, however, Route 66 activism in Oklahoma has not engaged seriously with urban areas. 66 runs through both Tulsa and Oklahoma City, but neither city has shown a concerted effort to preserve or develop this resource until the last five years, when Tulsa arrived on the Route 66 scene with the city’s ambitious “Vision 2025” plan. Although the city’s 66-related efforts are now under the umbrella of Vision 2025, several grassroots movements preceded the city’s involvement and positioned Route 66 for inclusion in the city’s overall economic development plan.

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1 See http://www.oklahomaroute66.com/theroad/factsheet.html
2 For website, see http://www.oklahomaroute66.com/
3 The Hampton Inn “Save a Landmark” program organizes motel employees and other volunteers in clean-up projects of Route 66 roadside architectural monuments and affixes a Hampton Inn “Save a Landmark” sign on each project. However, the program does not at present offer financial or other support for the continued maintenance of these landmarks.
According to Dennis Whitaker from the City of Tulsa Public Works and Development department, the grassroots effort to redevelop Tulsa’s Route 66 corridor began five years ago in 2000, when neighborhood leaders and business owners along 11th Street formed the 11th Street Business League. 11th Street is Tulsa’s primary alignment of Route 66, now a two-lane road that originally connected Tulsa to Catoosa to the east (home of the beloved “Blue Whale”) and Stroud to the west (the site of the route’s most well-known eatery, the Rock Café). A 11th Street runs northeast to southwest through the city, and most of the city’s historic motels, diners, and gift shops are located on the eastern end of this 11th Street corridor.

Like many urban portions of Route 66 across America, 11th street is a low-to-middle income part of town, populated with used car lots, light industrial workplaces, and a few run-down motels. The prevalence of used car lots is directly linked to the land-use legacy of Route 66; many of these lots are the sites of former motels that could not survive after Route 66 was bypassed by the interstate. Roadside motels from the 1940s and 1950s were often designed around large courtyards with parking spaces ringed a central shared space, then surrounded by a horseshoe of attached, single-story rooms. These motor courts were usually sited on the edge of the urban center (in what are today inner-ring suburbs), so that traveling families could be near to city services but
One of many used-car lots along east Tulsa's 11th Street/Route 66 corridor. Source: Author.

A map of methamphetamine labs discovered in Tulsa since 2001. Route 66/11th Street is the line shown in red. Source: City of Tulsa Police Department, Special Investigations Division.
could enjoy the informality and camaraderie of the motor court experience. Because of
the popularity of this motel form, historic motels on Route 66 often occupy large, deep
lots with a significant amount of commercial street frontage. As such, they are ideal sites
for businesses like used-car-sales because the sites can accommodate a large automobile
inventory while providing exposure to a commercial corridor and proximity to a viable
market (in this case, low-income residents of west Tulsa).

Like other urban pieces of the old road, 11th Street in Tulsa today suffers from
neglect, disrepair, and a general seediness that contrasts sharply with the “car-hops and
milkshakes” image of Route 66’s heyday. But much of 11th Street’s downtrodden ap-
pearance results from the blankness of its empty lots and auto body shops – not from the
vice associated with older motels, as in Albuquerque or Flagstaff. Tulsa has lost so many
of its historic Route 66 motels to demolition that these properties have not emerged as a
magnet for vice. Rather, in Tulsa, the type of crime plaguing motels in other Route 66
cities is spread out over the entire city; for example, methamphetamine labs have been
found not only in Tulsa’s urban areas, but also in affluent suburbs, in rural areas, and
even in the honeymoon suite of a local Residence Inn. The Tulsa Police Department has
mapped the incidences of meth labs throughout the city from 2001 to 2005, and the maps
show a wide geographic spread, with only 1 lab discovered along 11th Street/Route 66
in 2005. Perhaps the scarcity of 66 motels in Tulsa has not only limited their exposure
to vice, but has also helped emphasize their historic importance and has prompted more
investment in their upkeep. Jack Patel, for example, has spent thousands of dollars of his
own money on the restoration of the Desert Hills neon sign, and currently, it is the only
fully restored motel sign along the 11th street corridor (see “66 Spotlight on Jack Patel”).

The Battle of the Plans

But even without the proliferation of vice, 11th Street in Tulsa is hardly a tour-
ist-friendly destination. The road looks almost industrial, with deep setbacks, scattered
vacant paved lots, and a complete absence of pedestrian activity. Perhaps it was this
contrast with the iconic image of Route 66 that motivated the founders of the 11th Street
Business League to meet in 2000 and discuss the necessity for improvements to their
roadway and strategies for marketing the road to Route 66 tourists. The group achieved
immediate results. Within one year of its founding, the 11th Street Business League had
lobbied the city for increased attention to broken streetlights, property crime, and prosti-
tution along 11th Street, including an application to the city for $145,000 worth of capital
improvements for street lighting. The timing of the 11th Street Business League was fortuitous, for around the
same time, in 2001, a citizen’s action group called TulsaNow was forming in response
to two redevelopment bonds that failed to pass citywide elections. In the late 90s, the
Tulsa city government had proposed a plan called the “Tulsa Project” in which the

5 Julie DelCour, “Methamphetamine: Battling the Plague”, and editorial, “Meth Proliferation: This
6 http://www.tulsapolice.org/sid.html. See map.
city would reshape itself as a “tertiary” convention market, building facilities to attract smaller events such as high school sports tournaments instead of professional (if minor league) events. However, this project failed at the polls and was followed by another failed capital campaign called “Tulsa Time” that focused on the construction of a smaller convention center with a greenway connecting to the Arkansas River. Determined to demonstrate their city’s willingness to change, the founders of TulsaNow began brain-storming about possible urban redevelopment plans for the city, including several projects that highlighted the city’s remaining historic buildings. The group began by holding meetings and asking local developers, preservationists, and representatives from the Tulsa Redevelopment Authority to speak on these issues, and Tulsans began to pay attention to the group’s public hearings.

In October 2002, TulsaNow organized a public event called “The Battle of the Plans.” At this event, citizen planners were encouraged to present their ideas for Tulsa’s revitalization, regardless of scope or feasibility. Accordingly, plans ranged from the relatively mundane (redevelopment of the Arkansas River waterfront) to the impossible (a plan for an “‘Eiffel Tower-size derrick’ that would be connected via elevated tram cars to a series of derricks positioned around the city). Several plans incorporated a Route 66 theme, but only one presented implementable strategies for Route 66 corridor redevelopment; this plan was the product of the 11th Street Business League, which by then had changed its name to the Route 66 Business League of Tulsa.

By the time of “The Battle of the Plans,” the Route 66 Business League had incorporated itself as a 501(c)3 and had stated its mission as, “to design and implement a comprehensive economic improvement strategy for the East Tulsa Historic Route 66 Area...that includes but is not limited to crime prevention, code enforcement, physical improvement and economic development.” The League held its first official meeting in January of 2003, following the successful presentation of its proposals during “The Battle of the Plans.” Although the Battle was not a formal, competitive process, it drew public and press attention and positioned the League as a force for change along the Route 66 corridor. The Battle also drew more attention to Route 66 as a cultural resource for the city of Tulsa.

**Vision 2025**

At the same time, the leadership of Tulsa County was busy brainstorming ideas for a new city and county vision plan, which would focus on economic development and attracting new large, corporate industries to the Tulsa area. In October 2002, the city and county government held the first in a series of “Dialog/Visioning 2025 Citizens’ Summits” to hear any and all ideas from the public about improvement and development projects for the City of Tulsa. These first summits, basically a higher-profile version of the “Battle of the Plans”, presented yet another forum for the Route 66 Business League to garner attention for the corridor. However, this forum had the advantage of local

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9 Articles of Incorporation of Route 66 Business League of Tulsa, Inc.. May, 2002.
66 Spotlight on Jack Patel

Jack Patel, the owner and proprietor of the Desert Hills Motel on Route 66 in Tulsa, says that his business relies “90% on locals” needing weekly or monthly stays, and that he sees, at most, one foreign tourist per week during the peak season of July, August, and September. This is despite the fact that Mr. Patel has spent thousands of dollars on restoring the Desert Hills’ neon sign in an effort to attract Route 66 tourists. Interestingly, Mr. Patel noted that most of his overnight visitors who are traveling Route 66 are from other countries – mostly Western Europe and Japan. He remarked that very few American Route 66 tourists stay at the Desert Hills, despite his efforts to list the motel on several Route 66-themed websites (one of which is maintained by Emily Priddy). Mr. Patel tries to balance the need to make a living serving local clients with the tourism potential of his classic, 1953 motel; “It’s tough – it’s never going to be like Vegas, where you’d expect more tourists. I’m trying to kind of stay in the business, and also make a place where there is something to see for out of town people.”

Knowing that his income depends on local clients, Mr. Patel has made an effort to keep up with the chain motel competition without pricing himself out of the local market. “Of course we had to make changes, you can’t just keep the old black and white tv, nowadays people want more convenience, updated air conditioner in the room, phone, primo tv and everything, so we try to provide all that just like big chain motels… But if you want to make any super improvements, you’d have to get big time financing. And for the local people, you don’t need that much [improvement]. You just want to stay where they can afford it, and where we can stay in business. Because if you make super changes, then we’d have to make enough rent to pay it off. But we try to stay with rates that they can afford.”

With the encouragement of Emily Priddy and other, Tulsa-based Route 66 activists, Jack has completed extensive renovation of his 1953 motel during his five years of ownership and has paid particular attention to his sign, a distinctive and well-known motel sign among Route 66 aficionados. With the help of his wife, he has also maintained his rooms up to the standard of comparable chain motels, and he keeps two rooms free at all times for tourists. The rest of the rooms, set further back from 11th Street, are used by regular daily and weekly tenants. Mr. Patel offered me a tour of his two open motel rooms, and I saw for myself that the rooms were just as well appointed as a room at a comparable motel along the Interstate, with color cable television, a clean and serviceable bathroom, and a new air-conditioning wall unit.

For a motel like the Desert Hills, built in 1953 and purchased after years of decline, maintenance and economic viability present a distinct preservation challenge. Preservation, in the sense of maintaining the motel’s original landscaping, interiors, or decoration, can mean expensive labor, material, or consulting costs, a luxury that a cash-flow dependent business like the Desert Hills cannot afford. When Jack Patel purchased the Desert Hills from his uncle ten years ago, the motel was in disrepair, inside and out. “At that time,” Mr Patel says, “More than half of the rooms were down, not rentable. And slowly we just did most of it by ourselves and got it up to where we could rent it

2 Jack Patel Interview.
Jack Patel in front of the Desert Hills Motel sign. 11th Street/Route 66 is in the background. Source: Author.
government sponsorship and, more importantly, the participation of the Mayor and his staff. During the “summiting” process of October 2002, the proposed revitalization of Route 66 caught the eye of the city’s Planning and Economic Development Division, and the city began working together with the Route 66 Business League to submit a proposal for inclusion in what would become the city’s “Vision 2025” plan.10

Route 66 was only one of many improvements submitted for “Vision 2025”, but early in the visioning process, the City recognized Route 66 revitalization as a project that seemed to require very little capital investment to reap a significant tourism and economic development benefit for the city. For Tulsa, Route 66 was a dormant civic asset, like an undeveloped riverway or other pre-existing, natural feature, that would require a relatively small financial investment (compared to the proposed construction of a new stadium) to generate increased revenue and civic pride. Julie Miner, economist for the City of Tulsa’s Urban Development Department, explained to me the particular advantage of tourism over other forms of economic development; “The reason tourism is an important ingredient in economic development is that it’s dollars that come from outside your community. You don’t have to necessarily have a great deal of government support for [tourists]. They don’t have a house and they don’t have water lines and all that, they just stay in the hotel and spend money. So that’s gravy, and that’s why we like it. And in doing so [on Route 66], it also helps the ‘Mom and Pop’s’ and the Quicktrips.”11

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10 Route 66/Vision 2025 Project Implementation Plan, p 2-1 and interview, Julie Miner and Dennis Whitaker, Tulsa Planning and Economic Development Department, January 4, 2006.

11 Julie Miner, Tulsa City Hall, January 4, 2006. “Quicktrip” is a convenience chain store, similar to Seven-Eleven. Unlike many roadies I met, Julie Miner sees any increase in commerce along Route 66 – in both chains and independent businesses – as a positive force. Michael Wallis, another roadie, would agree; as he said in our interview, “If it’s there, it’s real, even if it’s a god damn McDonald’s – that’s the reality of Route 66.”
In March, 2003, the county collected three billion dollars' worth of proposed projects for "Vision 2025," and a Tulsa committee began the project selection process. A few months later, the Mayor and the Tulsa City Council voted unanimously to support the Vision 2025 plan; Vision 2025 was then presented to Tulsa voters, who passed the massive planning initiative on September 9, 2003. Now, all that was left for Route 66 advocates in Tulsa was to decide how to spend their allotted fifteen million dollars. With little fanfare, Tulsa assembled a committee of thirteen Route 66 advocates, business owners, and preservationists from all 26 miles of Tulsa's corridor to work together with planning consultants on the city's Route 66 plan.12

I spoke with two of these committee members – Michael Wallis, the writer, and Brad Nickson, the Tulsa county representative for the Oklahoma Route 66 Association – to get a sense of how they felt about the planning process and the resulting document. I also spoke with project manager Mike Arand from the planning firm Dewberry, which (along with marketing firm Littlefield) consulted on the Route 66/Vision 2025 plan. All three men described a long and arduous planning process, in which representatives the citizen committee fought bitterly over how and where the city should spend its considerable Route 66 budget. But as Mike Arand pointed out, spread over 26 miles, 15 million dollars doesn't turn out to be as much money as everyone would like; "When word first got out that we had 15 million dollars, everybody thought, 'Wow, you can gold-plate everything,' but it doesn't take very long to use it up...instead of asking for 15 million, we should have asked for 20, or even 25."13

The Route 66 Planning Process

A major source of conflict in the planning process was the eventual decision to devote over a third of the overall funding to the construction of a new interpretive center, currently called "The Route 66 Xperience". To understand why the committee ended up devoting so much of its budget to a new building, rather than solely to bolster the existing historic fabric and businesses, it is important to remember that the city's Route 66 corridor plan was formulated in the context of a large-scale, city-wide revitalization initiative. This context made it possible for the Route 66 planning committee to dismiss the idea of adapting an existing building for an interpretive center, since a new building could not only take advantage of a proposed lot near the historic Cyrus Avery Bridge, but could also complement the city's waterfront redevelopment efforts. This redevelopment context also affected the mentality with which Tulsa's Route 66 planners approached the planning process. In Tulsa, Route 66 was one of many tools that the city would employ in its economic development, rather than a link in a national chain of resources.

Although efforts along Route 66 started with the the 11th Street Business League, just as Vision 2025 originated with TulsaNow, both processes were eventually co-opted by the more formalized, city-sponsored planning process which began in 2003. From then on, city officials spearheaded the entire planning process, from organizing the Route

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12 Different people and publications estimate the length of Tulsa's Route 66 corridor as anywhere between 22 and 26 miles. For consistency, I will use Mike Arand's estimate of 26 miles.
13 Mike Arand interview, Dewberry Planning offices, Tulsa, Oklahoma, January 6, 2006.
Tulsa's Route 66 Master Plan map, showing twenty-one planned interventions. Source: Dewberry.
citizen advisory committee to selecting Dewberry as the planning consultants. While these efforts were well-intentioned and certainly faster than allowing Route 66 revitalization to build its own momentum and capital, the city’s rapid upscaling of its Route 66 efforts also effectively deracinated the city’s grassroots movement. Not only was the city-organized planning process more structured and hierarchical, but the promise of $15 million for Route 66 alone altered the scale and expectations that many on its advisory committee were accustomed to dealing with. As a result, the committee soon found itself with an army of consultants and $15 million at its disposal, and according to Dewberry Project Manager Mike Arand, this engendered a passive and reactionary mindset among committee members; “I think in some instances [the citizen committee had] the attitude, okay we’ve hired these professionals, let’s see what they have to say. And then they reacted to it as opposed to bringing forth their own ideas and saying, we’d really like for you to consider this...So from that standpoint, they weren’t really contributors. And we originally asked them for their ideas and only got 2 -- the other 19 [of the plan’s 21 proposed projects] came from the consultants or city staff.”

The sudden influx of cash for Route 66 also brought out the territoriality endemic to local government – particularly in a city like Tulsa, which was unaccustomed to collaborating on public projects of this scale. Everyone I spoke with involved in Tulsa’s Route 66 planning process commented on the frustration of working with a few particular committee members who viewed the process as an opportunity to advance their personal or neighborhood agendas. “There were a number of people in our 13-core committee members who had agendas, and we didn’t get those agendas out on the table and resolved soon enough,” said Mike Arand when I asked him about the committee’s consensus-building process. “I thought we were gaining consensus as we went along – I’ve been at this 30-some-odd years, and I really thought we had most of them nodding their heads ‘Yes’. But when it came right down to it, their agendas came into play, and you know the first time we actually took a vote on this, it was split right down the middle, 7-6. And it stayed that way for a long time, for nine months.” Committee member and Oklahoma Route 66 Association representative Brad Nickson was blunter; “This has been one of the most frustrating things I’ve ever been involved with – the whole thing, with all the politics that’s actually going on behind the scenes. There’ve been times when I sat in a committee meeting and said, ‘What are you doing? You’re wasting our time. We’re getting this stuff taken out of our hands and then put back in at the whim of city counselors, county commissioners, the Vision Board, whoever they are.’ I guess it’s been frustrating because I don’t have a government background...[and] it’s moving so slowly. We’ve missed out on two tourism seasons, dragging our feet putting this master plan together.”

Another factor that affected the planning process was the early involvement of the City’s Economic Development Department. In Albuquerque, for example, much of the Route 66 collaboration with city government has involved the city’s preservation or land use planning departments. But in Tulsa, Julie Miner and Dennis Whitaker, affiliates of the city’s department of Urban Development, have been the city employees most directly involved in the planning process. As a result, the plan reflects the city’s

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14 Mike Arand interview.
15 Mike Arand interview.
# ROUTE 66 MASTER PLAN PROJECT LIST

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**The Vision 2025/Route 66 Master Plan Project List and budget. Source: Dewberry.**
emphasis on generating tourism and commerce, rather than exclusively preserving or redeveloping Route 66’s existing built fabric. This is not to say that the Route 66 plan does not involve preservation initiatives; the plan earmarks $800,000 of its $15 million for a historic preservation fund. Although the uses of the fund are not yet finalized, Mike Arand expressed a hope that the fund will make grants available to private property owners who would like to hire consultants to prepare National Register nomination forms. The fund may also provide low-interest, revolving loans to individuals interested in purchasing or rehabilitating an historic Route 66 structure. However, nearly $7 million of the plan’s $15 million will be spent on the construction of the new interpretive center its surrounding parks and plazas.17

The “Route 66 Xperience”

“We could have created homage to Route 66 that we all loved.
We could have followed our hearts and restored the bridge.
We could have distributed our investment up and down the route.
We could have done a million different things with our $15 million seed money.
But we did our research.
And we found we are not facing a Generation Gap. We are facing a Generation Chasm.
If we do not build a bridge, our memories of Route 66 will die with us.”

- Vision 2025, Route 66 Plan18

In keeping with the economic development and tourism goals of the city, the centerpiece of Tulsa’s Route 66 plan will be the five million dollar “Route 66 Xperience,” a three-story interpretive center on a hilltop overlooking the Arkansas River and the original alignment of Route 66 over the 11th Street Bridge. Littlefield, the market research consultants who collaborated on the plan, early on determined that any successful marketing of Route 66 to tourists and locals would require an aggressive outreach to a younger audience, and that the best way to engage this audience would be through a technologically sophisticated, Route 66-themed interpretive center. While the plan acknowledges the importance of the traditional Route 66 aficionados, it emphasizes the importance of reaching out to a new generation that has never known any highway but the interstate; “Research revealed that the perceptions and attitudes about Tulsa and Route 66 vary greatly depending on age and personal experience. Baby Boomers grew up on Route 66, seeing America from the back seat of an automobile while on family vacations. Their connection today is driving the road and reliving cherished memories. The Generation Gap after 1964, the birth year of the last Baby Boomer, however, is wide and deep. Generation Xers and those that are younger have no connection to Route 66. The challenge then is to transcend those generational differences by bringing the romance, heritage, and nostalgia of the old road into a ‘hip’ new world.”19

19 Route 66/Vision 2025 Project Implementation Plan, Executive Summary, p 1-1.

65
“We learned a lot of things about today’s traveler [through market research],” recalled Mike Arand. “What different groups, age groups, types of people, are interested in seeing, not only if they come to Tulsa but if they come to Tulsa for Route 66. And we used that information to drive the evaluation of potential development and projects on the road.” In response to the results of the market research, Arand and his planning team created a list of fifteen project criteria. Among these criteria were cost of the project vs. impact, potential to attract private investment, likelihood “to support engagement beyond the windshield”, and relevance to marketing research. By the end of the planning process, the planning team and citizen input committee had identified twenty-one projects for inclusion in the final plan. Four of these – the 11th Street/Cyrus Avery Bridge Preservation, the Cyrus Avery Centennial Plaza, Avery Park Southwest, and the Route 66 Xperience – are located next to one another, near the crossing of 11th Street and the Arkansas River. The planning committee judged all four of these projects to be highly relevant to Tulsa’s economic development goals and to be likely to attract a new generation of roadies not only to Tulsa, but to Route 66 as a national resource.

The “Route 66 Xperience” will be a three-story building of approximately 33,000 square feet on a vacant lot near downtown Tulsa overlooking the Arkansas River. According to Mike Arand, the first floor will be dedicated to an interactive interpretive center about Route 66, its development, and its relevance to American history. The use of the center’s second and third levels are to be determined, but Arand and Michael Wallis speculate that the second level could house the office of the National Route 66

20 Mike Arand interview.
21 Route 66/Vision 2025 Project Implementation Plan, p 6-5.
Federation, an organization that purports to represent the combined interests of all eight of the Route’s State Associations. The City of Tulsa has also expressed an interest in placing some of its offices in the new facility. The idea of creating a “destination restaurant” on the third level has met with some skepticism, since the building will have been constructed with public funds and some committee members did not like the idea of a private enterprise capitalizing on a public project. Regardless, the building will serve, primarily, as an interpretive center designed to surprise and attract a younger audience through the creative use of interactive technology. The project is still in its early phases, but images within the planning document show large video screens, interactive kiosks, full-scale Cadillac replicas placed in a simulated road environment, and other visually stimulating exhibits. Clearly, the planning committee sees technology as the means for attracting and exciting a new set of Route 66 enthusiasts.

As for the decision to spend nearly half of the city’s Route 66 budget on a new building, several people I spoke with believed that this was the only way to bring in not only younger, but older Route 66 tourists as well. Michael Wallis, the unofficial spokesman of Route 66 and a planning committee member, supports the proposal for an interpretive center because of his conviction that a youth-oriented, interactive museum could conceivably entice visitors off of the Interstate and into the center of Tulsa. It is widely believed among Route 66 aficionados that most Route 66 tourists drive the original alignment in rural areas and then jump onto the Interstate to bypass major metropolitan areas. “In so many places, especially cities, people tend to bypass the cities when they’re traveling Route 66 because it’s a hassle to try to follow these alignments and so forth. So here are Mr. And Mrs. America out there with two and a half kids and a basset hound in your Volvo, and you want to take in episodes of Route 66, big spoonfuls. And you use the five Interstates paralleling 66 to your advantage...[So] ultimately we decided that [Tulsa] needed a big attraction to lure people in, and that’s how we got this idea of the Route 66 Xperience, or this big national interpretive center.”

The committee’s decision to focus its energy on the Xperience rather than the Cyrus Avery Bridge may indicate that the future of Route 66 tourism lies in interpretation, rather than preservation, of the built environment. Initially, according to Julie Miner, the committee planned to rehabilitate the 11th Street/Cyrus Avery Bridge, an historic structure built in 1918 by the Missouri Valley Bridge & Iron Company for $180,000. “I don’t know what we had expected – I think we expected to fix up the bridge, and to us that was a big deal, spend ten million dollars and make the bridge beautiful. And it was actually the marketing people that came up with the idea, in their research, to build this building on the river and to make it high-tech,” recalled city economist Julie Miner. “I was just as surprised at [the idea of the interpretive center] as anybody else. I would have been

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22 From what I can tell, Wallis and California’s Jim Conkle are both equally as “in demand” as speakers and representatives of the Route 66 renaissance. However, Wallis is the author of the most widely-published Route 66 coffee table book, Route 66: The Mother Road, and will voice one of the characters in the upcoming Pixar movie Cars, which takes place in a bypassed town along Route 66. Wallis, unlike Jim Conkle, has managed to turn a profit on his Route 66 passion and has written several other coffee-table books about historic roadways.


24 Route 66/Vision 2025 Project Implementation Plan, p 5-1. The bridge was renamed for Cyrus Avery in 2004 to recognize Avery’s advocacy role in the bridge’s construction and the subsequent routing of Route 66 through downtown Tulsa.
happy with fixing up the bridge or saving some old buildings; that would have suited me...But now it really makes sense, because if we do this, and if the National [Route 66] Federation does put their headquarters there, then that would help the whole state. It can be the place that you call and say, ‘We want to do a Route 66 trip’. And we used to be bypassed, and now we’ll have the headquarters. How cool would that be?”

Many Route 66 advocates had hoped for the full-scale restoration of the Bridge into a pedestrian thoroughfare that would be lined with period lampposts and would serve as a venue for street fairs and other festivals. However, rehabilitation of the bridge up to code would have cost the city the entire Route 66 budget, according to Mike Arand. “Well, the Bridge is considered the most significant icon of Route 66 remaining in Tulsa, so there has always been a desire to restore it to its prominence. Unfortunately, to do it correctly has a pricetag of approximately fifteen million dollars, and it would remove such a significant amount of the bridge, which would then have to be reconstructed as a replica, that it loses some of its historical significance...The idea was that we could restore it, allow people to get out on it, and use it as a pedestrian walkway from one side to the other, but the fact of the matter is that it was originally closed to traffic in 1980, and...the last 25 years of non-use has not been good to it.”

25 Julie Miner interview.
26 Mike Arand interview. Although the bridge would have been reserved for pedestrian use, code requires that it be able to accommodate vehicular traffic as well in case of emergency. This added an additional cost to the proposed rehabilitation.
Instead, the Route 66 plan calls for the partial rehabilitation of the Bridge – just enough to keep it from crumbling into the Arkansas River. Eventually, this solution was acceptable to the Route 66 committee, perhaps because members like Brad Nickson understood that the bridge’s aging was a part of Route 66’s natural legacy; “Basically, you would have to have torn it down to below the arches, and then rebuild it. And at that point you have a new bridge; you don’t have anything that’s historically significant other than a bridge in that position. So I think we’re going to do some things to shore up some of the underwater piers to make it more stable – it’s not in any danger of falling down, but we can insure that it’ll be around several more decades. Then we’ll just use benign neglect – to me that’s kind of a romantic thing, watching it just deteriorate over the years.”

Perhaps if the price of full restoration had been lower, Nickson would not have been as sanguine about the romance of deterioration. However, the Cyrus Avery Bridge is hardly an ideal site for pedestrian activity or public functions. The bridge was replaced in 1980 by a modern interstate bridge that blocks the view to the west along the river and has made the Cyrus Avery Bridge obsolete as a means of vehicular transportation. “The intent was always to allow people to get out on the bridge and walk across the river, that type of activity,” recalls Mike Arand. “But if you’ve been there, you know that there’s an elevated highway on one side and a railroad bridge on the other side of the highway…so its out in the middle of all these overpasses and bridges, and its probably not a good location for any type of a festival. So under this initial program, we are only going to spend somewhere between five and six-hundred-thousand dollars to remove the vegetation, make each end look a lot better aesthetically, put up period lighting, that kind of activity. But we’re not going to do any of the structural repairs that are the big ticket items.” Instead, the plan will commemorate Cyrus Avery with a bronze statue called “East Meets West.” In the proposed statue, Avery stands next to a 1920’s automobile and greets a man in a wagon leading a team of horses; the statue is meant to symbolize Avery’s role as a progressive proponent of the automobile and the roadways that served it. Surprisingly, this million-dollar cast bronze statue does not seem to have been a point of contention for the planning committee, perhaps because it represents the plan’s only overt homage to the “Father of Route 66.” This statue will be the focal point of Cyrus Avery Centennial Plaza.

The Other $8 Million

Although the “Route 66 Xperience” and its associated projects will consume half of the overall planning budget for the corridor, the plan also proposes streetscaping, neon-sign preservation, and small-business incentives. The overall streetscaping budget totals $2.1 million dollars, and addresses all twenty-six miles of Route 66 in Tulsa. Not to be outdone by Albuquerque or Rancho Cucamonga, Tulsa also proposes the construction of two Route 66 gateways at the eastern and western edges of town, at the cost of

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27 Brad Nickson interview.
28 Mike Arand interview.
Tulsa's proposed gateways, above; a proposed street intersection, below. Source: Dewberry.

"East Meets West", the proposed million-dollar statue for Cyrus Avery Plaza. Source: Dennis Whitaker.
Perhaps the largest non-Xperience related expenditure is the enhancement of six arterial street/11th Street intersections for $1.2 million each. The plan includes design guidelines for the implementation of these enhancements, which specify the placement of “Route 66” logos in sidewalks and crosswalks of the new intersections. Like Rancho Cucamonga, Route 66 streetscaping enhancements also include bus shelters and planters with the famous Route 66 shield logo.

Lastly, the plan recommends a few, long-term strategies for the maintenance and further enhancement of Tulsa's corridor. One of the most interesting recommendations is for the creation of a “Route 66 Authority”, an organization similar to a Business Improvement District with the power to levy taxes on its members. “The idea behind the [Route 66] Authority is primarily promotion and marketing. But they could also use it...for capital improvements if they wanted to,” said Mike Arand. “But [the planners] didn’t want to make it particularly onerous on [business owners] because they’re already paying property taxes, so we recommended that the money collected be used to hire staff and to underwrite the annual communications and promotions budget for the corridor.” This is, perhaps, one of the plan’s most interesting proposals, and it would make Tulsa the only one of the four case study cities to institute a tax-levying authority over Route 66 businesses. Certainly, the activism of the 11th Street Business League proved that Route 66 businesses can work together toward a common goal; an Authority would partner these businesses with the institutional leverage of the City of Tulsa and could result in a powerful force for promotion and development of the corridor’s commercial interests.

**Tulsa Conclusions**

The story of the Route 66 Renaissance in Tulsa is, on the surface, much more straightforward than the story in Albuquerque or even Flagstaff, where larger contexts of preservation and activism have had a greater impact on Route 66’s development. In Tulsa, engagement began at the grassroots level but was quickly co-opted by the city’s Vision 2025 planning initiative. While this will inject $15 million into the Route 66 effort – more than all other cities I’ve studied, combined – it has reframed the Route 66 Renaissance as a government action guided by city hall representatives and private consultants. Certainly, any effective revitalization of Route 66 will involve both government participation and government funding; for example, Albuquerque’s efforts illustrate an effective balance between grassroots and government activism. Outside experts, too, have their place in Route 66 revitalization, as illustrated by Albuquerque’s recruitment of a private planning firm to help implement a transit corridor along Central Avenue. But Tulsa, simply because of the scale of its budget and efforts, has bypassed the fine-grained community-based planning that has made Albuquerque’s efforts so successful.

Even the members of Tulsa’s Route 66 Citizen Advisory Committee seemed shocked into silence by the scale of the city’s budget. Grassroots advocates like Brad Nickson are accustomed to dealing with budgets in the thousands, not the millions, and this rapid upgrading seems initially to have stunned these citizen advocates into silence while they adjusted to a new scale of thinking. As Nickson said in our interview, “Any-

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thing that happens along the route, I’m happy,” as if he was afraid to look too closely at
the route’s good fortune. But now, after more than a year of committee work, citizens
like Nickson may be more prepared to join the debate about Route 66, and the planning
process should take advantage of the committee’s year of learning. As is often the case,
Tulsa’s planning committee hasn’t had any time for formalized reflection on the planning
process; the emotions and frustrations I saw in my interviews suggest that this would be a
valuable step as the plan moves closer to adoption.

And although the opportunity for the planning process to foster grassroots creativ-
ity may have been lost, the plan itself can make up for this loss by allocating funding
specifically for citizen-based planning efforts along the corridor. Amazingly, none of the
city’s Route 66 money has been allocated to foster grassroots efforts; the closest the city
has come to this is with its “Pearl” fund, which allots $700,000 for the public purchase
of façade easements and to provide incentives for individual building preservation. But
this is a far cry from providing financial support to the organizations that have kept the
memory of Route 66 alive for the last thirty years and will most likely be responsible
for corridor’s continued development, once the city has moved on to other urban issues.
Much of the work of groups like the Oklahoma Route 66 Association has focused on
outreach and boosterism; Tulsa should take advantage of this group’s existing expertise
in this field by partnering with the Association to enhance its communications efforts.
The city should also consider other ways to encourage small-scale Route 66 development
through a broader based grant-making program. In other words, financial support need
not be through direct grants to organizations alone; the National Park Service’s Route 66
Corridor Program’s matching grants have enabled individuals and organizations to pursue
National Register listing, oral history gathering, structural evaluations, and a variety
of other strategies that gradually enhance Route 66. Tulsa should consider adopting a
similar program.

30 Brad Nickson interview.
Rancho Cucamonga, California:
The Forgotten Past
In 1986, the city of Rancho Cucamonga, in San Bernardino County, CA, ratified the Foothill Boulevard Specific Plan – an economic development and transportation plan that would bring order to the chaos of strip mall development that threatened to clog the young suburb’s main artery. Foothill Boulevard had once been the last rural stretch of Route 66 for travelers on their way to Los Angeles. But by the time the city began planning for this corridor in 1986, Foothill Boulevard had lost most traces of its agricultural heritage and had been developed in patches with strip centers to serve the area’s growing population. This development had happened without much consistency, regulation, or thought to traffic management; old Route 66 had no median strip or turn lanes, and developers were placing strip-center entrances and exits at such frequent intervals along the road that traffic was hurting local businesses. City officials also worried that commercial development was outpacing residential development and that the city had failed to regulate development appropriately. Nancy Fong, a 20-year veteran of Rancho Cucamonga’s Planning Department, remembers the impetus for the 1986 plan; “We were concerned that there was a mismatch of development, that [projects] were not coordinated and not integrated, and that they did not represent the image of Rancho Cucamonga, which is a city with a plan, with a vision.”

The 1986 Foothill Boulevard Specific Plan addressed these economic development concerns as well as the city’s concerns with the aesthetic and functional aspects of new commercial development along the road. Through design guidelines, the plan shaped the construction of medians and strip-center entrances so that shoppers would continue to flock to Foothill as the city’s primary commercial corridor. Between 1986 and 2000, Rancho Cucamonga implemented this plan in increments as the suburb continued to grow. Bob Klekner, the lead consultant for the city’s 2002 Visual Improvement Plan, recalls that the widening of Foothill Boulevard led to the loss of many of the city’s historic homes, most of which were Craftsman-style bungalows that had been converted to commercial or office use. Although most of these buildings had been demolished, in the late 1990s the city began to realize that Foothill Boulevard’s Route 66 history represented an underutilized economic development tool. By then, the road had been widened to its current size (two lanes heading each direction, with a median and turn lane in the middle), and city government’s concerns about auto congestion were being eclipsed by the desire to attract new businesses and improve the city’s tax base.

Nancy Fong along with other Rancho Cucamonga city employees began discussing the possibility of using Route 66 as a “branding” tool for Rancho Cucamonga. Nancy recalls that the annual “Route 66 Rendezvous,” a vintage car rally in nearby San Bernardino, prompted the initial proposal for renaming Foothill Boulevard “Route 66 Boulevard,” since that neighboring city had a history of successfully associating itself with the Rally and other profitable Route 66 events. “So we said, well why not us?” she remembers. “Why can’t we capture that Route 66 theme? We may not have the same type of activity as San Bernardino, but we can have something different, something that is representative of Rancho Cucamonga.” This conviction eventually resulted in the creation of the Foothill Boulevard/Historic Route 66 Visual Improvement Plan, a docu-

1 Nancy Fong interview, Diamond Bar City Hall, January 18, 2006.
2 Nancy Fong interview.
By January 2006, the Route 66 Visual Improvement Plan was in the midst of implementation; about half of Foothill Boulevard has been streetscaped using the plan’s palette of Route 66-themed iconography. This part of Foothill, on the eastern end of town, is also the most recently developed part of the road; a new, open-air, pedestrian-oriented mall, the “Victoria Gardens Lifestyle Center”, was completed here at the intersection of Foothill and Interstate 15 in 2004. Because this is the first part of Foothill to experience large-scale redevelopment since the adoption of the Visual Improvement Plan, it is also the first section to see a full-scale implementation of the plan’s design guidelines (financed by a mandatory cash outlay from the mall developer). But in an interesting confluence of marketing and design trends, the look of the new mall is fairly consistent with the iconographic, nostalgic feel of the city-mandated streetscaping. “Streetwalls” within Victoria Gardens are decorated with faux painted advertising murals, and old neon signs for non-existent shoe repair and malt shops have been salvaged and mounted along corridor walls to create the feel of a 1950’s main street, complete with streetlamps, benches, and even street signs for the pedestrian corridors (see picture). So, for the developer of Victoria Gardens and the city of Rancho Cucamonga, the required Route-66 streetscaping along Foothill presented an opportunity to reinforce the project’s design and marketing theme, and the developer implemented the Foothill streetscaping to the fullest extent possible. As a result, citizens of Rancho Cucamonga and the rest of the Inland Empire approaching Victoria Gardens by car from Foothill Boulevard can now experience an integrated simulacrum of American urbanism in both the private and the public realm.
The Long Lost History of Rancho Cucamonga

Unlike other Route 66 towns that are now proudly claiming this heritage, Rancho Cucamonga has very few structures and signs, and little original roadbed left from the heyday of Route 66. The area was mostly undeveloped until the 1960s, but like the rest of southern California, it has a unique agricultural heritage that has almost completely disappeared over the last few decades. It is this history that Michael Taylor, the coordinator of the National Park Service’s Route 66 Corridor Program, would like to see celebrated. During the dustbowl years of the 1920s and 30s, when Route 66 was first recognized as a trans-American highway, “Okies” and other impoverished westerners dreamed of California as a promised land where they could secure a regular job in the citrus groves and earn a steady income in a beautiful, temperate, and affordable community. This was a fiction for most poor farmers, who were turned away at the California border after what was often months of arduous travel; this story is memorialized in *The Grapes of Wrath*, which chronicles one family’s experience along Route 66 during this era in American history.

The area’s agricultural history began when California was still under Mexican occupation. In the 1830s, 13,000 acres of the land that is now Rancho Cucamonga was owned by one man, Tubercio Tapio, who ran a successful vineyard and winery in the area. Remnants of this winery are part of the present-day Thomas Winery building, an adaptive-reuse property that serves as a shopping center and is listed on the California Historical Landmarks list. Tapio’s vineyard land was eventually sold to John Rains and his wife and renamed Rancho Cucamonga, after the Kucamongan Native Americans who originally settled the area. Throughout the 19th century, Rancho Cucamonga was colonized by a variety of populations, including the Americans, who invaded California in 1846 and declared it a state in 1850. Like the settlers before them, the colonists who arrived after statehood struggled with the challenge of irrigating the arid chaparral land, but agriculture remained the area’s primary industry until late in the 20th century. Until the automobile came to prominence, settlers, adventurers, and prospectors found their way to Rancho and the rest of the “Inland Empire” via a slew of famous railroad lines and trails including the Santa Fe Trail, the Camino Real, the Butterfield Stagecoach route, The Union Pacific Railroad, and the Pacific Electric Railway. The first of these, the Santa Fe Trail, was later paved to become the city’s Route 66 alignment.

Unlike Albuquerque and many other Route 66 cities, Rancho Cucamonga remained a small, agricultural town until the 1960s when suburban growth from the Los Angeles Metro Area began to spill over into San Bernardino County, which lies 40 miles east of downtown Los Angeles. Since the 1970s, Rancho has experienced steady population growth as a residential community on the former site of the area’s first successful vineyard. But as late as 1980, Rancho was known among Route 66 travelers mainly as a stretch of agricultural road connecting San Bernardino to Los Angeles. “It was a real country place when I first started; that three-bay gas station was the only thing in town,” recalls Quinta Scott of her first photographic trip to Rancho Cucamonga in 1979. The

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city of Rancho Cucamonga was not incorporated until 1977, at which time the population was 44,600.\textsuperscript{4} At that time, San Bernardino County’s total population was only 746,200, 41\% of whom lived in unincorporated areas. Today, the county population is nearly 2 million, 15\% of whom live in unincorporated areas; 137,000, or about 6\%, live in the city of Rancho Cucamonga.\textsuperscript{5} As a result of its sudden suburban growth and the recentness of its agricultural past, Rancho has far fewer artifacts from the Route 66 heyday than other cities that have chosen to reclaim and feature this heritage.

\textit{The Visual Improvement Plan}

Nancy Fong (and the City of Rancho Cucamonga) recognized that Foothill Boulevard’s Route 66 history was a dormant asset several years after local Mother Road aficionados attempted to put Rancho on the map for Route 66 travelers. In 1991, local roadies founded the “Route 66 Visitors’ Center and Museum” in a storefront along Foothill Boulevard. The Visitors’ Center also sold “Highway 66” neon signs to businesses along Foothill that wanted to advertise their allegiance to the Mother Road and distributed maps of Foothill showing local, Route 66-related businesses. The founding of the visitors’ center reflected a swell of interest in Route 66 in the whole of the Inland Empire. This interest culminated in the “Route 66 Rendezvous,” an annual hot rod gathering first organized by the San Bernardino Convention and Visitor’s Bureau in 1990.\textsuperscript{6} Although the Rancho Cucamonga Route 66 Visitors’ Center closed in 1997, San Bernardino’s “Route 66 Rendezvous” continued to grow as an annual celebration, and the City of Rancho Cucamonga took notice. At the same time, Rancho was looking for a way to sharpen the appearance of its main street in the hopes of attracting new businesses. “We wanted to unify the corridor by the streetscape, hardscape, the median islands,” recalls Nancy Fong. “So with that in mind, also with our city redevelopment agency [participating], this was one of the ways to foster economic development...this was just a small part of that economic strategy, looking at Route 66, to brand the city.”\textsuperscript{7}

Rancho Cucamonga hired Urban Design Studio (UDS) to present a preliminary proposal for the new streetscaping, which would be implemented partly with city funds and partly through contributions from developers as they redeveloped parcels along Foothill. Bob Klekner, the lead on the UDS Project, was impressed with the city’s whole-hearted embrace of its new image; “We’ve worked with other communities along Foothill Boulevard in the San Gabriel Valley, where the Boulevard is the old Route 66 as well, but no “city” [sic] has embraced the historic value quite as much as Rancho did.”\textsuperscript{8}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[6] “The Rendezvous” has become Route 66’s most prominent festival; it attracts 500,000 visitors to San Bernardino every September for a weekend-long celebration of “custom and classic vehicles and enough food and automotive vendors to satisfy even the most demanding tastes.” See http://www.route-66.org/about_us.htm.
\item[7] Nancy Fong interview.
\item[8] Bob Klekner, written communication, March 16, 2006.
\end{footnotes}
asked UDS to create a palette of Route 66 icons, as well as an array of street furniture, signage, and wayfinding choices, to present at a public workshop in July of 2000.⁹

“We didn’t have enough images of classic Route 66 communities or historic icons to put in there, so if you look at it, it’s kind of a hodge podge, but we were trying to just get a feel from people about what they liked and didn’t like. That was one of the first things we did, so we could just get people involved,” recalls Bob Klekner of this first community meeting. UDS presented these design options to Rancho Cucamonga’s Chamber of Commerce in September, 2000, and later to the broader public through an online survey on the city’s website. The survey presented the viewer with a variety of options for benches, trash receptacles, streetlights, banners, and paving, and asked the viewer to rate the options from 1 to 5. The survey then attempted to gauge the public’s interest in Route 66’s more eccentric built fabric, in a section of the survey called “Public Amenities”; here, viewers could rate from 1 to 5 images ranging from more traditional public fountains and clocks to life-size plaster dinosaurs, wigwams, and 12-foot high twin arrows jutting out of the desert (a reference to Route 66’s iconic “Twin Arrows,” two giant arrows along Route 66 outside of Flagstaff in the abandoned town of Twin Arrows, AZ).


A page from UDS’s online survey, asking participants to rate the dinosaur as a “public amenity” on a scale from 1 to 5. Source: UDS.
Lastly, the survey pitched a series of “ideas” for the thematic interpretation of Route 66, which Rancho Cucamonga could then incorporate throughout its stretch of Foothill Boulevard. Ideas included transforming Foothill into a symbolic version of the Route 66 corridor, in which each new intersection would represent one of the route’s eight states, or interpreting Foothill as an “homage to the automobile age,” highlighted by the burial of eight to ten cars headfirst along the roadside in reference to Route 66’s famous Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, TX.\(^\text{10}\) While UDS indicated on the survey that a re-creation of the Cadillac Ranch was improbable, the firm also suggested another idea that was even less likely to be implemented – the installation of neon signs along Foothill marking the boundaries of different districts within Rancho Cucamonga. At the time, new neon signage was against city ordinances, despite the fact that the Route 66 Visitors’ Center and Museum had been churning out neon signs for Foothill businesses throughout the 1990s. “There were ordinances in that city that didn’t allow certain signs, including bright new neon,” remembers Bob Klekner. “And our point was, that’s part of Route 66 – and now they have allowed neon signs, I hope in part because of our plan.”\(^\text{11}\)

Urban Design Studio’s final plan forsakes grander thematic interventions for simple streetscaping combined with familiar Route 66 iconography, like the black-and-white “Highway 66” signs mounted on bus kiosks and replicas of 1930s gas pumps grouped in intervals along the sidewalk as barriers to automobile traffic. Both of these interventions integrate thematic designs with functional streetscaping elements; along with benches, trash receptacles, and streetlights, they seem less dramatic than many of the ideas proposed in UDS’s original survey, perhaps because they serve a useful purpose and likely would have found their way onto Foothill Boulevard with or without the presence of Route 66. However, the plan’s most ambitious intervention, and the least functional from a pedestrian point of view, is the proposal of two entry gateways that will span the width of Foothill Boulevard at the eastern and western ends of the city. The plan states that the gateways “should announce not only the entrance into the City, but also acquaint the motorist with the fact that they are on Historic Route 66 and celebrate its heritage.”\(^\text{12}\)

10 Route 66/Foothill Boulevard Historic Route 66 Visual Improvement Plan Survey.
colors, but still, the arch is an unmissable intervention that attempts to both define and brand the city. Once built, these gateways will announce that drivers are not only traveling along Route 66, but that they have entered a municipality that has chosen to recognize and invest in this heritage.

Ironically, motorists driving into Rancho Cucamonga are not “entering” Route 66; the Route’s historic path includes all of Foothill Boulevard, a road that runs the width of San Bernardino County. Drivers are only entering a zone in which this history is actively addressed; this is true in each Route 66 city that chooses to highlight its heritage through large-scale interventions like gateways. However, in Rancho Cucamonga heritage is highlighted exclusively through the re-creation of a remembered past, not through preservation or conservation of anything that once characterized this portion of Route 66 during its period of significance. Rancho’s Foothill Boulevard Plan honors nostalgia, not history, and perhaps this is a byproduct of the city’s desire to employ its history as a branding device and economic generator, rather than as a tribute to the region’s past. The plan itself makes this almost explicit in its introduction, in which it describes Foothill Boulevard as “an invaluable piece of Americana known as Route 66”. The plan’s labeling of Route 66 as “Americana” instead of “America” or even “American history” reveals an unbridgable distance between the town’s conception of this historic road and the reality of the history that happened along it. The value that the plan recognizes is that of a well-known national and international label, not the value inherent in the thoughtful interpretation and exposition of human history. On the other hand, in Rancho Cucamonga, the true history of Route 66 is a difficult one to interpret – a history of agricultural labor and settlement, when migrant workers fled the oppressive poverty of the dustbowl states for the promised land of California.

Although Urban Design Studio’s plan does not engage with this history, the city’s new Foothill Boulevard Mural Program may lead to a more thoughtful interpretation of the area’s Route 66 history. The program encourages local citizens, organizations,
Three finished versions of UDS's streetscaping plan near Victoria Gardens Center. Source: Author.
and businesses to engage in the city's streetscaping process by soliciting mural designs and reimbursing up to 50% or $7,500 of the total mural cost. The program’s brochure suggests that mural proposals “reflect the growth and development of the city of Rancho Cucamonga” and forbids the use of either advertising or political sentiments. Other than the city’s online survey about streetscaping initiatives, this program is Rancho Cucamonga’s sole attempt at engaging the community in the Route 66 corridor development process. However, given the city’s dearth of historic Route 66 fabric, this is a sensible program that will help broaden the city’s interpretation of the corridor.

The rural landscape of the past could not be further from the landscape of the present, given the city’s current incarnation as the “Inland Empire’s Premier City” the home of the region’s most successful, new, open-air “Lifestyle Center”. In this light, it is no wonder that Rancho has chosen to celebrate its good fortune in having a river of “Americana” flowing through its main commercial artery, instead of struggling to make sense of an agricultural history long displaced by suburban development. And it may be true, as roadie and activist Jim Conkle argues, that any attention for Route 66 is good attention; what Nancy Fong sees as a “branding” opportunity can also serve as a reminder of what most San Bernardinians have forgotten, or have never known in the first place – that what is now an ordinary road was once one of America’s most well-traveled and revered cross-country thoroughfares.

Rancho Cucamonga Conclusions

In Rancho Cucamonga, the lack of a critical mass of built fabric led to a top-down Route 66 planning approach that emphasized branding over preservation. This was perhaps the only way that the Route 66 corridor would receive any attention; the city’s agricultural landscape has been long replaced by commercial and residential development, and all that is left of agricultural Route 66 are a few scattered properties and the narratives of the city’s past. However, agriculture and the promise of steady work in California’s groves and orchards played an integral part in Route 66 history. These narratives – *The Grapes of Wrath*, the songs of Woody Guthrie, and other cultural products – chronicle the hardships of traveling Route 66 during the Great Depression, and Rancho Cucamonga was one of many towns that symbolized freedom from poverty for thousands of Dust Bowl refugees. In the absence of built fabric, this is the history that Rancho Cucamonga should be fighting to preserve. It is a difficult history and a challenging one, but it is rich with meaning and interpretive possibility. Rancho has implemented only one program that opens the door for a wider and more meaningful interpretation of its Route 66 corridor – the mural program along Foothill Boulevard. The program is new and has yet to result in any new murals, but with any luck, this outreach will result in thoughtful and historically relevant interpretations that will deepen the city’s representation of Route 66 to both travelers and citizens.

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15 Rancho Cucamonga City Hall website. See http://www.ci.rancho-cucamonga.ca.us/.
Because of the city’s lack of historic Route 66 fabric, programs facilitating public art and interpretive projects, like the mural program, are the best way for Rancho Cucamonga to develop its corridor in a meaningful way, beyond the market-based notion of “branding.” Because Rancho Cucamonga is striving to present itself as a forward-thinking “city with a vision,” the city could take advantage of this interpretive opportunity by supporting Route 66-related public art with a technological edge. For example, I have proposed to several roadies a project for Route 66 that involves the “podcasting” of location-based oral histories. This project integrates narrative with an easily-accessed, web-based library, so that visitors could listen to stories as they drive or walk along portions of Route 66. Similar projects have been proposed for Tulsa and Albuquerque, but for Rancho Cucamonga, a project like this would have even more resonance since the visible signs of its agricultural history have been lost to development. A project like this need not restrict itself to oral history and other forms of audio, since so many of Route 66’s cultural products are visual. When I mentioned this project to Professor Manuel Castells, he suggested creating a hyperlinked corridor, where users could access a thread of images, stories, music, and video with an historic connection to the location. This type of project would lend itself well to Rancho Cucamonga, since so many cultural products address California’s agricultural and Route 66’s role as the highway to this promised land.

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16 Nancy Fong interview.
Flagstaff, Arizona: The Future
According to Michael Wallis, the self-declared “father” of the Route 66 Renaissance, Flagstaff might be the next, up-and-coming Route 66 city. Much of the built fabric from the 1920s through the 1960s survives, and the town has already developed a strong tourism-oriented economy because of its proximity to Grand Canyon. Of all the Route 66 cities I have studied, Flagstaff draws the most tourists and generates the most income from these visits. According to the City of Flagstaff, 5 million tourists annually come to Flagstaff as the gateway city to Grand Canyon, the Petrified Forest and Painted Desert National Parks, the Navajo and Hopi Native American reservations, the Lowell Observatory, and dozens of other lesser-known national parks and monuments. Altogether, non-city residents, including both tourists and second-home owners, provide around 50% of the town’s sales tax revenue.

The Flagstaffers I spoke to believe that few of these tourists come to Flagstaff to see Route 66, and that those who do come to see the route are often disappointed by the city’s lack of typical Route 66 attractions like neon signage, themed diners, and gift shops. “People come into the train station here and ask, Where’s Route 66? And they’re right here standing on it,” remarks Sharlene Fouser, supervisor of the Flagstaff Visitor’s Center. For tourists, Flagstaff’s famous natural attractions eclipse the cultural attraction of Route 66, despite the city’s recent revitalization of its historic downtown core and the city’s large inventory of historic motels.

Route 66 runs straight through the heart of revitalized downtown Flagstaff, which features late 19th century frontier architecture as well as new additions like structured parking and sidewalk cafes that attract pedestrians and give Flagstaff’s streets a healthy volume of foot traffic, particularly during the summer tourism season. Downtown Flagstaff is what local geographer Thomas Paradis calls a “Tourism Business District”: a small-town main street where tourist-oriented businesses identify themselves with a theme that reflects the town’s history, including its architecture, industry, or natural resources.

In an article focusing on the themes adopted by downtown Flagstaff businesses, Paradis found that in 2000, none of downtown’s businesses identified themselves primarily with Route 66. Instead, the most prominent themes were “mountains” and “the environment”, followed closely by “ethnic/cultural.” This may be due, in part, to the fact that Route 66 itself runs along the southern edge of the downtown grid, and that the businesses most associated with Route 66, such as motels and diners, are scattered along the ten miles of the route to the east and west of the Flagstaff metro area. However, it is surprising that a town like Flagstaff with such a prominent tourist economy has not capitalized more on its Route 66 heritage.

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1 Conversation with Flagstaff Planning Department, including Karl Eberhard, Michael Kerski, John Saltonstall, and Kimberly Sharp, Flagstaff City Hall, January 10, 2006.
Route 66 in Arizona – the Statewide Context

Of all the Route 66 states, Arizona boasts the most beautiful natural and built fabric along 66, and it was certainly my favorite part of the corridor when I drove it last summer. The sheer expanse of the desert reminds the traveler of the loneliness and danger associated with early automobile travel, when a drive across the desert was a perilous proposition and travelers could drive for days without seeing any signs of human life. When you do come across a sign of human civilization on Route 66 in Arizona, it is often a civilization with which you may be less familiar – Arizona is where the first known Americans lived, people now called the Pueblo Americans (or Anasazi) and, along with New Mexico, where Route 66 winds through several Native American reservations. Arizona’s Route 66 is not without sentimental, 20th century artifacts as well; the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook and the “Standing on a Corner Park” in Winslow, Arizona, made famous by The Eagles’ song “Take It Easy,” are but two examples.\(^5\)

The state of Arizona and the Arizona Route 66 Association have worked steadily over the last decade to revitalize the state’s Route 66 corridor, and the results are evident in both the towns and the small businesses that have reclaimed their Route 66 heritage. The public sector has also aided in the state’s Route 66 revitalization through grant programs for transit-related development, historic preservation, and brownfield redevelopment. These partnerships between private citizens and the public sector have facilitated some of Route 66’s most interesting redevelopment projects. For example, in June of 2004, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Arizona Department of Envi-

\(^5\) An informal source told me that the words were originally “I’m standing on a corner in Flagstaff, Arizona, and there’s such a fine sight to see/ it’s a girl, my lord, in a flatbed Ford, slowing down to take a look at me”, but that The Eagles changed the town to “Winslow” because it sounded more lyrical.
Environmental Quality (DEQ) instituted a grant program for the cleanup of abandoned underground gas storage tanks along Route 66 in order to encourage redevelopment of historic gas station properties. According to the program’s press release, at least 100 historic gas station properties along Arizona 66 contain leaking underground storage tanks; the cost to repair or replace these tanks is often enough to deter a preservation organization or a developer from rehabilitating or redeveloping the property. The DEQ recognized this obstacle and instituted the program “[t]o explore ways to help local communities create more businesses where people can ‘get their kicks’ on Route 66,” according to the program’s press release. In another example, the revamped La Posada hotel, a former Harvey House along the railroad line and Route 66 in Winslow, AZ, was purchased for $11 million by a California architect with partial funding from a Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Arizona Department of Transportation. The rehabilitation of La Posada into a boutique hotel has taken seven years and has been financed in part through Transportation Enhancement Grants and also through Arizona State Parks’ Heritage Fund Grant Awards; the hotel now regularly serves as the state’s most popular site for Route 66-related conferences and events.

In addition to an active public and private sector, Arizona has the country’s oldest Historic Route 66 State Association, founded in 1987, as well as the longest intact piece of original Route 66 paving, 137 miles between Seligman and Kingman. The state is also home to the last Route 66 town in all of America (Williams, in 1984) to be bypassed by an interstate highway. On Route 66’s final day in 1984, roadies, aficionados, and other friends of the Mother Road gathered in Williams to hear Bobby Troup, composer of Route 66’s famous anthem, perform the tune live on a piano rolled out onto the asphalt for the occasion:

If you ever plan to motor west,
Travel my way, take the highway that’s the best,
Get your kicks on Route 66.
It winds from Chicago to L.A.
More than 2,000 miles all the way.
Get your kicks on Route 66.
You go through St. Louie, Joplin, Missouri,
And Oklahoma City looks mighty pretty.
You’ll see Amarillo, Gallup, New Mexico,
Flagstaff, Arizona, don’t forget Winona,
Kingman, Barstow, San Bernardino.
Won’t you get hip to this timely tip,
When you make that California trip?
Get your kicks on Route 66.

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6 January 26, 2006, Arizona DEQ Press Release, “Route 66 project launched to redevelop abandoned gas stations, clean up underground tank sites”.
8 “(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66”, words and Music by Bobby Troup. Troup wrote the song in 1946 while driving Route 66 with is wife, and Nat King Cole’s recording made it famous later that year.
Despite this active, statewide redevelopment movement, the City of Flagstaff is only just beginning to engage with its portion of Route 66. In 2004, the city’s Convention and Visitor’s Bureau resuscitated its defunct “Route 66 Days” festival, scheduled for the week before the well-established San Bernardino Route 66 Rendezvous in order to attract roadies on their way to California. The festival was first celebrated ten years ago, according to Michael Kerski at Flagstaff City Hall, before it “kind of burned out and turned into a car event.” Then, in 2004, the Flagstaff Downtown Business Alliance revived the event as a celebration of the route itself, rather than the cars and bikes that travel it. In a local newspaper article, the Downtown Business Alliance president Debbie Kaiser argued for the September event as a way not only to extend the summer tourist season, but also to get Flagstaff on the map as a Route 66 town. “The key,” states the article, “will be finding Flagstaff’s particular niche in the Route 66 revival movement.”

The City of Flagstaff Community Development Department has also taken an interest in redeveloping Route 66. The first signs of renewed interest were exhibited in 2002, when the City Council charged the Convention and Visitors’ Bureau with creating a task force to brainstorm and research the future of tourism in Flagstaff. The task force of 50 community leaders decided that Route 66 was one of the town’s dormant assets, and the city created a Route 66 imaging program with a $10,000 startup grant. In early 2005, a planning consultant named Jim Nelson approached the City of Flagstaff and the Route 66 imaging program with a proposal for “creating and implementing an integrated tourism initiative based on Flagstaff’s Route 66 heritage.”

Nelson’s high-powered background as director of planning and development for MCA/Universal Development Company and creator of Universal’s CityWalk, a simulated “downtown” entertainment center in Los Angeles, may have alienated him from the major players in the small, civic-minded town of Flagstaff; City Hall failed to renew Nelson’s contract, and only an initial draft of his plan survives. However, even though Nelson’s plan was not embraced by City Hall, it was a starting point that drew attention to the city’s Route 66 assets such as its many intact motels and its stash of preserved neon signs currently languishing in the city’s “sign graveyard.”

More a “pep talk” than a workable plan, the Nelson report uses narrative to describe how the commercial and cultural products of a theoretical “Route 66 Historical District” would appeal to the average tourist: “It isn’t the crowd or the band that you notice the most as you move along – it’s the parade of smells that jump out at you: chili from a booth labeled ‘Hot Rod’s’; grilling hamburgers from ‘Miss Patty’s’…Like trips to fairs and carnivals of the past, you completely become part of the crowd – smiling and swaying to the music.” In its more analytical moments, the report threatens its own credibility with exaggerated estimates of the city’s Route 66-tourism potential; “If down-
Two images from the Nelson report: above, the Route 66 corridor through the city of Flagstaff, and below, a close-up of Nelson’s proposed “Route 66 Historical District and Promenade”. Source: Nelson Report, courtesy of City of Flagstaff.
town Flagstaff had a Route 66-based visitor destination that could siphon off part of the Canyon's tourist stream, the potential reward could be an additional 200 to 300 dollars direct spending per capita per day on [sic] tens of thousands of visitors. This figure is highly unlikely, given that the average Route 66-oriented motel in Flagstaff charges less than $30/night. “Jim Nelson’s report? We find that…entertaining,” says Redevelopment Manager Kimberly Sharp. “[But] something I liked about the Jim Nelson report,” she adds, “was that in downtown, we’re focusing on truly pedestrian, parking garages, just bringing out people. But Route 66 is more about cars…Route 66 will probably always be vehicle focused. And that part [of the report] I enjoyed, the drive in diners and the drive in theater.”

This touches on one of many of the complexities of the Route 66 theme – it is unabashedly automobile-oriented, but in a way that explicitly celebrates the cruising and self-expression via automobiles that epitomize mid-20th century American car-culture. This theme is distinguished from both pedestrian-oriented planning and contemporary strip-mall development, because the former eschews the car while the latter addresses it solely as a functional extension of the consumer. As it develops its Route 66 plan, Flagstaff will undoubtedly encounter this paradox and will be forced to invent a new approach to auto-oriented planning – with culture, self-expression, and meaning coexisting with the much-derided yet essential automobile.

Planner John Saltonstall remembers that the City Council’s ambivalence about the Nelson plan focused on its centralized repackaging of Route 66 in Flagstaff; “City Council has sent a variety of mixed messages with the whole Nelson report. They, at that time, said, ‘We don’t want this big thing going on, this celebration of all the neon, a collection of all the experience of Route 66 in one place.’ But now they’re saying they want some of that brought back.” The plan emphasized the creation of a “Route 66 Historic District,” in which the city would concentrate its streetscaping and business development efforts within a four-block area to create a themed attraction. The thematic and economic centralization struck the City Council as too “Disneyland,” and the plan was rejected. But, according to the city’s planners, current discussions are revisiting the notion of centralization of cultural resources, albeit with an emphasis on independent businesses and “authenticity,” a term that invariably elicits a wide range images and concepts among the preservationists and aficionados of Route 66. “I think Jim Nelson’s report provides a great place to start,” said Sharp, “but we need to actually talk to the property owners, and I think that the City of Flagstaff might have a different take on authentic preservation versus the theme park.”

In response to the City Council and the community’s continued demand for some kind of Route 66 planning, the Flagstaff Community Development Department is now working on a plan to create an historic preservation and economic development district around its Route 66 Corridor. The city is using both the Nelson report and a National Park Service motel inventory report as resources in its initial planning stages, and planners have begun meeting with private property owners to get a sense of what policies and incentives the city can implement to engage owners in the preservation process.

However, planners Karl Eberhard and Kimberly Sharp believe that the Route 66 redevel-

14 Kimberly Sharp, Flagstaff City Hall interview.
15 John Saltonstall, Flagstaff City Hall.
16 Kimberly Sharp, Flagstaff City Hall.

The development process will be long and difficult, since it will require an overhaul of the city’s preservation codes and policies before a district can be put in place.

The draft of the city’s 2006-2010 Consolidated Plan acknowledges both the difficulty and importance of this project, since like many other Route 66 towns, Flagstaff is losing its roadside architecture rapidly – particularly its motels. Flagstaff has only a brief history with the practice of historic preservation; the town did not create a Historic Preservation Commission or a Historic Preservation Ordinance until 1995, when it became a Certified Local Government. And as the city’s Urban Designer, Karl Eberhard, notes, the guidelines for historic preservation were not well thought-out when they were first laid down, which has slowed the creation of any new districts; “The current rules for creating a historic district are chaotic and barbaric and designed to prevent anyone from actually doing anything, but they look good on paper. So we’re basically working… to
revamp the heritage resource protection ordinance. And doing that will hopefully give us the tools to create a Route 66 district easily... Right now, to create the district would probably take just as long as creating a new ordinance.”

Flagstaff also suffers from the social, spatial, and economic challenges that have led to the deterioration of Route 66 businesses in other towns and cities. At present, Route 66 business owners do not have either the inclination or resources to invest in their businesses, since Route 66 tourists have yet to prove themselves a distinct or viable market in Flagstaff. Many of the businesses, particularly motels, have weathered the changes in Route 66’s fortunes by serving the transient, mentally ill, or criminal population. The City of Flagstaff recognizes this issue; “There is a challenge with the existing innkeepers and various business owners who are like, ‘This is what we’ve got, this is what you’re going to get, nothing more’,,” says Kimberly Sharp. “So we have to try to work on a collaboration about how it could grow and how it could increase their bottom line.”

“There’s a certain education for us that’s involved too,” agrees City of Flagstaff Urban Designer, Karl Eberhard. “The people that own these hotels, these hotels predate the interstate. You’ve seen it – towns like Winslow are wiped out because the interstate came through and everything died. And these hotels and restaurants and gas stations have managed to hang on in spite of the interstate, but it’s been a tough battle for them. They’ve had to adjust their clientele from interstate travelers to hourly rates. And that’s going to take some education to try to get them to market and attract the interstate travelers, or even destination travelers, as opposed to the lowest of the lowest travelers.”

Flagstaff Motels

Business owners are not the only people at whom Flagstaff will have to aim its education and outreach initiatives; visitors and residents both view the decaying motels as the scourge of the city, since they often serve as last-resort housing for the city’s indigent and mentally-ill populations. Ironically, the motels have found a viable market in this population, which has fallen through the cracks in the city’s public service infrastructure. For this population, motels are often an option that is just within their financial reach, as a single-occupancy room in an older Flagstaff motel can cost about $165/week and does not require a large, upfront outlay of cash for security or utility deposits. In addition, unlike in Albuquerque, motel rooms in Flagstaff can be paid for by county housing assistance vouchers. “Living in a motel is not the best option...[but] I’m glad we have them as an interim solution. We certainly appreciate the assistance that they’ve provided us,” said Wenda Meyer, the senior program coordinator for Coconino County Community Services.

For business owners, relying on this market is not without its hazards. Like Albuquerque, Flagstaff has suffered the loss of several historic motels in the last few years, due to the risks associated with this transient clientele. Flagstaff’s Red Rose Motel

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17 Karl Eberhard, Flagstaff City Hall.
18 Kimberly Sharp, Flagstaff City Hall.
19 Karl Eberhard, Flagstaff City Hall.
suffered $2000 worth of damages when a homeless client left a dog alone in a motel room for two days. “When you sell a room for $25 a night and you suffer $50 to $75 a night in damages, it’s hard to get ahead,” says Gil Hagmier, a general manager of the Red Rose Inn and the Royal Inn, both located along Flagstaff’s 66 corridor.\(^{21}\) Add to this the fact that the commercial value of these properties is currently around $30 to $40 per square foot as retail property, and you understand why historic motels are fighting a losing battle, according to Michael Kerski, Director of Community Investments for the City of Flagstaff.\(^{22}\)

In many cases, property owners can no longer even afford to demolish their own properties due to the expense associated with asbestos testing and removal. In April, 2005, John Connolly, the owner of the 66 restaurant Salsa Brava purchased the Paradise Hotel adjacent to his restaurant for $285,000 and spent an estimated $100,000 on asbestos testing, abatement, and demolition. “We referred to it as ‘The Parasite’...I don’t need this much space for Salsa Brava, but I was seriously sick of looking at that building,” says Connolly.\(^{23}\) Many motel owners sell to larger developers who demolish and then treat the properties as vacant lots as they wait for land prices to rise. This practice is likely to continue in Flagstaff, since the city and County have natural growth boundaries in the form of National Parks and Native American reservation land. As a result, land in Flagstaff is scarce. At the same time, the town has become a large second-home market for other Arizonians due to its crisp mountain climate and scenic beauty. The growth boundary and robust second home market are at least partially responsible for the town’s increase in housing prices, which jumped 14.4% in 2004, 6 points higher than the increase in the nearby Prescott Valley.\(^{24}\)

These economic forces only exacerbate the housing shortage for the city’s indigent population. But at least one business owner has responded with a creative solution that maintains the exterior architecture of a historic motel property while providing formalized social services to the motel’s clients. In December of 2005, Lynette and Kent Bybee purchased the Royal Inn, a Route 66 motel, and have begun conversion of the motel into supportive housing. The Bybees intend to equip the lower floor of the motel with handicap-accessible bathrooms and fixtures, and they have partnered with Flagstaff Social Service agencies to help them manage the care and selection of their tenant population. The couple is performing their rehabilitation on a limited budget, and they salvaged many of their new carpeting and fixtures from another, newer motel slated for demolition. “Our goal is to get it to be a safe place to be,” says Lynette, the former owner of a day-care center whose husband ran a successful contracting business before they purchased the Royal Inn.\(^{25}\) In order to increase the property’s income, the Bybees are working with social service agencies to pair up clients as roommates, which makes the proposition more affordable for both owners and tenants. The endeavor has not been without challenges; the couple evicted 25% of their tenants because of drug and alcohol

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\(^{21}\) Peterson, “Mission of Mercy, a Losing Battle.”

\(^{22}\) Michael Kerski, Flagstaff City Hall.


use in their first month of operation. Notwithstanding these difficulties, this form of adaptive reuse could provide a template for other Route 66 motels in communities that are willing to combine preservation with social services.

Route 66’s Future in Flagstaff

Flagstaff benefits from an active and intelligent local government, a supportive state government, and a state-wide network of Route 66 aficionados and private property owners who care deeply about the corridor’s future. Only last year, Sharlene Fouser at the Flagstaff Visitor’s Center succeeded in having Arizona’s Route 66 corridor designated as a National Scenic Byway, joining New Mexico and Illinois, the two other states where Route 66 corridors have also received this designation. Fouser hopes to start an Arizona Route 66 Byways Office in Flagstaff next year with a $25,000 seed grant from the Scenic Byways program, which will coordinate an inter-state effort to have the entire Route designated as an “All-American Road” — the sine qua non of federal historic road designations in the United States. This effort, along with other local initiatives, may position Flagstaff to become “the next big Route 66 city”, as Michael Wallis believes. However, to earn the reputation and tourism of well-regarded Route 66 cities like Albuquerque, Flagstaff will have to address some of its most daunting challenges including the preservation and adaptive reuse of motels, while creating new partnerships among social services, business organizations, private land owners, and city government.

Foremost among Flagstaff’s unexploited resources in Route 66 redevelopment is Northern Arizona University. Sean Evans at the University library has long been a Route 66 aficionado, and he serves as the University’s unofficial representative to the roadie community. Evans directed me to a study performed by NAU students addressing the challenges of motel preservation along the route, and he referred me to several professors who have studied the planning and development of the road in Arizona. He also told me about NAU’s joining with other universities along Route 66 in a new consortium of Route 66-related archives, including photographs, oral histories, and other forms of Route 66 documentation. The planners I spoke with at the City of Flagstaff had not heard of any of these initiatives, nor where they involved in the upcoming planning of “66 Days” by the city’s Visitor’s Bureau. For a town of only 60,000, Flagstaff suffers from a surprising lack of communication among individuals and organizations working on Route 66 redevelopment; to succeed with limited resources, the town should consider establishing a system of communication about Route 66 initiatives, be it a committee, task force, newsletter, or website where advocates can maintain a dialog about planning projects, events, and concerns.

26 Peterson, “Royal pain gets a makeover”.

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Flagstaff Conclusions

Of all the cities I visited, the last to engage with Route 66 is Flagstaff, Arizona, and the city has yet to formulate its planning process. If my interviews with Flagstaff City Hall are an accurate indication of the city’s intentions, Flagstaff will rely heavily on planning tools such as historic districts and preservation ordinances in guiding its Route 66 Renaissance. However, the most important thing that Flagstaff can learn from other cities is that grassroots organizations and local Route 66 advocates can be revitalization’s best assets if the city can engage them in the planning process while still supporting their work as independent organizations. It is probable that Flagstaff will not be working with a budget comparable to Tulsa’s; therefore, Flagstaff need not worry about overpowering its volunteers with its large-scale, centralized planning efforts. Instead, Flagstaff is more likely to develop as Albuquerque has, through a series of small-scale efforts by committed groups and individuals. Overall, this is likely to result in a finer-grained redevelopment effort, which will help the city achieve a degree of authenticity and resonance that Tulsa is not likely to have, despite its budget.

The city should also consider forming a motel preservation and affordable housing task force to address these two interwoven issues. If the Bybees can make a success of their historic motel adaptive reuse, then the city should consider creating incentives for other businesses who are interested in providing specialized housing using the existing motel structures. This will become increasingly important to the community’s well-being if Flagstaff’s housing prices continue to rise. As John Saltonstall noted in our interview, Flagstaff may be well on its way to becoming “a little Aspen”; average home valuations there increased 25.8% in the first quarter of 2006, compared to still sizable increases of 11.1% and 10% in 2005 and 2004, respectively. More importantly, most of these increases in valuations are occurring in low-to-mid-priced homes, which will increase property taxes for individuals and families that may not be prepared for the additional expense. While the immediate effect of these changes may not be to push more people into affordable housing, the land value for these properties will only increase, as will development pressure.

The city could achieve two positive results if it partnered adaptive reuse of historic motel properties with provision of affordable condos and rental housing. Although the small size and poor condition of many motel units would make this a difficult challenge, individuals have already begun to implement this type of reuse, and the input from the city’s urban designers and planners could only improve this process. However, this success is contingent upon the city’s of Flagstaff intervening on the behalf of its historic motels before they end up demolished and turned into used car lots, like Tulsa’s, or abandoned to vice, like Albuquerque’s.

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Conclusions
I began this thesis with two questions — are Route 66 cities engaging with this cultural resource, and if so, how and why does the form of engagement vary from city to city? Through my case studies, I have learned that cities along the corridor have engaged in the last decade with Route 66, but that engagement has taken different forms in different cities depending upon three primary factors: the city’s overall economic and political context, the city’s other redevelopment efforts, and the degree to which the city’s built fabric has survived the last twenty to thirty years of the corridor’s economic decline. My case study research also led me to several recommendations for the urban development of Route 66, and I have concluded each case study with site-specific recommendations. In this final chapter, I will focus on the broader issues of Route 66 as a national corridor and recommend ways in which local and national advocates can reframe their planning and development efforts to better emphasize Route 66’s most valuable features.

Local vs. National Perspective

All Route 66 cities share a common perception of the corridor as a tool for economic development and as a means of branding and identifying their city. This perception emphasizes a locally-based approach to Route 66 development as opposed to a state-based or regionally-based approach. At the local level, as exemplified by Tulsa and Rancho Cucamonga, Route 66 is a means to an end; if properly developed, it will increase tourism, attract businesses, and engage local merchants and property owners in the branding of each city. While planners and local advocates appreciate Route 66’s value and hope to capitalize on its international reputation, they do not create or implement preservation and development projects with the national corridor in mind.

However, aficionados and advocates who view Route 66 as a national corridor tend to have a different perspective: to them, the road is a place of meaning with an intrinsic value, regardless of how or why it develops. To this type of aficionado, “Anything that happens on Route 66 is great.” If a city views and develops Route 66 as an identity tool or as a means of jumpstarting economic development, as in Tulsa, these advocates are reluctant to criticize the city’s efforts, since they believe that any attention to the corridor is good attention and will only increase the public’s awareness of the road’s intrinsic value. As a result, national advocates, who care the most about Route 66’s legacy, are not the best people to create and implement corridor development strategies. However, de facto they are the custodians of Route 66 and their passion is one of the corridor’s greatest assets.

1 This sentiment was expressed during my interviews by most of the roadies I met, including Tulsa’s Brad Nickson, New Mexico’s Johnnie Meier, and California’s Jim Conkle. Johnnie Meier expressed this idea when talking about the “Route 66 Casino”, a new 66-themed casino outside of Albuquerque. Jim Conkle echoed this sentiment when talking about the streetscaping in Rancho Cucamonga.
A Linear Place, with State-based Units of Preservation

Corridor preservation is a relatively recent phenomenon in the United States, and very little corridor preservation has taken place along 20th century pathways. Most preservation and interpretation of modern buildings and places has occurred at smaller scales, with individual sites or monuments. However, Route 66 will never reach its full potential as a cultural corridor unless it can be viewed as one “place” with one overarching idea that is manifested and interpreted through different themes along the road. This requires breaking away from a locally-based mentality. It also requires dividing Route 66 into manageable segments, as one must do with any project on such a large scale. For a variety of reasons, this has already happened on Route 66 with the state emerging as the preferred “unit” of preservation along the route.

While I believe that regional “units” will ultimately provide a stronger planning framework for Route 66, I found that the corridor’s most impressive grassroots and government projects were funded and implemented at the statewide level. For example, Johnnie Meier’s New Mexico neon sign program has been one of the Route’s most well-publicized and funded projects, gathering support from individuals, the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the National Park Service’s Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. In many ways, the state is a very manageable unit of preservation for Route 66, since the road’s character is just as strong in its rural areas as in its cities. These towns and rural areas, which often lack the resources to preserve a sign or building, rely on state-based Historic Route 66 Associations for funding and volunteer labor. The state-based Historic Route 66 Association, in turn, can take advantage of the funding and expertise of state government programs, from the Department of Transportation to the state’s SHPO. Because money and expertise for preservation work are most often available at the state-level, this has evolved as the de facto unit of

Johnnie Meier at the defunct Route 66 Sandwich Company: “Another Route 66 business bites the dust.” Source: Author.
preservation for Route 66. However, the quality and quantity of preservation work varies strongly with the individuals in charge of each state’s Historic Route 66 Association. In a state like New Mexico, which benefits from the tireless enthusiasm and professionalism of an aficionado like Johnnie Meier, a lot of work can be accomplished in a short period of time (see picture). Other states are not as fortunate.

An Answer to the Problem of State-Based Thinking

Since many aficionados lack the time, money, and expertise to accomplish large-scale and sustainable projects, ineffectiveness and inconsistency are inherent in Route 66’s volunteer-driven preservation culture. But a more significant problem with the state-based redevelopment of Route 66 is the balkanization that occurs among the states. Each State Association tends to have a very good sense of the initiatives that are happening throughout their own state, but very little knowledge of what is happening in other states. This is also true for other, locally-based Route 66 advocates; in my interviews, I was shocked by the lack of communication on a state-to-state level among Route 66 preservationists. For example, Sharlene Fouser in Flagstaff told me of her plan to use a seed grant to start a Route 66 National Scenic Byways office there in Arizona, with the hope of eventually luring the National Route 66 Federation to Flagstaff; she had not heard that Tulsa was spending $15 million on Route 66 alone, $7 million of which would go toward a new interpretive center that potentially would house the offices of the National Route 66 Federation. Fouser was not particularly fazed by this information, but I was surprised at the lack of communication among state-based advocates about something as fundamental as the location of their national headquarters.

The balkanization of activity at the state level also points to the need for more regular, systematized communication among state organizers. During my interviews, there were several instances in which I realized that something as simple as a monthly newsletter or listserv would have an enormous impact on the work of revitalizing Route 66. For example, the New Mexico Historic Route 66 Association has lobbied the state to create a Route 66 “vanity plate”, and a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the plate will go to the State Association to support its work. This idea Johnnie Meier picked up from a friend in the Illinois State Association, which instituted a similar program. However, none of the other states I visited have implemented this relatively straightforward fundraising initiative, and I wonder how much of this is due to the relative strengths of different state organizations, or the lack of communication among the states in general. Some of this lack can be attributed to the age and technological inexperience of many Route 66 aficionados, who may be less comfortable using the Internet for regular communication. Yet, the web is full of Route 66-related websites, forums, and weblogs, and some advocates directed me to a few forums where many of the more active preservationists maintain a regular online presence. Regardless, the fact remains that there is no one
reliable and regular source for Route 66 preservation communication, and that this is a void that needs to be filled if the corridor is ever to achieve cohesiveness.

The state-based conception of Route 66 has another, more far-reaching effect on the corridor’s development. Many of the Route’s most interesting thematic segments – Native American culture, Santa Fe Railroad and Harvey Houses, and areas with a concentration of hand-hewn WPA architecture – span state lines. America’s state boundaries were drawn long ago by politics and history that have little to do with the cultural, social, and economic patterns that influenced Route 66’s development years later, and Route 66’s most cohesive themes often transcend state lines. Unfortunately, the dominance of the state-based development model deemphasizes these thematic areas. For example, the preservation of neon signs in New Mexico ends at the state border, although Arizona’s Route 66 was just as famous for the bright vernacular of its own neon signs, set against the same desert sky. The same type of program implemented at a thematic level could have preserved the most distinctive signs throughout Route 66’s desert cities, choosing from a wider range of signage and creating a thematic experience that contributed to the corridor’s cohesiveness.

The thematic redevelopment of Route 66 would require State Associations, aficionados, the National Park Service, and other route-wide advocates to view Route 66 through two specific lenses – a thematic lens, and a regional lens. Here, the term “region” refers to an area defined by geographic or cultural boundaries, rather than state or other political lines. The term “theme” refers to any cultural, natural, or historic pattern of development. As I drove Route 66, I was struck by several regional themes that could be highlighted through organized preservation or interpretation projects, particularly in the southwest. These included Native American Culture; the Santa Fe Railroad and Harvey Houses; the Neon Corridor; WPA Art and Architecture; the Dustbowl Exodus; California Agriculture; and Natural Wonders of the Southwest. Each of these themes has a specific historic, cultural, natural, or architectural consistency, and each emerges organically from a geographic region along Route 66. As such, these themes provide a more holistic system of national organization for Route 66 redevelopment than the current, state-based system.

The Benefits of Regional Thinking

The benefits of the “regional theme” conception of Route 66 would carry over into the corridor’s surrounding regions and communities, increasing the tourism draw for a wide range of associated businesses and attractions. A regional theme would employ the Route 66 corridor as a springboard for a wider pool of cultural resources, and as a result, an entire region could enjoy the economic benefits of theme-based tourism. For example, a Route 66 traveler entering the “Santa Fe Railroad and Harvey Houses” portion of the road may discover a passion for the architecture of Mary Colter and decide to take a detour off of Route 66 to explore her other structures. Mary Colter was the architect and interior designer for the Harvey House chain and the lodges at Grand Canyon National Park, and is famous for her narrative-based approach to building design and her incorporation of local materials, processes, and aesthetic traditions.

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3 Mary Colter was the architect and interior designer for the Harvey House chain and the lodges at Grand Canyon National Park, and is famous for her narrative-based approach to building design and her incorporation of local materials, processes, and aesthetic traditions.
Route 66 Regional Themes

- California Agriculture
- Santa Fe Railroad and Harvey Houses
- Native American Culture
- Neon Corridor
- Natural Wonders of the Southwest
- Dustbowl Exodus
- WPA Art and Architecture

Source: Author.
also has the potential to attract cultural tourists who may not be specifically interested in Route 66 as a corridor, but would like to learn more about one of the corridor's associated themes. This type of tourist is more likely to stay longer and spend more money in one place as she explores her area of interest, as opposed to roadies, who thrive on constant movement along the corridor.

At the same time, a thematic organization of the road would require planners and advocates to look beyond state lines to form spatial and thematic connections, which can also improve wayfinding and connectivity. Currently, “Historic Route 66” signs have a consistent size and color throughout the entire corridor, but they are placed at irregular intervals and can be difficult to follow, particularly in urban areas. Even when signs are present, they indicate only the roadbed itself, not the architecture, history, narratives, and events that characterize different segments of Route 66. Signage that corresponded to regional themes would help travelers to organize a trip around motels, restaurants, museums, and other attractions that represent that region’s particular culture. This would aid in the local marketing of Route 66, as well as the national branding and connectivity of the corridor.

Most importantly, a thematic organization of the corridor would enrich the traveler’s experience by framing her Route 66 journey in a wider context. For example, as a traveler enters a particular thematic region of Route 66, she sees a sign welcoming her to the “Dustbowl Exodus” segment of the Oklahoma highway, and suddenly the rolling fields and farmland outside of Oklahoma City take on a new resonance. The road becomes a place where families like the Joads took to the highway out of desperation, hauling all their worldly possessions in the back of a third-hand, flatbed truck. None of this history and narrative is immediately visible through the windshield, but a regional theme helps to sound the depths of the traveler’s own memories and experiences, connecting the act of travel to the search for meaning that often accompanies it.

**Implementing Regional Themes and the Future of Route 66**

Currently, the National Park Service’s Route 66 Preservation Program is the only program whose mission is to foster the development of Route 66 as a national cultural resource. While this program is filling an important gap, the program is scheduled to “sunset” in 2009 regardless of whether or not it has spent its allocated budget. In the interim, the volunteer-run Route 66 Federation may re-emerge as the focal point for national Route 66 activity. But if not, what entity will act as a communications clearinghouse for all Route 66 projects? More importantly, will this organization have the vision and capacity to develop Route 66 as a national corridor along thematic and regional lines? One likely participant in the future development of Route 66 is the National Scenic Byways office once Route 66 earns the designation of “All-American Road.”

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4 The Joad family were the protagonists of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, which chronicles the mass exodus of Oklahoma farmers out of the Oklahoma dustbowl toward California along Route 66. In this book, Steinbeck dubbed Route 66 “The Mother Road”.

5 Michael Taylor interview, and Public Law #106-45, Department of the Interior, 1999. Although Taylor stated that the future of the program is uncertain, it is not uncommon for similar National Park Service programs to be renewed as they approach their sunset date.
To earn this status, a majority of the Route’s eight states must have their roads declared “National Scenic Byways”; the entire corridor then becomes eligible for All-American Road status. The Scenic Byways program, founded in 1992, has awarded $250 million in grants to thousands of scenic byway roads; byway grants cover both preservation and promotion, and the program represents a both a good source of funding and an organized and effective means of promotion for the Route 66 corridor. However, the National Scenic Byways office does not serve in an advisory capacity, offer technical assistance, or organize programs or events. The Byways program will provide financial resources, but Route 66 needs an organization with a national scope if Scenic Byway funding is to be used creatively and efficiently.

Other Recommendations and Concerns

In addition to my observations about Route 66’s local and national leadership and the importance of implementing a regional theme approach, I would like to advance ten specific recommendations and concerns that apply to the entire Route but are derived from my experiences in the case study cities. “Recommendations” refer to implementable strategies. “Concerns” refer to issues that will continue to surface along Route 66 unless they are addressed in meaningful ways by local government and organizations.

Recommendations

1) The lessons learned by these four Route 66 cities should be shared with other cities along the corridor, regardless of state or region, since the city has emerged as a distinct “unit of preservation.” Preservationists should begin to view the city as its own preservation “unit,” since many Route 66 cities will need to address similar issues, such as development pressure and motel crime, that may not apply to rural and small-town areas. As well, urban Route 66 redevelopment efforts share a perspective on Route 66 as a tool for economic development and branding; this commonality suggests that cities could benefit from a dedicated forum for exchange about Route 66’s urban issues. One way to facilitate this learning would be to hold a “Route 66 City” symposium, where urban preservation efforts can be compared with one another and where local government representatives and advocates can exchange ideas and strategies.

2) One way to achieve greater authenticity along Route 66’s built fabric is to foster individual preservation efforts, whether they happen on a statewide scale like Johnnie Meier’s sign program, or on a small-town scale like the revitalization of La Posada hotel in Winslow, Arizona. This fine-grained preservation is what gives Route 66 variety and eccentricity, two of its defining characteristics. Route 66 is lucky; it is defined by entrepreneurialism and individuality and it does

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6 National Scenic Byways program website and Sharlene Fouser interview. See http://www.byways.org/learn/
7 http://www.byways.org/learn/program.html.
not require visual harmony or consistency to maintain its character as a linear corridor. In fact, harmony detracts from the Route’s identity as an odd assortment of individual commercial enterprises. One simple way that cities can facilitate grassroots efforts is by supporting Route 66 non-profits, such as the eight Route 66 State Associations. These associations have been working on the Route for ten years or longer, and their volunteers are some of the most capable and committed aficionados along the Route. A little dependable financial help from local government could go a long way in the hands of an Emily Priddy or a Johnnie Meier in their respective states.

3) To encourage fine-grained preservation, the grant-making aspect of the National Park Service Route 66 Preservation Program should also be replicated and reinforced by programs within state and local governments. The National Park Service acts as a steward of Route 66, rather than as a hands-on preservation organization. This bolsters the idea that Route 66, even more than other types of historic resources, can best be kept alive through the fostering of individual efforts.

4) Do not shy away from the integration of affordable housing with historic preservation. The restoration of a motel does not have to mean turning it into a boutique property, as many have suggested. In some cases, local affordable housing advocates may be the Route’s best allies in the preservation of older motels. Of course, this may mean that motels will be only “partly” preserved, and they may not meet the standards required by the National Register and must therefore forfeit historic tax credits; alternatively, it may also mean that affordable or specialized housing has to spend some of its budget on cosmetic and façade improvements - an allocation that may not be palatable to some community organizers. Regardless, partnerships between community groups and Route 66 preservationists present a natural solution for the Route’s motels, if both groups are willing to give a little. This partnership should be recognized and facilitated by local government in cities like Flagstaff, where the need for affordable housing is increasing.

5) Activists and property owners along Route 66 would benefit from a booklet showing a variety of adaptive reuses for motel properties. This could include rehabilitated properties, restored properties, or completely redeveloped properties, ranging from condos and affordable housing to boutique motels. The book could also show how specific tax incentives have enabled partial or full motel preservation, including examples where only the façade has been maintained. This would be useful not only along Route 66, but for older motels and hotels across the country. The study would have to recognize that total preservation is not always possible, but that there is an important role in urban development for “partial” preservation (such as façade donations, etc.), particularly when development pressure makes total preservation an economic impossibility.
Concerns

1) In interpretation, authenticity is more difficult to achieve than cliche - it takes more research, more participation, and more imagination, and therefore it can also require more time and money. This is an inevitable challenge of the interpretation process and should be acknowledged by those engaged in Route 66 interpretation. If the challenge of authenticity is not recognized and planned for, new Route 66 museums and centers will end up glorifying the iconography of Route 66, rather than rendering the hardship, complexity, and ambiguity that characterize the true Route 66 experience.

2) So much of the beauty of Route 66 resides in shared memory and the cultural products (books, movies, music, television shows) associated with the road. These things should be integrated with any efforts to interpret the road’s history, since these are the images one thinks of when thinking “Route 66,” rather than the actual road itself.

3) Route 66 ignores the last thirty years of its history at its peril; the east Indians are a part of the story of Route 66 just as much as the Oklahoma Dustbowl farmers and the bypassing of the Interstate are. However, the generation of Americans who will be responsible for maintaining this history have grown up in a more ethnically and culturally diverse country, as opposed to the route’s current custodians, many of whom are near or reaching retirement. For the next generation of Route 66 aficionados, like Emily Priddy, the story of the route’s east Indian motel owners will be an easier story to tell.

4) Ambivalence about the car is another important part of the Route’s narrative. The growth of automobile travel created Route 66 in the first place, as its relocation to the Interstate later caused Route 66’s demise. Route 66 interpretive centers have the opportunity to educate and inform Americans and other tourists about the car’s role in our nation’s built history – not just on the Route, but as a force responsible for decentralization of all American cities. Our country’s growing ambivalence about automobiles is beginning to reveal itself, as shown by the mixed-emotions concerning mass transit planning in Albuquerque. As it evolves as a cultural resource, Route 66 will have to take this ambivalence into account in its interpretive centers if it wants to stay connected to the issues that concern younger audiences.

5) The most interesting ideas for the Route 66 Renaissance come from people who embrace change along the corridor, not from those who would like to see it frozen in time. Regardless of their design value or aesthetic sensibility, the abstract arches over Albuquerque and the “Route 66 Xperience” in Tulsa are just two ways in which the Route is growing and changing to meet the needs of a new audience. Preservationists should not resist growth and change along Route 66, since this is how the corridor maintains its economic vitality and its cultural relevance.
However, preservationists may find that they have to walk the line between economic development (which tends toward nostalgia/marketing) and meaningful interpretation (which is slower, more complex, and more expensive).

Finally, I want to re-emphasize the importance of framing Route 66 as a national resource. At the local level, this conception is overshadowed by the corridor’s potential as a tool for economic development and identity creation. But local initiatives will not succeed if Route 66 does not develop its national identity and cohesiveness. This is why I have used this conclusion to examine Route 66 from a wider perspective and to make recommendations for large-scale development and planning. Although this thesis examines Route 66 as a local resource that is being developed by individual cities, Route 66 is undeniably a national resource with an international presence, and as such, it must be viewed not only as a local resource but also as an interconnected network of places that interpret a common history. For Route 66 to reach its fullest potential both on the local and national level, it must be developed as a continuous place, in which each of its components contributes to the overall corridor’s success.
Further Research

Here, I am including a list of six ideas for further study. At some point during the thesis process, each of these ideas tempted me away from my original question, and I hope that other planning students and scholars will look to this list for inspiration about further research into the Route 66 corridor:

1) How has the east Indian and Pakistani population been integrated into Route 66 preservation efforts, and what more can be done? Is this the future of Route 66 preservation, since this population represents such a major part of the route’s historic property ownership?

2) Will the preservation of Route 66 in urban areas inevitably lead to gentrification, similar to the historic preservation of older homes in large east and west-coast cities, which has increased their property values?

3) Are gentrification and “Disneyfication” effectively the same concept on Route 66, or do they refer to different processes? Does an ambiguous term like “Disneyfication” adequately describe the development of a place like Route 66, where the layering of themes and ideas from popular culture is integral to the corridor’s culture?

4) Does Albuquerque’s Route 66 rapid bus line represent a possible future for Route 66 tourist-strips in urban areas? Or is this only possible in Albuquerque because the city is undergoing redevelopment efforts independent of Route 66?

5) At what point does a place or property “turn the corner” and become an acknowledged historic artifact? Is this time period correlated to the human life span? Is this span enough to make something transform from a blighted motel to an historic treasure?

6) What other types of cultural resources have required inter-state participation? How does the redevelopment of Route 66 parallel the recreational development of shared natural resources, such as lakes, rivers, or forests?
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**Miscellaneous**


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