Sorkin's essay contains no recognition of New Urbanism's successes (however partial), nor does it ever present specific cases to back his critiques. It straddles the lines of nihilism to say that nothing good has ever been done by New Urbanists and that his argument, despite its shallow examples and lack of specifics, should be accepted as the defining perspective on the subject.

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At the outset of planning last year’s edition of Agora, the staff decided to—in the midst of the 2009 election—construct the issue around the theme of “change.” This year, the staff chose to start with a clean slate and not constrict article selections with a predetermined theme. We received a strong batch of submissions that, in the end, gave us a journal centered on the theme of “Detroit.” That our authors hail from a number of programs across the university, both undergraduate and graduate, speaks to the fact that Detroit is more relevant than ever. Additionally, I am proud that, for the first time, Agora welcomes a faculty submission to the journal. Professor and former dean, Doug Kelbaugh, brings his experience working in Detroit to our pages.

Detroit, long a focus of the work done by the urban-planning and urban-design programs at the University of Michigan, has also found itself as a mainstay in national headlines this past year. From bankruptcy to entrepreneurialism, foreclosures to right sizing, Detroit is reentering the national consciousness. While the media may have spent the last year focusing on trivial problems such as private jets, the planning and design programs and the university as a whole have chosen to tackle more substantive issues, some of which are showcased in this volume.

Agora 2010, the journal’s fourth edition, begins with Robert Linn's topical “Complementing Demolition.” Detroit grapples with a shrinking population and the accompanying problem of home abandonment while facing a mounting budget deficit, making the expensive task of vacant-home demolition even more daunting. Linn’s article presents alternatives to the current city policy, looking to improve an issue currently being discussed at local and federal levels.

Returning contributor Amanda Tillotson, complements Linn's piece with her article “Pathologizing Place and Race.” Linn's discussion of demolition and the alternative approaches to vacancy segues to Tillotson's discussion of slum clearance. Her analysis of the language used to justify slum clearance through time has had a connection to pathology, but this language changed in some subtle — and not so subtle ways — such as the increasing inclusion of race in to the discussion. This historical analysis has modern-day implications, both for Detroit and the rest of the country.

“Inside/Outside,” by Barret Bumford, addresses increasing divisions in our society. Metro Detroit is one of the most segregated areas in the country—racially and economically. However, as Bumford discusses through literary analysis and personal experience, divisions are becoming more prevalent in our physical spaces and day-to-day interactions, as well. How do planners need to adapt to the fact that social interaction is increasingly moving to cell phones and the Internet and away from face-to-face interactions? How do our planning decisions impact the built environment’s shift toward walls and gates? Addressing segregation on all of these levels are planning issues exemplified in Detroit.

Issues such as these are among the challenges tackled during design charrettes, which is the subject of Doug Kelbaugh’s article of the same name. Charrettes bring together students and professionals in an intense environment to tackle issues at the forefront of urban design. As Kelbaugh discusses, the University of Michigan has conducted more than half a dozen charrettes in Detroit in the past decade.

In keeping with the urban design theme, Andrew Broderick’s “Tapping Terrain Vague” looks at the reclamation of former industrial space for public parkland and the need to better provide open space in under-served communities. Rails-to-trails projects are gaining popularity across the country, from New York’s High Line Park to Detroit’s Dequindre Cut, as a way to encourage exercise and alternative transportation, while providing planned reclamation of post-industrial areas.
The next feature is the product of an urban-design studio focused on the prospect of light rail along Woodward Avenue, Detroit’s main north-south thoroughfare. This team project addresses current shortcomings in Detroit’s mass transit, specifically in the New Center area, which is the site of the city’s current train station. The article explores the transformative potential of the currently in-progress M-1 Rail project.

Damon Healey’s case study of the Argonaut Building (now the A. Alfred Taubman Center for Design Education) provides valuable insight on the complex task of adaptively reusing historic structures in a depressed economy. This example of Detroit’s shift from manufacturing to a new creative economy is located in New Center, which was highlighted in the previous article. It gives a glimpse of what could lie ahead for Detroit — and an example for others to learn from.

Looking at education in Detroit from a different perspective is Karey Quarton, who wrote about after-school programs in Detroit Public Schools. Along with the issues of demolition and public transit, Detroit’s schools are a current mainstay in local and national headlines. With attendance and graduation rates declining, the district has begun to look at an extensive restructuring of the city’s schools. This piece investigates more simple, but no less important options, for improving the outlook of public education.

Jennifer Williams explores Atlanta’s demolition of public housing and the issues involved in attempting to move low-income residents away from typical governmental support to the free market. As the country copes with the recession and foreclosure crisis, the needs of those in our cities who are the most vulnerable should be considered. This issue is compounded in central cities, such as Atlanta and Detroit, where race and poverty are often closely linked with troubling certainty.

“Failed Linkages” ties in to the Detroit theme with its discussion of the city’s People Mover. This discussion of the elevated rail line in the city’s downtown dovetails with the Woodward Avenue light-rail project discussed earlier in the issue. Proponents of the light-rail project feel that a light-rail link feeding downtown will increase relevancy and ridership of the People Mover and help improve the diversity of the Motor City’s public transportation.

We conclude our fourth edition with a piece from Michael Glynn. While “Healthy Planning” is not place specific, this thoughtful and thought-provoking article takes a planning-centric look at the national debate about health care — one that has repercussions from Detroit to Los Angeles. Glynn argues that a focus on community and sensible planning has the power to foster better health for an entire nation.

A focus on the local — on our own community, or however we choose to define it — might be the answer to a number of our problems. Boarding up houses, improving living conditions for the rest of the neighborhood, designing an old industrial space to give the disadvantaged a place to play close to home, and providing both public transit and affordable housing for all are community-focused plans that have the power to make a difference on a scale that extends far beyond their physical reach.

In Detroit, where a number of the traditional-planning and governmental frameworks have ceased to exist, much has been made about the “grassroots” community work that has filled the void left behind — and rightfully so. Detroit has the ability right now to show the power that urban planning can have on a community, and the power that, as Glynn argues, a community can have on an entire country.

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Complementing Demolition
The Need for a Multifaceted Approach to Address Residential Abandonment in Detroit

Robert Linn

Introduction
Detroit faces a crisis of residential abandonment. The city is home to an estimated 33,500 vacant and abandoned homes that are linked to increases in crime and decreases in property values (Riley, 2008). In response to this growing problem, the city's leadership employs a program of widespread residential demolition, an approach it has used for more than 50 years. To support this program, the city allocates an outsized portion of its available financial resources. However, these expenditures prevent the city from dedicating financial resources to other means of combating the numerous ill effects of abandonment. Other approaches to addressing abandonment, such as caring for vacant lots and boarding up Vacant, Open and Dangerous (V.O.D.) homes are comparatively underutilized. Due to financial limitations, the vacant lots resulting from the city’s demolition campaign typically remain neglected by city services, becoming overgrown or targeted as illegal dumping sites. The social and economic effects of these unkempt vacant lots are similar to those of the abandoned structures they replaced, undermining the intention behind demolition. A more effective approach to the management of abandoned properties would include improving the maintenance of vacant lots to supplement demolition. Similarly, boarding up vacant homes is a necessary complement to demolition that would allow the city to address more abandoned homes, without increasing overall spending. An abandonment strategy that includes securing and boarding up buildings may offer greater benefits by allowing the city to address a greater number of abandoned homes, particularly V.O.D. structures.

Detroit’s Abandoned Residential Structures
Residential abandonment is the result of population decline. As Dan Kildee, long-time President of the Genesee County Land Bank, notes, “The greatest problem with population decline is that when people leave, they don’t take their houses with them” (2009). Kildee’s general observation about shrinking cities is clearly relevant to Detroit. As the city’s population decreased from 1,849,568 in 1950 to an estimated 837,711 in 2007, the city has faced seemingly unparalleled levels of housing abandonment (Census Bureau, 1950; ACS, 2006-8). In 1950, Detroit had 522,430 housing units (Census Bureau, 1950). However, over the subsequent 50 years, demolition exceeded new construction by 147,334 housing units, leaving a total of 375,096 housing units in 2000 (Census Bureau, 2000). This loss of population and homes is likely to continue into the foreseeable future; a 2005 Detroit Free Press poll found that more than a third of Detroit residents would leave if they could afford to do so, suggesting that abandonment is likely to continue (Dickerson, 2005). Those residents account for more than 85,000 currently occupied housing units (ACS, 2006-8).

The city’s abandoned homes create numerous challenges for residents, most notably affecting neighborhood health, property values, and crime rates. Neighborhood abandonment increases the risks for a host of diseases and disabilities, with childhood lead poisoning a chief concern (NPR, 2005). According to a Wayne State University estimate, more than half of Detroit’s vacant homes may be contaminating their neighborhoods with airborne lead-based paint dust (Shine, 2004). This type of exposure to lead can cause reduced attention spans, hyperactivity, and other behavioral problems in children; greater exposure can damage a child’s kidneys and central nervous system and cause anemia, coma, convulsions, or death (Sullivan, 2002).

Increased abandonment negatively affects property values too. A 2001 Temple University Center for Public Policy study found a statistically significant spatial correlation between increased residential abandonment and decreased property values of neighboring homes in Philadelphia (Temple, 2001). The study found that properties within 150 feet of an abandoned property – whether a vacant lot or an abandoned structure – lost $7,627 in value, while properties within 300 feet lost $6,819 and those within 600 feet lost $4,542 (Temple, 2001).

In addition to concerns surrounding public health and property values, abandonment has been found to coincide with significant increases in crime rates. A 1993 University of Texas study examined the effect of abandoned homes on crime in distressed neighborhoods
in Austin, Texas, which, in terms of property values and demographics, bear a near-perfect resemblance to many neighborhoods of Detroit (Spellman, 1993). The study found that overall, blocks that featured V.O.D. structures were 320% more likely to be subject to drug-related crimes, 180% more likely to experience theft, and 200% more likely to suffer violent crimes than demographically similar blocks without any abandoned buildings (Spellman, 1993).

In Detroit, local fire data suggests a similar relationship between abandoned homes and arson. Although recent data shows that occupied housing outnumbers vacant housing more than seven-to-one, half of the Detroit Fire Department's 11,000 annual calls are to abandoned homes (DRPS, 2010; Riley, 2008). Together, these pervasive issues of health, property values, and crime help explain why abandoned buildings were the second-most common topic of resident complaints to the City of Detroit in 2008 (Brown, 2008).

In turn, these problems contribute to the spread of abandonment. Because abandonment typically occurs suddenly and has the greatest impact on the nearest properties, the communicable effects of abandonment tend to cluster spatially and spread rapidly (Odland, 1979). After an initial instance of abandonment in a neighborhood, owners of neighboring properties are subject to increased pressure to abandon their own property. This is due to the reality or perception of a declining neighborhood based on the evidence of decreasing property values, increasing crime rates, and other externalities of residential abandonment. As Rolf Goetz notes in Understanding Neighborhood Change, homeowners in areas of declining property values often “adopt more of a wait-and-see attitude regarding home improvements. They wonder whether it makes sense to continue investing in their homes” (1979). Abandonment becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; the possibility of greater declines in value serves as a disincentive to invest further in a property, further encouraging neighbors to abandon their property.

Detroit Demolition

Detroit’s present prescription for addressing residential abandonment is widespread demolition. Between 1970 and 2000, more than 161,000 buildings were demolished in Detroit (Goodman, 2004). More than 90% of these demolitions were of residential structures (Kilpatrick, 2008).

This approach to abandoned homes is born from a belief that demolition effectively eliminates many of the problems of abandonment. In 2008, then-Councilwoman Sheila Cockrel articulated this prevailing view: “Because of the cancer that these abandoned structures are, they destroy value to residents around them. They destroy any sense of safety and security... This stuff has to come down” (Riley, 2008).

Detroit’s demolition program has considerable opportunity costs. From its general fund, Detroit allocated more than $5 million to demolition in fiscal year 2009 (Executive Budget Summary, 2008-9). However, this represents only some of the demolition spending. The majority of the city’s demolitions are funded with federal grants. In 2010, the city directed two thirds of its $21 million federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program allocation to expand residential demolition (Hackney, 2010). In 2009, Detroit utilized more than half of its $47 million Housing and Economic Recovery Act allocation for demolition (Travareli, 2009). This is not a new approach. Between 1988 and 2008, the City of Detroit used $225 million of its annual Community Development Block Grant allocations on demolition of vacant structures; almost a third of its average annual allocation (Cockrel, 2007). This unparalleled allocation prohibits Detroit from abating abandonment through other means.

Despite the city’s outsized expenditures in support of this campaign, Detroit’s effort to eradicate abandonment cannot keep pace with rates of abandonment. Demolition of abandoned homes, while effective at addressing many of the concerns of abandonment, is problematic. The average cost of residential demolition in Detroit, more than $10,000 per home, prohibits its use in addressing all newly abandoned homes each year, much less the existing stock of 33,500 vacant homes (Executive Budget Summary, 2001-9; DRPS 2010). While the city has demolished an average of nearly 1,000 structures annually, the city lost a net average of 5,800 households each year between 1990 and 2007 (Census Bureau 1990; ACS, 2006-8). Given the prevailing rate of housing abandonment and the city’s current demolition spending, the city remains unable to demolish all of its V.O.D. homes. The city has maintained an inventory of more than 10,000 V.O.D. homes for more than 20 years (Montemurri, 1989; DRPS, 2010). In 1998, during a lauded and widespread demolition campaign, the Detroit News summarized the problem: “Demolition isn’t likely to outpace the rate of property abandonment in Detroit for years — if at all” (1998).
The city should re-examine the use of demolition as Detroit’s primary tool for combating abandonment. Two issues, presumably unaddressed due to financial limitations, deserve consideration: the burden created by unmanaged vacant lots and the effectiveness of securing abandoned buildings. The city’s approach to addressing abandoned structures, near exclusive reliance on demolition, undermines the effectiveness of demolition because it fails to embrace complementary strategies.

The Problem of Vacant Lots

Prolonged population decline and widespread demolition have left Detroit with a glut of vacant residential parcels. Detroit’s population decline has persisted over six decades, causing the supply of vacant land created through demolition to increasingly outpace demand for developable residential parcels. In the three decades between 1978 and 1998, the City of Detroit issued 12 demolition permits for every building permit (Daskalakis, 2002). As a result of this trend, increasing numbers of the city’s residential parcels are becoming vacant lots. In 1989, 65,000 of the city’s 343,800 residential parcels were empty (Montemurri, 1989). Today, twenty years later, 91,500 residential parcels are vacant lots — more than a quarter of the city’s residential properties (DRPS, 2010). Of these, an estimated 40,000 are owned by the City of Detroit (Detroit Regional Chamber, 2008).

Due to its limited financial resources, the City of Detroit typically fails to make improvements to recent demolition sites. John George, President of Motor City Blight Busters, a Detroit community development group, observes, “When the city demolishes a house, they don’t plant grass, they don’t plant trees; it’s just a big scar” (Wilgoren, 2007). For decades, the city’s budget for maintaining vacant lots has been in steady decline due to a decreasing tax base and increasing demolition costs. In 1993, Detroit spent $4 million annually maintaining vacant lots (Costello, 1993). Today, Detroit spends $800,000 annually maintaining its lots (Betzold, 1999). This increasingly inadequate sum is stretched further and further with each demolition, and only covers an annual mowing (Betzold, 1999). In response to resident dissatisfaction, there is a long history of administrations paying for a second mowing during election years (Betzold, 1999).

Because the core of the city’s limited vacant-lot maintenance is an annual mowing and the occasional collection of trash left by illegal dumping, residential demolition sites typically remain in stasis, creating problems similar to those created by the vacant residences they replaced. As John George notes, “After demolition, the city leaves a patch of dirt that gets covered with peoples’ trash. It’s not much better than [an abandoned] house” (2009). Other residents find the condition of vacant lots problematic. The condition of the city’s vacant lots generated the most complaints to the city in 2008, surpassing even those generated by abandoned buildings (Brown, 2008).

Much of this dissatisfaction stems from illegal dumping, a problem the city is largely unable to address. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), vacant lots are the most common sites of illegal dumping (Vogan, 1997). This phenomenon, which leaves neighborhood lots strewn with garbage, places an even greater burden on the city’s limited vacant-lot maintenance budget (Vogan, 1997). In 1990, Conley Abrams, then-Director of the Department of Public Works, stated that the department was forced to largely ignore illegal dumping due to inadequate funding (Betzold, 1990). This policy has continued unchanged. In 2001, Ulysses Burdell, then-Director of the Department of Public Works, underscored the frustrating delays in addressing illegal dumping due to limited financial resources “There are higher priorities out there. We’ll get to it when we [get more funding]” (Detroit News, 2001). According to the EPA, existing instances of illegal dumping in Detroit encourage further illegal dumping (Vogan, 1997). Thus, the city’s inability to address initial instances of the problem may encourage additional dumping, increasing the overall cost of remediation and furthering neighborhood decline.

This poor maintenance has more psychological effects that further erode neighborhood conditions and increase crime rates. Noted urban scholar James Howard Kunstler explains, “[vacant lots] repel people. People will cross the street rather than continue walking on the side of the empty space” (2008). According to Kunstler, vacant lots, especially when poorly maintained, cause pedestrians to lose their sense of safety. (2008) Responding to a perception of crime, pedestrians may begin avoiding a neighborhood, a reaction that encourages crime (Skogan, 1986). With reduced resident activity and traffic, the safety of the neighborhoods declines. A University of Pennsylvania study of Philadelphia found a compelling spatial correlation between vacant lots and crime (Cohen, 2009). By comparing police data with corresponding census demographics data and vacant property records from 2002 to 2006, researchers documented an 18.5% increase in assaults in neighborhoods containing vacant lots compared to neighborhoods without them (Cohen, 2009).

In turn, the housing market responds to this declining vitality and increased crime rate. Properties adjacent to vacant lots can lose as much as 20% of their value (Wachter, 2005). Due to these declines in property values, excess vacant space, especially when poorly maintained, discourages reinvestment and deters new construction (Schilling and Logan, 2008). Similar to the exoduses sparked by the presence of abandoned dwellings,
trash-strewn vacant lots also encourage increased housing abandonment. “What usually happens is people get so disgusted living next to a vacant lot that they eventually move as well,” explains Rosa Sims, a local community development advocate (Betzold, 1990).

Because the city commits so many resources to demolition, and comparatively so few to managing the lots created in the demolition process, the resulting lots become neighborhood liabilities. The resultant increases in crime and decreases in property values serve to undermine the success and effectiveness of demolition as a tool in addressing residential abandonment.

The primary aims of the city’s demolition program, crime prevention, neighborhood stabilization, and property-value preservation, are not supported to the fullest extent possible as long as vacant lots are left unattended after demolition. Expanding fundamental services, such as illegal dumping abatement, grass planting, and increased lawn mowing would address many of the widely held concerns about the city’s vacant lots that were articulated by John George. Given the damage caused by unmanaged vacant lots, improved management is a necessary complement to demolition as an approach to addressing housing abandonment.

Securing the Abandoned

As a complement to demolition, boarding up abandoned buildings could be used to cost-effectively abate many of the problems associated with abandonment. While demolition offers a more permanent and effective solution to addressing abandonment, securing abandoned homes, the process of boarding over all points of entry, affordably reduces the impact of V.O.D. homes. Detroit spends an average of $10,000 on demolition per abandoned home (Elrick, 2004). In contrast, the city’s average cost of securing abandoned homes is less than $700 per home (Elrick, 2004). Despite this dramatic difference in cost, the city has refrained from the widespread practice of securing buildings. While Detroit averaged slightly more than 1,000 demolitions annually between 2000 and 2009, it secured an average of just more than 110 each year during the same span (Executive Budget Summary, 2001–9). As of 2009, this disparity left the city with more than 10,000 V.O.D. homes (DRPS, 2010). However, existing research suggests that securing abandoned buildings may be a markedly more cost-effective option. Given the difference in cost, a minimal redistribution of demolition spending towards securing buildings would allow the city to more effectively address the challenges of a much greater number of abandoned homes.

Securing abandoned homes greatly reduces the likelihood of many crimes. Albert Thomas, the former director of Detroit’s Buildings and Safety Engineering Department, argued that most cases of arson in Detroit are merely cases of opportunistic vandalism. “If there’s something there that will burn and nobody around, people who are attracted to arson will gravitate toward vacant, open buildings,” Thomas observed (Edmonds, 1987). Nationally, unsecured abandoned buildings are more than three times more likely to become victims of arson as secured abandoned buildings (Howley, 2009). Detroit Fire Department officials estimate that in Detroit, V.O.D. homes may be four times more likely to suffer arson as secured abandoned homes (Perrin, 2010). The difference between secured and unsecured abandoned structures is similar for other crimes too. In the 1993 University of Texas study, blocks with secured buildings had less than a 30% increase in crimes when compared to demographically similar blocks without any abandoned buildings (Spellman, 1993). As noted, blocks with V.O.D. homes experienced increases between 180% and 320%, depending on the type of crime (Spellman, 1993). These disparities suggest that securing V.O.D. structures offers promise in the reduction of many neighborhood crime rates.

Securing abandoned buildings may also affect neighboring property values. Although the direct relationship between securing V.O.D. structures and improvements in neighboring property values has not been studied extensively, existing work examining the correlation of crime and property values indicates that the potential reductions in crime brought about by securing abandoned buildings would significantly increase neighboring property values. Depending on the type of crime, increases of as little as 3% in crime rates correlate with decreases in property values of between 5% and 15% (Thaler, 1978; Buck, 1991; Hellman, 1979). The findings of these studies suggest that the disparities in crime rates documented in the University of Texas study would positively impact neighboring property values. However, a more conclusive statistical analysis of this relationship is still needed.

In comparison to demolition, securing abandoned buildings is more suited to rapidly addressing abandonment. Due to financial and legal limitations, the city’s overwhelming reliance upon demolition stymies its ability to respond quickly to individual instances of

“Abandonment becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; the possibility of a greater decline in value serves as a disincentive to invest in a property, further encouraging neighbors to abandon their property.”
housing abandonment, a necessity in slowing the spread of abandonment (Goetz, 1979). City ownership is typically a prerequisite for city-funded demolition, and Detroit must wait for as many three years to seize a property for tax delinquency, which is the city's primary means of abandoned property acquisition (Legal Lines, 2005). Even after seizure, the city must typically wait nearly two years before demolishing the most dangerous structures due to funding shortages (Montemurri, 1999). Furthermore, Detroit must wait an average of between eight and nine months for utility companies to disconnect a house's gas and electric service (Hackney, 2010). However, with the advent of the city's Department of Administrative Hearings, city employees can secure buildings until the owner addresses the problem or the structure can be demolished (Gallagher, 2009). Unfortunately, even this tool remains underutilized due to limited funding.

Although less effective than demolition in abating the effects of residential abandonment, the significant differences in cost of securing buildings as opposed to demolition would enable the city to address a greater number of abandoned structures if some demolition funding were diverted to securing homes. In this manner, securing the city's V.O.D. structures could prove to be another strong complement to the city's existing demolition program.

Conclusion

While demolition remains a popular and compelling means of addressing many of the problems associated with housing abandonment, Detroit's near exclusive reliance upon demolition in addressing the buildings left after population decline is ineffective and inefficient. The city's current approach to managing its vacant lots blunts the effectiveness of demolition and allows many of the problems that sparked the abandonment to persist only partially addressed. Reducing the focus on demolition and shifting more resources towards vacant-lot maintenance and securing abandoned buildings would prove a more prudent use of limited resources. Increasing use of the less costly practice of securing abandoned buildings could allow the city to abate the affects of a much greater number of buildings while facilitating a more rapid response to contagious abandonment. A multifaceted approach to remediating housing abandonment, one that includes the complementary policies of increased vacant lot maintenance and greater use of securing abandoned buildings, would offer the city a more flexible and capable strategy for addressing abandonment.

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Pathologizing Place and Race
The Rhetoric of Slum Clearance and Urban Renewal, 1930-1965

Amanda Rowe Tillotson

Introduction

“When slum clearance enters an area,” Harrison Salisbury wrote in 1954, “it does not merely destroy slatternly houses. It uproots the people. It tears out the churches. It destroys the local business man. It sends the neighborhood lawyer to new offices downtown. It mangles the skein of community friendships and group relationships beyond repair.” As measured by lives disrupted and communities destroyed in American cities during the period from 1930 to 1965, urban renewal and slum clearance projects affected low-income urban populations much like war. Like wars, these projects were governed by rules of engagement that defined the enemy, codified the reasons for combat and specified the goals to be attained.

In the policy realm, the rules of engagement have different names. Defining the enemy is translated to “the negative social construction of target populations” (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). On one hand, media and public discourse can picture those who experience difficulties in positive terms. On the other hand, these populations can be defined in negative terms, legitimating punitive policies. Welfare recipients and individuals with HIV exemplify populations that have been construed in negative terms (Schram, 1998, 2005; Sontag, 1978/2001; Ingram and Schnieder, 1988, 2005).

Reasons for combat similarly translate into causal stories that explain how problematic situations came to exist and define the range of appropriate remedies (Stone, 1989). These stories have all the elements of narrative: villains who create the difficulty; the victims whom it threatens; and heroes, the policy prescriptions intended to save the victims.

Causal stories establish warrants for political action, legitimating particular policy solutions (Hillgartener and Bosk, 1988; Best, 2001). Grave threats demand the policy equivalent of “shock and awe.” The threats justify the swift use of overwhelming force. In social policy narratives, these threats are often framed as metaphors that connect social problems to familiar, visceral concepts, such as disease. Without intervention these social problems will spread beyond the initial sick population to engulf healthy sectors of society. Populations afflicted by social problems are portrayed as vectors of pathology that have the potential for spreading their difficulties to others. Metaphorically, the areas in which they are concentrated become pockets of infection (Meyer and Schwartz, 2000).

This paper is based on an analysis of national newspaper coverage of “slum clearance” and “urban renewal” during the period from 1930-1965. It argues that rhetoric in popular media connected “slums”/“ghettos” to pathology, and that this connection helped to legitimate urban renewal and slum clearance policies. The destruction of existing communities was warranted by the need to prevent this pathology from spreading. The rhetoric of pathology changed over time. Early on, arguments about physical disease were invoked along with those about social disease. These areas were connected to illnesses, such as tuberculosis, typhus, and venereal disease. Connections between slum housing and social difficulties, such as crime, were presented in the context of this medical model. The connection was rooted in the poor physical conditions of slum life. Rhetoric focused on the physical pathology of slums or on physical conditions, such as overcrowding, poor sanitation, and poorly maintained buildings. These physical conditions, in turn, produced both physical diseases, such as tuberculosis and social problems, like crime. (Sidney, 2005)


2 The term “ghetto” began to appear in the 1960s. As I argue, the transition from “slum” to “ghetto” in policy discourse marked the point at which problems of low-income urban areas began to be almost entirely racialized so that the “target population” became almost exclusively black and, to a lesser degree, Hispanic.
The rhetoric began to change in the 1950s, and this change became more apparent with the urban riots of the 1960s. The notion of physical disease survived mainly as metaphor, and the “slum” problem was redefined so that the inhabitants of slums, rather than the conditions of the housing stock, were identified as the difficulty. Slums became any geographic area inhabited by “carriers” of social disease such as criminals, promiscuous women, alcoholics, and addicts. The physical condition of the buildings or neighborhoods was incidental. Urban renewal was justified by the need to disperse problem populations.

These problem populations were increasingly defined along racial lines. The term “slum” gave way to that of “ghetto,” and slum-born pathologies were increasingly connected to race and to the attributes and behaviors of individual residents. A 1961 account of a dilapidated neighborhood on West 84th Street in New York City, where a street brawl had involved more than 400 blacks and Puerto Ricans, illustrates this new rhetoric: “This is, clearly, more than a slum. A slum is good people in bad houses. But this, as one man put it yesterday, is ‘a ghetto of sociopaths’” (Phillips, 1961).

This paper examines changes in the rhetorical structure of urban renewal. The first section focuses on the development of rhetoric that pathologized “place”. Slums were problematic because degraded housing and neighborhood congestion facilitated the spread of physical and social disease. During the period from 1935 to 1965, however, a rhetorical shift occurred. Media accounts increasingly portrayed slums as cancers. Slums had become an invasive, possibly terminal, disease. The actual condition of the housing stock, the density of neighborhoods, and the prevalence of physical disease became less relevant. Once an area was publically identified as a slum, it was construed to be a cancerous lesion, and slum clearance could be justified as a surgical intervention needed to save the host.

The second section examines the parallel development of popular rhetoric that pathologized race and reconstructed slums as “ghettoes” that were defined not by the condition of the housing stock, but by the geographic concentration of blacks. Ghetto populations were construed to be dangerous because they constituted a reservoir of social pathology that could be ignited into explosive violence. These two sets of changes reinforced one another. Slums were increasingly described as “cancers” as they also became increasingly defined as areas that contained concentrated populations of blacks.

**The Pathology of Place**

On March 29, 1930, Governor Franklin Roosevelt defended his proposed “slum clearance” program at a luncheon of the New York Board of Trade. “Hundreds of thousands of men and women,” Roosevelt said, “are still living in vile and unhealthy surroundings contribution to another unresolved condition – crime. During my lifetime, the proportion of people living in ancient and vile surroundings has been constantly decreasing. We have made progress, yet we are still far from removing what physicians would call ‘points of infection’ in our midst” (“Governor Asks City”, 1930).

The phrase “ancient and vile places” is a synecdoche that incorporates social understandings about slums during this period. Slums were urban areas with specific physical characteristics—old, badly maintained housing; high population density; poor sanitary arrangements. These characteristics, in turn, produced problems with the physical and moral health of inhabitants. Slums were therefore likely to spread both physical disease and social disease. A 1930 article headlined “Bad Slums That Remain A Reproach to New York” summed up this line of reasoning: “It is to the slum that the criminologist traces the bulk of crime. To the slum the social worker looks for delinquency; health agencies for much rickets, cardiac trouble, and pernicious anemia; and to schools in the slums for great mental deficiency” (McMullen, 1930).

Discussions of slums and slum clearance during this period emphasized their physical characteristics. For instance, a story about individuals displaced to make way for New York City’s Stuyvesant Town project in 1945 begins, “From dark rooms and apartments without sanitary facilities and from back houses that stand amid clotheslines and unkempt yards, families which have been in the same house or the same block for as much as half a century are being uprooted daily” (Cooper, 1945). The destruction of existing communities was justified by the poor physical condition of slum housing.

Degraded housing and congested neighborhoods facilitated the development of physical illness. Writing in 1950, R. Van Dellen, a health columnist told readers of the Chicago Daily Tribune that “Everyone is in favor of slum clearance not only for esthetic reasons but because it is more healthful…When too many individuals are huddled into a small space, filth and dirt generally prevail.” Filth, he continues, produces additional problems including infant diarrhea and infestations of vermin that could lead to typhus. He also argues that congested slums produce foul odors and noise, further undermining the inhabitants’ health.

The physical condition of slum housing also produced social diseases. Pathological slum environments were transformative: they transformed “people” into “problems.” In his 1935 testimony on the Wagner Bill, Baltimore Rabbi Edward L. Israel argued that the development of a permanent federal agency to assist with slum clearance was needed to “dry up the nation’s cesspools of crime.” This thinking connected crime to the physical conditions rather than the inherent moral failings of
inhabitants. “He declared,” the New York Times reported, “that crime led to an erroneous conclusion that it was the foreign element that was responsible for the crime. But when the foreign element moved away and ‘other races’ moved in, the section still remained a ‘cesspool of crime’, showing, he said, that it was a matter of environment” (“Slum Dwellers Plead to Senators,” 1935). Individual misbehavior was connected to environmental degradation. Slum clearance therefore became an investment in crime control. In 1945, a New York Times article titled “Goldstein Warns of Gangster Rule” reported the remarks of one mayoral candidate: “I’m happy to see these slums go…The more we invest in slum clearance, the less we spend on reformatories and penitentiaries.” The logic was straightforward; the poor physical conditions that produced disease also created poor social conditions, and these led to higher rates of crime and other social problems.

Changing use of metaphors in this rhetoric revealed a shift in this causal link. The specific connections between physical conditions and slum-borne illness were deemphasized, and slums were increasingly compared to cancers. Susan Sontag noted that “tuberculosis and the alleged or real threat of it in the slum-cleaning and the ‘model tenement’ movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.” “The feeling,” she continues, “was that slum housing ‘bred’ tuberculosis. The shift from tuberculosis to cancer in planning and housing rhetoric had taken place by the 1950s. Blight, a synonym for slum, is seen as a cancer. Disease also created poor social conditions, and these led to higher rates of crime and other social problems.

Articles Associating Cancer and Slums

Specific examples provide insight into the patterns shown in Figure One. In 1935, an announcement of New York’s Ten Eyck clearance project indicated that it would “spearhead a drive to wipe out the worst slum cancer spots in the city” (“Housing Job”, 1935). The theme also appears in a 1950 article that quoted the chairman of the Chicago Planning Commission: “Unless other studies uncover more slums of a more cancerous character, those along the railroad track should have first priority” (Sturdy, 1950). Another contemporary account described slums as “the no man’s land which rings the business district and forms a cancer that is slowly but surely eating away at the vitals of centralized business” (Bloom, 2004: 319). The dramatic images invoked by this metaphor had two effects. First, they emphasized the geographic location of slum areas rather than their physical deficiencies. Secondly, the images made it possible to label areas as slums without considering the physical characteristics of buildings or neighborhoods.

Metaphors also invoked symptoms of cancer. In 1954, for instance, Albert M. Cole, head of the Federal Housing Administration, denounced one problematic Chicago housing project as “a nauseating running sore on our civic life” (“US Chief Wars on Race Bias”, 1954). Like cancer, slum blight would metastasize, producing terminal decay in the host. In the same year, a Chicago Daily Tribune article headlined “Cities Are Rotting Away at the Core” quoted Illinois Senator Paul Douglas’s comment that “Our cities are rotting away at the core and our residential neighborhoods are falling into disrepair” (“Slum Rot Hits Cities at Core”, 1954).

The danger that slums would metastasize warranted radical action that, like surgery, involved the painful destruction of some areas in order to preserve the body as a whole. A 1942 letter to the editor of The Washington Post justified the disruptive process in these terms: “It seems to me that any criticism of the process of demolition before reclamation is unfair. Slum reclamation is a major operation. Before a return to health can begin, the diseased part must be removed. There are hardships inflicted, but when the cancer is gone, the resulting cure is worth all the pain the operation caused” (Flagg, 1942).
The slum clearance literature referenced other medical modalities. An influential 1955 plan for slum clearance in Washington, D.C for instance, took a triage approach. “No Slums in Ten Years” suggested that some areas would require “complete clearance,” others could benefit from “spot surgery”, while “large-scale rehabilitation” would be needed in others (Bloom, 2004: 79).

The increased frequency of the “cancer” metaphor as a warrant for invasive slum clearance measures kept pace with another shift in the rhetoric of slum clearance. As the urgency of the disease metaphor increased, the characteristics of race rather than those of place became more salient. The term “ghetto” replaced that of “slum,” and the racial characteristics of residents eventually eclipsed the physical characteristics of their neighborhoods as the defining characteristic of “pathological” areas. This nominal transition had substantive force. As the slum problem was redefined as the ghetto problem, urban renewal came to be justified as a program that would break up concentrations of urban blacks in order to reduce their potential for explosive violence.

The Pathology of Race

In 1965, Hubert Humphrey spoke to the National Conference on Civil Rights. His widely-reported speech, intended to raise national consciousness about racial inequality, also demonstrated the changed public understanding of slums and their pathology:

“Slumism is poverty, illiteracy, disease..discrimination and frustration and bitterness..ungathered garbage and unheated buildings…a family of eight in an unheated room..danger in the air and violence in the street..rent so high a desperate man is moved to tears, or to crime….decay of structure and deterioration of the human spirit.”

“The danger,” he noted, “is that these ghetto slums are rapidly becoming not just part of the nation’s major cities but the nation’s major cities themselves.”

Humphrey was a noted supporter of legislation to address racial and social inequities, and his use of these themes demonstrates that the transition from “slum” to “ghetto” had become so pervasive that it was even incorporated into “progressive” tropes, like slum clearance and urban renewal.
As slums were increasingly defined in terms of race rather than place, the term “ghetto” became more common. Etymological history demonstrates the distinction between the word “slum” and the word “ghetto.” The former referred to place—originally, a back room or back alley, probably from the Irish phrase “S lom e Slum,” meaning a “vulnerable place.” The term ghetto, by contrast, was from the Venetian dialect ghetto, an island to which Jews were relegated. It therefore referred to a place that segregated problematic groups, such as populations of color.

By the 1950s, discussions of “slum clearance” and “urban renewal” policies had become de facto discussions about the dangers posed by large urban concentrations of black Americans. These concentrations were metaphoric “cancers” that would destroy their urban “hosts” if not surgically removed. This redefinition occurred within a particular historical context. During the period from 1930 to 1965, issues of racial disparity in housing, education, political participation and employment were brought to the foreground by the return of black soldiers from World War II, by the civil rights movement, and by the urban riots of the 1960s.

As Figure Two demonstrates, the rhetorical association between slums and ghettos and blacks increased slowly until the 1940s, and more quickly thereafter. The process of racialization became more intense during the 1950s. Robert C. Weaver of the John Hay Whitney foundation commented at the beginning of the decade, “as we look at what is being done in Chicago and Detroit, we see that what is supposed to be slum clearance is becoming Negro clearance” (“Inequalities Causing Race Bias, 1950). By the early 1960s, race had pervaded discussions of urban renewal/slum clearance, and intervention was rationalized by the need to prevent further explosions of urban violence.

The process of racialization can be traced through two phases of discourse. In the first phase, slums that housed large numbers of blacks were described in generic terms—that is, they were viewed as overcrowded areas characterized by dilapidated buildings and poor sanitary arrangements. Both place and race were problems. In the second phase, slums were redefined as ghettos, and concentrations of blacks rather than concentrations of dilapidated buildings were identified as the principal problem.

A 1930 article written in the aftermath of a Harlem riot demonstrates the first phase of racialization. “Within this territory lives an economically, socially and politically diverse group, united only by race. Harlem is American the way New York is American, a melting pot made up to Spaniards, Puerto Ricans, South Americans, West Indians, Mexicans, Africans and Abyssinians.” The author further argues that slum problems, such as ‘bunching’ [overcrowding] and poor housing, occur because the supply of housing for Negroes in this area is limited, leading to higher rents, and because Negroes are let go first in economic downturns (Feld, 1935). Notably absent from accounts of this sort, however, are concerns about “spreading” violence that might engulf larger segments of the city.

By the 1940s, however, a second rhetorical phase had emerged. Slums were increasingly viewed in terms of their potential for spreading racial violence. The physical condition of slum housing was only part of the problem. A 1943 editorial in The Chicago Tribune, for example, criticized the argument that the recent Detroit race riots were simply a function of poor housing conditions:

“…to ascribe race riots to bad housing is quite a flight of logic. Is it supposed that the Negroes of Detroit found their slum quarters so undesirable that they sallied out to attack the white people? Or that the whites of the city were so outraged by the Negro slums…that they invaded them and attacked the Negroes?” (“Housing and Race Riots”, 1943).

The supposed pathology of black and Hispanic slum dwellers was central to this developing construction. Urban blacks and Hispanics were increasingly distinguished from previous minority groups that had passed through the slums on their way to better lives. A 1959 New York Times article titled “60% Rise in Puerto Ricans and Negroes Is Seen Here” reported an analysis put forward by Harvard historian Oscar Handlin. Handlin noted that

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4 Because Proquest identified such a large number of stories using both the word “Negro” and the word “slum” I was not able to read each of the stories. I did, however, eliminate classes of articles that seemed likely to contain associations that did not relate to my hypothesis. I eliminated advertising, stories about situations in other nations, obituaries, book reviews, and reports of cultural events such as art shows.
“other big waves of migration also gave rise to the type of lawlessness and social disorder in which the newcomers [that is, blacks and Puerto Ricans] figured prominently. But he reported, too, that drug addiction and sexual disorders and irregularities among the Negro and Puerto Rican newcomers run high. And he records, too, that these newcomers seem more susceptible to physical and mental illnesses” (Knowles, 1959).

Characterizations of racial pathology suggested that concentrations of urban blacks created neighborhoods defined by particular patterns of “danger and deviance.” These “symptoms” of pathology constructed a sort of “slum syndrome” that characterized urban blacks and Hispanics. “Drunkeness. Unemployment. Gambling. Overcrowding. Homosexuality. Narcotics Addiction. Despair” headlined one account of a black and Puerto Rican neighborhood on West 84th street where a street brawl had occurred (Phillips, 1961). High percentages of female-headed families, high birth rates, and high rates of mental illness were other “symptoms” (Priddy, 1955).

Geographic concentrations of poor urban blacks were kindling for a potential conflagration. Some accounts stressed that outside agitators held the match. A 1943 article entitled “Problem of Negro Worries Capital” warned that the District’s mix of poor blacks concentrated in slums and well-educated, more affluent blacks was problematic: “We have welling up here an irresistible force among Negroes for their rights…it is being directed by people of great intelligence and increasing daring. The force is increasing to the point where we have to consider a basic law of physics. That force is going to burst out somewhere unless the white community adjusts itself to it” (Catledge, 1943). As new social movements emerged, these movements became incorporated into this discourse: “Increasingly strident appeals by so-called Black nationalist, Muslim and pro-African organizations are being made to the city’s Negroes. Some of the appeals are being made in terms that would promote the desegregation of black men and white” (Knowles, 1959).

The Cold War connection warranted stepped-up slum clearance efforts. In 1957, a New York Times story headed “Washington Slum to Be Replaced” demonstrated this new sense of urgency: “Ground will be broken this spring for an urban renewal project of global significance (emphasis added). The developers have already razed 29 acres of miserable frame shacks. A photograph of the Negro slum, with the Capitol looming out of the squalor, was circulated throughout the world by the Soviet Union as an ‘example’ of how Americans live.”

“Slum clearance and urban renewal were weapons aimed not at problematic places, but at problematic populations.”

The Watts riots in 1965 marked another break point. Now, the potential for violence had nothing to do with physical conditions and everything to do with concentrations of “pathologic” populations. Watts, as a 1965 New York Times story pointed out, had little in common with Eastern slums:

“To the eye of the Easterner, to whom a slum is a pile of bricks with dirt in the street and piled garbage cans the description of the Watts area in this term is misleading. Depressed urban areas in the wide-open cities of the west, in which Los Angeles is a leading example, do not have slums of that sort. Their slums look like Watts, a settlement of houses separated by lawns that often are kept green by watering, cars parked in front, various indications of appliances such as TV antennae and a business district that looks clean and well-tended.”

Still, the article continues, the symptoms of “slum pathology” are present, and “In 1960 the population was 77% Negro and now is much more. About 30% of the children are from broken homes, and the dropout rate in school is about 2.2 times that of the rest of the County… More than 500 parolees from County prisons live nearby. In three months the police reported 1,000 crimes, which included 96 murders, rapes, and felonious assaults…Prostitution and drunkenness are readily found in the area…narcotics are for sale there” (“Experts Divided on Rioting Cause”, 1965).

The “prevailing moods” in black areas were, a similar article noted, “economic and social apathy, a ranking sense of grievance against ‘whitey’, and a pent-up potential for violence” (“Race and Riots”, 1965). The warrant for action to break up this critical mass of grievance was expanded further during the 1960s. It now authorized attempts to break up any concentrations of urban blacks that posed a threat of explosive violence.

The McConie Commission Report on the Watts riots laid out this new warrant. “In examining the sickness at the center of our city, what has depressed and stunned us most is the dull, devastating spiral of failure that awaits the average child in the urban core- so serious and so explosive is the situation that unless it is checked, the August riots may seem to be only a curtain raiser for what could blow up in the future” (“Race and the City”, 1966). Concentrations of poor urban blacks, regardless of the condition of their housing, were now construed to be the problem. Slum clearance and urban renewal were weapons aimed not at problematic places, but at problematic populations.
Conclusion

The warrant for slum clearance and urban renewal changed in two ways from 1935 to 1950. Slums came to be regarded as more than sites that harbored physical and social illness. By the end of the period, any areas that were described as slums had become potentially metastasizing illnesses that justified any methods needed to remove them.

During the same period, the focus of this pathology shifted from “place” to “race”. The “cancer” was no longer defined in terms of concentrations of problematic buildings, but in terms of concentrations of problematic people; that is to say, poor people of color.

These two changes reinforced one another. In each of the three newspapers examined, the 1950s represented a high point in the number of stories that associated cancer and slums. During this era, the rhetorical association of “slums/ghettos” and blacks became much more common, although it peaked in the 1960s. The result of this shift was to conflate place and race; problematic neighborhoods were any neighborhoods where blacks concentrated.

These changes occurred within a shifting historical context. During the 1950s, the domestic and international risks posed by geographic concentrations of black Americans were pointed up by their incorporation into Cold War propaganda and by the rise of new Black Nationalist and civil rights movements. During the 1960s, the expansion of the civil rights movement, the growth of black power movements, and waves of urban riots reiterated the theme that concentrations of blacks, regardless of their physical surroundings, were potential powder kegs.

The rhetorical developments described in this paper have contemporary echoes and suggest an agenda for future research. Future studies might ask, for instance, whether more frequent public discourse about increasing violence and social problems in suburbs characterized by concentrations of blacks reiterate the tendency to conflate the pathology of place with that of race.

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Introduction

This article is a study of how physical and social divisions will affect urban form in the future. Cities are dividing themselves into two separate kinds of urban form that I describe as INSIDE and OUTSIDE. The inside consists of gated communities, office parks, and shopping areas with entry control points and barriers to physically demarcate a social division from the rest of the city, excluding those who cannot afford the inclusive lifestyle outside. Divisions that are social in nature, like income inequality and class stratification, are reinforced by physical barriers that serve as positive feedbacks to the social divide. Once physical barriers are erected to separate one part of society from the rest, the social divide widens. In other words, physical divisions lead to social divergence.

In a previous paper, I made the case that subdivisions have divided the neighborhood away from the city. This model was then applied subsequently from the city to the human scale. Within each subdivision, single-family detached homes with garages isolate their occupants from their neighbors. Family members that live in the homes are further separated from each other and divide themselves into their own spaces within the home. Individual behavior reflects the divisions that exist on the macro scale of the city. As a means of analyzing the nature of these divisions, I relied upon film and music, which can serve to communicate how society responds to changes in the built environment. These art forms describe how people feel about their surroundings in a way that a social science journal article cannot—by appealing directly to human emotion.

I will again turn to literature as a way to predict what the built environment and society will look like in the future. I will apply Margaret Atwood’s 2003 novel *Oryx and Crake* in my analysis of the near future, and EM Forster’s 1909 short story *The Machine Stops* for an analysis of the distant future. Not to discount the value of social science, I will examine works that describe the history of the city...
with respect to physical and social barriers and also to describe the initial conditions of today’s urban form.

Before making predictions about the near and distant future, I first want to take a glimpse at the near and distant past. What follows is a brief personal narrative of the late 20th century subdivision, and a brief historical narrative of the Medieval European walled city.

Compound Fractures

When I finished my time in the army in 2004, I returned to my hometown of San Diego to go to college. It had changed a lot in four years. It was more crowded, more expensive, and I decided to settle in Oceanside, a quieter surf and military town 60 miles to the north. Oceanside also had grown over the past few years, sprouting more developments, but not necessarily more neighborhoods. Subdivisions were characterless, and I lived in one such gated community. For four years in the Army, I was most often living “inside the wire,” surrounded by chain link fences, concertina wire, and the colors brown, green, and black. Now, in Oceanside, I was still inside a gate. It was a nice enough house, with nice enough roommates, but there was something weird about the place. It was too quiet, too isolated, too separated. I didn’t like it because it wasn’t a real neighborhood.

I grew up on a grid street with an alley. I could walk or ride my bike to 7-Eleven for a Slurpee, Thrifty for an ice cream, and all over the scruffy, filthy, saltiness that is Ocean Beach. I lived on a street that ran all the way down to the Pacific Ocean and into the OB pier. It ran all the way up to Catalina Boulevard, which ran north-south to the tip of Point Loma. Guizot Street ran from sunset cliffs to Nimitz Boulevard. Ours was the steepest street in town, and it was called Niagara Avenue. From my house, the east-west and north-south extents of those streets spanned the entire range of Ocean Beach. That was my neighborhood. Now my “neighborhood,” just outside Oceanside, had shrunked to the walled-in space containing the dozens of single-family tract homes within. If I walked out my front door in any direction, I would soon hit a fence or a wall. I called the development “The Compound.” This moniker came from the Oceanside development’s likeness to the housing compounds in the Middle East.

Occidentals working in the Middle East for oil companies or defense contractors typically live in western-style housing tracts, enclosed by stonewalls and guarded by a 24-hour security force. While on deployment, I had the pleasure of touring such a compound in Doha, Qatar, where a contractor invited us to see his home. The guardhouse at the entry control point was well appointed with a sliding Dutch door and bulletproof glass. The outgoing gate had tire spikes and a lifting barrier arm. The inside of the compound was richly landscaped; palm trees were in abundance. There likely was a garden staff of third-country nationals, laborers imported from Bangladesh, Nepal, and India. The wealth from oil exports meant that there was no such thing as a lower class Arab. Real GDP per capita was over $57,000 (Heston, 2009). The houses were all two-story affairs, with Spanish tile roofs and stucco exteriors ranging from light sand to mocha. I could have been in Oceanside.

My compound made me feel like a lonely lord. I looked out my window at the vacant lot beside our development. Kids would ride their 80cc dirt bikes across it. Eventually, every house received a notice in the door handle from the homeowners association, which put a stop to the two-stroke recreation. It could have been ox plows moving across the field. I was a kind of vassal. I received my income through the GI Bill, which meant that tax money was financing my living arrangement. I was living in a walled space, and, being on the second floor, I was above the masses. The thing was, once I mounted my trusty steed (a Honda Hawk motorcycle) and crossed over the drawbridge (out the gate), I was just like everyone else. I was a lord by geography only. And so was everyone else who lived in the compound.

What disturbed me about living in the gated compound was the feeling it gave—and the feeling it didn’t give. I didn’t feel safe, nor did I care to. Instead, I just felt isolated and disconnected. I was just out of the military and wanted to reconnect with society. I was already an outsider, 24 years old and in community college. Living inside the compound actually made me feel like more of an outsider. I found solace in surfing and motocross, individual pursuits that were my version of bowling alone. Then I broke my collarbone and had to face the fact that it was social interaction that I was craving. My recreational pursuits were just distractions from the feeling of isolation.

I began to notice some subtle aspects of society during my Army stint, like the ways people use cell phones and the Internet to isolate themselves. This really bothered me. The picture of a group of girls out to lunch, seated around a table and all on their phones is etched in my memory. Riding in a car with everyone talking on the phone is another. Just another brick in the wall, I suppose. Except it seemed like society was building the wall, trying to keep me out. The divisions were not only physical. They were social, too.

“Divisions that are social in nature, like income inequality and class stratification, are reinforced by physical barriers that serve as positive feedbacks to the social divide.”
Cities Long Ago

Throughout history, the purpose of a city wall was to protect the city against enemy invaders. It was for keeping outsiders out. Now, walls around gated communities serve to keep the city out.

Howard Saalman's *Medieval Cities* details the purpose of medieval walls as follows:

“While one tends to think of [town walls] in terms of siege, with the militia behind the crenellations pouring boiling oil on ascending invaders, the everyday and even more important purpose of the walls should not be neglected: control of entry and exit in peacetime. To accomplish these specialized tasks effectively, medieval town walls, following Roman tradition, consisted of three characteristic parts: wall, tower, and gate. One to two meters thick and frequently up to twenty meters high, the wall was an insurmountable obstacle to normal transit. Its dank shadow blanketed an area some fifty feet wide on either side. Every hundred feet or so the wall swelled out into a round or square tower. Broken by small openings, the towers provided garrison within a maximum field of cross fire on an attacking enemy. The critical points in the wall, however, were the gates. By definition weak points in the fabric, they were doubly protected by especially large and strong flanking towers (Saalman, 1968).”

That much seems obvious, but Saalman has another key point about city gates during peacetime, which is much less palpable—The city gates were places where people waited. This waiting gave rise to the first suburbs, *faubourgs*. Now to paraphrase Saalman’s succinct explanation of how these proto-suburbs sprang up outside the city walls:

People had to wait at the city gate before they could conduct their business inside the city. Sometimes they arrived after the gate was closed and would have to sleep outside. Eventually, someone built an inn on the road leading to the gate, just outside the wall. After that, artisans set up shop to serve the guests staying at the inn. Voilà. The faubourg became the first suburb (Saalman, 1968).

Faubourgs grew even as land within the city walls remained unsettled. This is because; contrary to Robert Park and Ernest Burgess’ concentric ring theory of urban form, settlements within a city actually followed a starfish pattern, with densities greatest along the roads that radiated outward from the city center. This left the triangular regions between these roads unused. The faubourg, however, was on the main road leading to the city, so it grew in size as the favorable locations within the walls became saturated. It wasn’t only because of this favorable location that market activity increased, but also because visitors and merchants could conduct business in the faubourg without having to pay (or, at least, could more easily evade) the city’s gate and sales taxes.

Not only were faubourgs the first suburbs, they were also the first satellite cities. Eventually, the city walls would leapfrog the faubourg and it would become part of the city. In 1968, Saalman even noted, “The faubourg markets quickly turned into major satellite nuclei of economic life in competition with the older and usually smaller markets within the walls” (Saalman, 1968). This notation is a prescient one. Over the many years since Saalman published this work, the proliferation of developing green spaces outside the city for “big box” stores such as Home Depot and Target, which dwarf downtown hardware and drug stores, fits this description.

Saalman touches next on the fact that, despite the advantage of economic freedom, what the faubourgs truly wanted was to eventually be included inside the city wall:

“For whatever the limited advantages of a market in competition with the city, inclusion within the walls with all of the physical security, legal privileges, and economic opportunities that it implied—particularly if viability was enhanced by the demolition of the old inner wall ring—had greater attraction still (Saalman, 1968).”

So here we have an explanation for the preference merchants had to first locate along the main roads within the city walls. The second most desirable location was just outside the city gates, along these same major roads. But how did these entrepreneurs, who set up outside the gate, get what they wanted, which was inclusion within the city? Demolishing the old wall while simultaneously building the new one was expensive, not to mention time- and labor-intensive. The answer lies in the fact that the city first wanted to collect taxes from the faubourg, and second, populations were outgrowing the city, so more people were living outside the wall. These pressures led to the inclusion of the faubourg within a new city wall, but Saalman cites many examples of cities whose faubourgs did not gain inclusion, such as Aachen, Geneva, Paris, Strasbourg, and Barcelona.

In any case, the motivations of the medieval faubourgs and the modern day satellite developments are the same. In each example, these new developments founded outside of a major city will earn eventual inclusion within the city limits, as population and the economy grow, raising the value of their structures and land, which was acquired on the cheap. “There is a public challenge in the very fact that in these localities civic and industrial institutions are being created brand-new, on a wholesale scale, without the handicaps and restrictions which high land values and prior improvement impose on every effort to reconstruct the congested centers” (Taylor, 1970). As major city borders
expand outwards to contain their satellites, metropolitan advantages benefit the industrial suburbs. The economist Alfred Marshall presented the concept of localization in 1920, along with the idea of external economies, and what contemporary economists call technological spillover. As Saalman puts it, “It was the expectation of this eventual inclusion within the magic circle of production and trade that had brought the hopeful future franc bourgeois to the foot of the walls in the first place” (1968). The similarities between the faubourgs and the satellite cities seem to point to a want of inclusion and protection. As faubourgs grew, some cities, such as Breslau, expanded their walls to protect them.

The purpose of exploring the form of medieval cities and their expansions around the faubourgs was to determine whether or not this study would come into play when defining the initial conditions that are the basis for predicting the future of urban form. An understanding of medieval cities as a whole yields the striking similarities to today’s urban growth patterns. Both the medieval and the modern city spawned developments outside their physical limits, and expanded in many cases to include them. The inhabitants of the faubourgs and satellite developments settled outside of the city with the hope that they would be included in the future. Today, instead of entire cities fortifying themselves within walls, residential developments that are located inside the city are erecting barriers to keep the rest of the city out. Settlers in these gated communities want to be included in the city geographically, but want to exclude everyone else.

What follows is an examination of the literature dealing with gated communities to trace their historical roots. Once I have examined both the city as a whole and the fortified subdivision, I will be able to define the initial conditions and make predictions based on the fictional texts.

Walls inside Cities
A city with a wall and a gate was common in Medieval Europe, as was a single building with a wall and gates. But a collection of dwellings, private spaces within a public space, with a wall enclosing them all, effectively turning the public streets into private paths, was unheard of until the 19th century.

In the mid 1800s, the first such enclaves for the rich in the US were built in New York, New Jersey and Boston. Tuxedo Park, a hunting and fishing retreat built in New York in 1868, featured an eight-foot high barbed wire fence twenty-four miles long (Hayden 2003). Julius Pitman designed St. Louis’s private streets for the business elite to isolate themselves from the filth of rapid industrialization.

It would take a century before the gated development became accessible to the middle class, in the form of retirement communities in the 1960s and 70s. Gates and walls then began to enclose and surround resorts, country clubs, and finally, subdivisions and even existing city streets.

There are two works that I found particularly useful in understanding the current place of gated communities in our society. The first is Evan McKenzie’s Privatopia (1994). Second is Fortress America (1997), by Edward Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder.

Secession of the Successful
Evan McKenzie’s study of the Common Interest Development (CID) covers a range of issues, but mainly focuses on the “private government” structure of homeowner’s associations and how they relate to local governments. He traces the formation of CIDs from Ebenezer Howard’s Garden Cities to the present day form of privately owned luxury subdivisions in the United States. To ensure that the land would not be used for other purposes in the future, the restrictive covenant was born. In the 1970s, municipalities faced budget deficits and were encouraging the building of subdivisions with private infrastructure (1994). The CID was a kind of garden city, one with greater government powers than that of the city, and one that could restrict access to its “territory.” Since CIDs give their residents the opportunity to leave the city, McKenzie cites what Robert Reich calls a “secession of the successful,” writing that the constant growth of CIDs over time could perhaps lead to “a gradual secession from the city that would leave it stripped of much of its population and resources.” This describes the condition Detroit and other industrial mid-western cities have faced over a half-century of gradual decline. McKenzie mentions ominously “this steady secession would make the lives of those who remained in the city increasingly difficult” (1994).

Charles Murray predicted in 1991 that a caste system of the rich who govern themselves on private land will view cities the way Americans today view Indian reservations (1994). Rather than addressing social concerns in the cities, people have rejected urban life, moved away and built walls around themselves.

The Increasing Divide
“From the beginning, the suburbs have intended to separate their residents, first from the city and later even from each other,” write Blakely and Snyder, in Fortress America. They examine the motivation and desire that suburbanites have for living behind a wall. One reason is that developers have used gates as marketing tools. Like the bonus room, a gated community is just one more option that differentiates one cookie cutter development from the next, until every developer has accepted the need for gates. “With their often elaborate guardhouses and entrance architecture, gates also provide the crucial product differentiation—and clear identity—that is needed
in crowded and competitive suburban new home markets” (1997). Indeed, these developments display names that are “meant to conjure up bucolic rural imagery and only coincidentally reflect the actual landscape” (1997).

Marketing aside, people choose to live in gated communities because they want two feelings: One of safety and the other of community.

These reasons can be seen in the types of gated communities that exist. Blakely and Snyder classify three types: lifestyle, prestige, and security zone. While the lifestyle and prestige communities are typically separated from cities first through physical distance, security zone communities can start as ordinary neighborhoods with grid streets. Due to crime or traffic, these neighborhoods erect barriers so that their residents can control the space. “The fortress mentality is perhaps clearest here, where groups of people band together to shut out their neighbors” (1997). Here is a situation where fear of localized crime or increased traffic has resulted in the erection of gates and barriers to close off public streets and create defensible space (Newman, 1972). The gain in a feeling of safety can come at the cost of a loss of community. Blakely and Snyder posit that the purpose of these barriers is to preserve the sense of community but counter that “gated communities are no better or worse than society as a whole in producing a strong sense of collective citizenship” (2003). The issue of building barriers can even lead to stiff resistance by some residents, citing racial and class motivations. Some residents may simply move out of a newly barricaded neighborhood completely. Whitley Heights, CA and Miami Shores are examples of barricading that shattered cohesion within the community.

**Insiders, Outsiders, Dividers**

From the McKenzie and Blakely/Snyder texts, I pull two main points. First, there is an increasing social divide between those living in gated communities and those who remain in the city. A member of Citizens Against Gated Enclaves (CAGE), who fought against the Whitley Heights gate, best illustrates this point in a remark. “[A gate] says ‘stay out’ and it also says, ‘We are wealthy and you guys are not, and this gate shall establish the difference’” (Blakely 2003).

The second point is that as city form becomes disrupted with isolated, gated communities, society fractures as well. Blakely and Snyder note that a lack of social contact leads to a disintegration of the social contract. The sense of community becomes lost within gated communities and their greater urban areas. Hired guards substitute for responsibility to look out for one another and the social contract starts to break. Without this responsibility, residents lose interest in their neighbors. The physical isolation of the gated subdivision works its way down to the individual. The theory holds true that a community that divides itself away from the city will become divided within.

These points combined together form the initial condition from which predictions will be made in the following section. The trend in increasing social divide between insiders and outsiders is my basis for predicting the near future, using Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* as a guide. The trend of divisions that arise between individuals is my basis for predicting the long-term future, using E.M. Forster’s short story *The Machine Stops*.

**Cities in the Near Future**

**Compounds and Pleeblands**

Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* is a dystopian description of a world many years in the future. The ice caps have melted, Greenland’s ice sheet has slid into the Atlantic, Lake Okeechobee has shrunk to a mud puddle, New York has been swallowed by the sea, and many animal species have gone extinct after failing to adapt to a climate where Canadian summers start in February (and corporate vice presidents take vacations to Hudson Bay for the cool weather).

The stress for resources has stratified society in two, determined by where people live and work. In the *Compounds*, the privatization of the city has reached a nexus in the form of fortified corporate campuses (typically in the field of bioengineering), each complete with housing for all the workers and their families, schools (including universities) and malls. The bioengineering corporations like HealthWyzer, Watson-Crick, OrganIc, AnooYoo, and RejouvenEsense have the technologies to meet the world’s demand for basic necessities in the face of dwindling resources, and then some. Consumption has continued to increase, especially in the image department, and the corporations grow organs, engineer children, and have pills to make you “fatter, thinner, hairier, balder, whiter, browner, blacker, yellower, sexier, and happier” (2003).

However, the Compounds are not completely self-sustaining, as some Compounders lament. After a case of corporate sabotage, one man says that they should bring delivery services “in house.” Security is carried out by the CorpSeCorps, strict and all knowing. The high compound wall is rimmed with razor wire. Towers and guardhouses recall medieval city walls. Travel between the
Compounds and Modules (smaller Compound outposts) is achieved via bullet trains with bulletproof glass that crisscross the Pleeblands, the name given to everything outside the Compounds.

Remember when everyone lived in the Pleeblands?

“Rows of dingy houses; apartment buildings with tiny balconies, laundry strung on railings; factories with smoke coming out of the chimneys; gravel pits. A huge pile of garbage… (2003).”

In the Pleeblands, everything is disorderly, left to chance. The main character Jimmy is a perfect example of how isolation from the Pleeblands affects the individual. He had “grown up in walled spaces, and then he had become one. He had shut things out” (2003).

Atwood’s world is not so different from our own. It simply shows a divide in urban form that is on par with the social. Blakely and Snyder give the case of Rosemont, Illinois, outside Chicago, which “has installed guardhouses, staffed by police, on the public streets leading into its main residential area. Left outside is the commercial area of freeway off-ramp hotels, businesses, and several apartment buildings” (2003, emphasis added). This sounds eerily similar to the comparison of the Compound and Pleebland.

In Atwood’s world of Compounds and Pleeblands, the Compound has put up a wall that surrounds every aspect of one’s life. Home, work, and leisure are all contained within the wall. In today’s world, these aspects are still separate. Yet walls surround each. In the case of gated communities, homes are surrounded by a wall. Office parks with restricted entry and parking garages are another kind. Shopping malls with high levels of security and closed circuit television surveillance to maintain order and keep out undesirables is yet another example.

Another present day example of the increasing physical barriers between the stratified layers of the upper and lower class can be found in post-Apartheid South Africa. As Martin Murray writes in *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid*:

“As the era of white minority rule came to an abrupt end, middle-class urban residents began to move indoors, safely ensconced behind a prohibitive labyrinth of interdictory spaces. The proliferation of enclosed suburban shopping malls, gated residential communities, and fortified office complexes on the ex-urban fringe, together with the steady expansion of underground parking garages with restricted entry and above-ground walkways that bypass the streets… has usurped the conventional role of town squares, public parks, and downtown sidewalks for everyday social interaction. This expanding network of cocooned urban environments…has fundamentally reshaped the uses and meanings of urban space in the new South Africa. Barriers, walls, and security perimeters are the visible signs of the growing fortress mentality in urban South Africa after apartheid. (2008)”

The reason that urban form has not changed drastically toward Compounds with walls that surround the entire area where we live, work, and play, is due to the automobile. But in Atwood’s world, the internal combustion engine is obsolete. There is no mention of petroleum or petrol-powered cars, or even of jets. Compounders get around in electric golf carts, and bullet trains connect the Compounds. With urban planning trending towards “compact, walkable” cities, I find it plausible that suburban developments in the future will consist of these same characteristics. In Atwood’s future, there is no feasible substitute to the gasoline engine, and automobiles with ranges of over 300 miles are nonexistent. If this holds true in our future, it will be necessary to bring all aspects of life closer together. Since each aspect of home, work, and leisure already have barriers around them today, bringing them together in a single geographic location, there will be a wall that surrounds the entire Compound. These will be linked by high-speed MagLev or electric trains.

In Atwood’s future, the privatization of the city is carried to the extreme, as cities become corporatized. Each Compound houses its employees and support staff. It’s very similar to a military base, where all work takes place, and where most of the soldiers live. There is a post exchange for shopping, with a food court and barbershop, dry cleaners, and pharmacy. The hospital is nearby on its own defended territory. There is even an education center where soldiers can take night classes. Located just outside the base is the definition of a Pleebland, complete with payday loan offices, pawn shops, tattoo parlors, used car lots, and strip clubs.

I consider the fortification of residential neighborhoods with guardhouses as a kind of “militarization.” Setha Low, author of *Behind the Gates*, writes, “Living in a military compound is like living in a gated community” (2003). To complete the model of a Compound, it is necessary to determine how exactly Greenfield developments will arise in the form we have described. The answer, I believe, lies in climate change.

A major problem of climate change lies in its uncertainty. The probability density function of climate sensitivity has a “fat tail,” meaning that given a doubling of carbon and equivalent emissions in the atmosphere, global mean temperature can rise by an amount with an unknown upper bound (Yohe, 2004). For this reason, Atwood’s description of a rapid rise in sea level that washed away coastal towns and cities, including New York, is plausible. The people who have the financial means to evacuate a
flooded city will have to set up anew on a Greenfield site. Since these people will be of a certain socio-economic status that meets some minimum requirement to evacuate and relocate, it is sensible that the resulting settlements will be socioeconomically homogeneous. There is precedent in this pattern, as seen in the racial segregation of Detroit and the surrounding Wayne and Oakland County suburbs, and as described by Beall et al. when describing post-Fordist spatial segregation in Johannesburg after Apartheid (2002).

New developments will, of course, depend on the employment opportunities available from the corporations that decide to locate and develop Greenfield sites. Those relocating will be in the upper class, and will earn the right to live inside the Compound. These Compounds will be master-planned, and built on the theoretical foundation of New Urbanism. Schools, hospitals, and malls will all be included in dense, mixed-use blocks that will be accessible by foot. The compact nature of the design will facilitate the building of a circular wall. The poor will set up outside the wall, forming the new faubourg, the new favela, the new Pleeblad.

Cities in the Distant Future
Accessibility and Isolation to the Extreme

One of the buzzwords in the field of urban planning is “accessibility.” In the most prescient work of fiction I have ever read, E.M. Forster predicted, in 1909, how people interact with each other in the future to an astonishing degree of accuracy. Accessibility in Forster’s world has reached a nexus, where things are brought to people instead of people going to things. People isolate themselves in their rooms, because there is no need to travel to acquire anything, not even face-to-face human contact. Already today, our perception of isolation has changed. We feel isolated not when we are separated from people, but when we are separated from communication technologies.

In The Machine Stops, humans have been forced underground by an inhospitable atmosphere and into a honeycomb arrangement of single rooms, called The Machine. Man lives alone in his room, and does not need to leave it for any reason. Everything is available at the press of a button.

“There were buttons and switches everywhere—buttons to call for food, for music, for clothing. There was the hot-bath button, by pressure of which a basin of (imitation) marble rose out of the floor, filled to the brim with a warm deodorizing liquid. There was the cold-bath button. There was the button that produced literature. And there were of course the buttons by which she communicated with her friends. The room, though it contained nothing, was in touch with all that she cared for in the world (Forster, 1909).”

It is the concept of accessibility taken to the extreme, which leads to extreme isolation. When Vashti (“She” in the above passage) receives what is best described as a videoconference call from her son on the other side of the world, he says that she must come to him via airship. She does with reluctance, and for the first time in months, leaves her room and enters a hall where:

“She would summon a car and it would fly her down the tunnel until it reached the lift that communicated with the air-ship station...And of course she had studied the civilization that had preceded her own—the civilization that had mistaken the functions of the system, and had used it for bringing people to things instead of for bringing things to people. Those funny old days, when men went for change of air instead of changing the air in their rooms! (Foster, 1909)”

It is amazing how precisely accurate E.M. Forster’s accounts are, considering the story is more than 100 years old. He essentially describes the Internet, but also foretells the way people will use it, and the self-imposed isolation that results from it. Ironically, there is even a button for isolation to block incoming messages. In one instance, after three minutes in isolation, Vashti turns off the isolation switch and is swamped with incoming messages. “To most of these questions she replied with irritation—a growing quality in that accelerated age” (Foster, 1909). How true that people have, to a degree, lost the desire (and ability, perhaps) to communicate face to face and would rather send text messages. Direct experience terrifies Vashti. When the attendant on the airship touches her arm, she finds the act barbaric. Technologies that make communication possible for people who are far apart, end up pushing people at arm’s length more distant. At anytime, someone can pull out her phone and take more interest in its tiny screen than her immediate surroundings. How many hours per day do we spend looking at a screen (computer monitor, cell phone, television) and how many hours do we spend engaged in face-to-face communication?

The caution that E.M. Forster warns against is that this sort of behavior, this need to know information instantly, this addiction to all things digital and our preference for their second hand representations of real life interaction, goes even beyond basic isolation, and that leading to an aversion of “frightening” direct experience. He warns that when fractures in society become so deep that society begins to crumble, we will allow things to go from bad to worse, unchallenged (Foster, 1909).

In E.M. Forster’s underground world, man has separated himself from the surface of the earth. He subtly describes that this did not happen suddenly, nor was it man’s choice. The discrete, individual cells in the honeycomb worlds were probably set up as a form of redundancy, in
case there were leaks or failures in parts of the machine, to ensure mankind's survival. The air-ship system, the cars in the halls, and the communication system were all in place so that people could connect with one another, and not feel so alone. But as Vashti pointed out, that was the old civilization. Eventually, man made the change from people going to things, to bringing things to people. The decrease in physical travel occurred because the world looked the same everywhere. There was no point in going to Pekin when it looked just like Shrewsbury, wrote Forster. When we separate ourselves from our environment, we separate ourselves from each other. This is clearly exemplified in the situation wherein someone pays more attention to a tiny digital screen than to others.

Conclusion
Society is becoming increasingly stratified due to income inequality. As stratification increases, physical divisions in urban form increase. Technology has made the use of personal communications and entertainment devices pervasive. As the use of these devices increases, human face–to–face interaction declines. This decline in interaction leads to deliberate isolation. There is a positive feedback effect between an increasingly divided urban form and decreasing social interaction.

In the near future, cities will become further divided and approach the form described by Margaret Atwood in her novel, *Oryx and Crake*. In the distant future, society will behave in a manner approaching that described by E.M. Forster in his 1909 short story, *The Machine Stops*.

In many ways, we already live in the setting of *Oryx and Crake*, and behave like the underground civilization in *The Machine Stops*. We have divided cities into isolated, fortified communities, and isolate ourselves through the use of technology. In both of these stories, the environment, in the ecological sense, was damaged. In *Oryx and Crake*, the planet was still inhabitable, but the standard of living was only maintained for those in the Compounds, and then, only through some radical feats of bioengineering. In *The Machine Stops*, the atmosphere was unbreatheable, and man took the drastic step of separating himself from it, and as he did so, his society broke apart until each man isolated himself fully from virtually all direct contact with others. The reason this happened is because people were separated from the natural environment. When we put a barrier between ourselves and the natural world, we lose our connection to all living things, including each other.

References


Secondary Sources


Design Charrettes

The design charrette, a mainstay of École des Beaux-Arts education that fell out of favor with the rise of Modernism, has enjoyed a revival in both the academy and the profession in recent decades.

What is a design charrette? There are varying definitions and a range of types, and different purposes and goals. One of my favorite descriptions is that a charrette is the best way to get the most creative proposals for the most challenging problems from the most accomplished designers in the shortest period of time. A more succinct definition is an illustrated brainstorm. There are two basic types: ones in which multiple teams each develop a different scheme for the same project/site; the others in which a single team collaborates to develop different aspects or areas within the same project/site. Academic charrettes run by architecture and planning schools tend to be the first type or a hybrid of the two types, while professional practice favors the second type.

This essay will focus on the two dozen academic charrettes that I organized in as many years, first as Architecture Chair at the University of Washington and then as the dean at the University of Michigan. In these two cases, the term charrette came to mean a four-day, intensive design workshop that brings together three or four teams to generate and present different visions for a particular site. Typically, each team was led by one or two distinguished visiting professionals (architect, urban designer, landscape architect, or urban planner), one or two local design professionals, and a design faculty member or two. They co-led a team of 10 to 15 graduate students from architecture, urban design, urban planning, or landscape architecture programs in one or more universities. Occasionally, they were supplemented with business, law, and public policy students. Most teams tended to operate like temporary offices with the professionals and faculty members acting as design partners and the students as the design and production team, although the roles were fluid and other collaborative modes were used.

Over the last decade, the University of Michigan design charrette hosted over 30 faculty from various schools and colleges within the University and from other local universities, some 80 local design professionals and consultants, 60 visiting professionals and academics from around the country and world, and over 600 students. There were also visiting students from the architecture schools at Detroit Mercy, Wayne State, Lawrence Technological University, Miami, Morgan State, Harvard, and Pennsylvania, as well as from Detroit’s Cass Technical High School. Depending on the site and program, there sometimes were stakeholder and local citizen volunteers that became active team members.

The charrette process began with a morning-long bus and/or walking tour of the site and environs, led by local residents and professionals. After lunch, there was an afternoon of briefings by community leaders, landowners, government officials, and business leaders, as well as financial and technical consultants. These speakers were a vital part of the charrette and were carefully chosen based on the problems and opportunities suggested by the project or site. There were as many as a dozen 5 to 15 minute presentations, and sometimes a longer keynote talk. Urban historians, commercial experts, real estate developers, and public artists have also participated in various consulting and speaking capacities. In some cases, residents of the area became working team members, but they were more typically consultants or observers (due to the extensive time and technical needs in a charrette).

Following the briefings, the teams work independently for the following three days – in the same or adjacent space in an atmosphere of friendly and open competition. First, they discussed and distilled the information provided during the briefings and from any relevant data or literature made available or found on the web. (In some cases, students prepared by doing preliminary research and analyses before the charrette.) The teams collaboratively brainstormed ideas based on what they perceived to be the needs and opportunities of the site itself, as well as advice and information offered by experts, residents, stakeholders and consultants. There was no written program or problem statement. It was up to each team to decide the highest and best use of the site. In the early stages, the teams engaged in no-holds-barred discussions as they considered and tested ideas from any and all of its members. Initially, no idea was too radical, too obvious, or too extraneous. Many design and planning concepts quickly proliferated in a stage that was fertile and imaginative.
The mix and interaction of design professionals, faculty, and students is vibrant, creative, and productive. The chemistry produces ideas and designs of varying merit, but always compelling and profound ones that conventional, linear consulting studies would rarely if ever generate.

Photo: Doug Kelbaugh

As acceptable ideas were generated, team leaders often sorted themselves and the students into sub-teams for additional research and for development of options, which were periodically presented to other members of the team in pin-ups. About halfway through the process, usually toward the end of the second day, options were winnowed down and an overall strategy emerged by consensus. If no clear consensus emerged in time, team leaders often formulated a strategy based on prevailing ideas for execution by the team. Then the mode changed, often dramatically, from expansive brainstorming to a more disciplined focus on the production of drawings, images, and text. The second half of the charrette was usually a feverish team effort. It was a race, sometimes exhilarating and sometimes panicky, to the deadline to effectively illustrate the creative explosion of ideas in the first half. However, important or defining ideas sometimes came later in the process, making the scramble all the more intense.

Figure 2 (right) – Four teams work in friendly competition for four days in a well-equipped common space to generate their visions of what is the highest and best use for a consequently site in the community, in this case downtown Detroit.
Photo: Doug Kelbaugh

The workshop culminated with a public event that included a posted exhibit of the work, a reception, and a digital presentation by each team – all at a prominent venue within or near the study area. The general public, stakeholders, business and institutional leaders, government officials, and the media were notified by printed and email invitations, as well as word of mouth. The crowd ranged from 200-400 people and the media coverage usually included local TV stations and newspapers. Shortly after the charrette, CDs containing the presentations (originally color slides, later PowerPoint) from both the initial briefings and the team presentations were distributed to key people and parties. At the end of the semester, a 32-64-page book detailing the design proposals was published and hundreds of complimentary copies distributed to a larger audience. More than just a chronicle and archive of the event, the books were meant to help catalyze implementation of proposed concepts and designs.1

The visiting professionals were a virtual who’s who of contemporary urban design. They have included academic/professional leaders such as, in no particular order, Alex Krieger, Anne Winston Spirn, Rich Haag, Laurie Olin, Anne Vernez-Moudon, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Peter Calthorpe, Harrison Fraker, Michael Dennis, Toni Griffin, Linda Jewel, Andres Duany, Michael Pyatok, David Sellers, Walter Hood, Dan Solomon, Joseph Esherick, Ellen Dunham-Jones, Ken Greenberg, Gary Hack, Henning Larsen, Mary-Ann Ray, Michael Speaks, Stefanos Polyzoides, Elizabeth Moule, Rahul Mehrotra, and many other distinguished designers and planners.

Although I had previously participated in several design charrettes, the origin of the University of Washington series was quite accidental. When appointed the chair of the architecture department there in 1985, I wanted to invite a distinguished visiting professor for a semester, but lacking the funds, found that three or four top designers would come for five days at lower cost (especially if the guests knew and respected each other). Little did I know that this first design workshop would grow over the next quarter century into the largest annual design charrette in the country. Including subsequent charrettes at the University of Michigan, I organized and/or participated in over 30 of them. Several thousand students, faculty, guest professionals, and consultants participated and a total of some 10,000 people attended the public presentations at the end of these events. And a score of booklets were published and distributed.

1
The charrettes typically dealt with an urban design issue, project, or site of civic importance. Several variants emerged: ones to test and illustrate new public policies or design ideas on real sites; ones to respond to requests for help from community/civic organizations or government agencies; and ones to explore a particularly glaring problem or promising opportunity offered by a specific site. Most charrettes were hybrids, for example testing a new idea on an empty or under-utilized site. They consistently advanced creative solutions on real sites for real clients and users, as opposed to being theoretical or academic exercise for the sake of the students. The level of feasibility varied from project to project and from team to team, and whether the time horizon of the proposal was ten, twenty or more years. Some proposed designs were unrealistically ambitious or visionary, but most proposals tended to seek the middle ground, the sweet spot between an inspiring vision and a workable proposal.

Befitting the public university, these charrettes always worked with public agencies, organizations, or institutions and resisted requests from the private sector. It became clear over time that these compressed, adrenaline-driven brainstorms that are more appropriate to large, open sites that lend themselves to the major surgery of big concepts and broad-brush schemes. Charrette results should be seen as more illustrative than definitive, and only one step, preferably early, in the longer planning and development process. They consistently generated more imaginative ideas and proposals than conventional, linear design consulting would likely have produced. The chemistry of collaboration within teams and competition between teams engendered remarkable levels of thinking and production and, seemingly without fail, produced unique and compelling proposals.

Each charrette produced considerable local buzz and publicity. There were usually follow-up presentations to community groups and stakeholders, and the charrettes were often published and aired in the local print and electronic media. Sometimes they precipitated the commissioning of further studies or built projects or both. The charrettes consistently generated visions for the public and provided palpable imagery and imaginative ideas for public discussion, digestion and dissemination, as well as adoption by the community and eventual implementation. In any case, they elevated the level of public consciousness in a positive and provocative way that seemed to be widely understood and appreciated. There was always the danger of raising expectations too high within the community and the public at large, and caution and discretion had to be used in the presentation, publication, and dissemination of the results.

The charrettes ran the gamut of sites and programs. They suggested development where there was a hole in the urban fabric, where there were poorly utilized and under-populated areas, or where empty land offered entirely new and exciting opportunities. The 1988 charrette on a greenfield site along an existing rail line south of Seattle resulted in The Pedestrian Pocket Book, a national best seller in urban design and architecture. The small book helped jumpstart Transit Oriented Development (TOD), which has since become a well-known and influential strategy for planning and development in general and for New Urbanism in particular.

These annual events attempted to fill in some of the holes and to bring attention to overlooked opportunities and undernourished possibilities throughout the metropolitan area. The sites and programs were typically chosen in consultation with funders, civic leaders and the community, although the availability of funds or sponsors sometimes influenced the selection of a particular site or project to be studied. The selection criteria varied from time to time, but some were less negotiable. The charrette had to deal with a timely problem of significant enough size and scope to warrant the use of the many participants and resources; the location and topic had to make sense in social, environmental, and planning terms; and the sponsors or clients had to be not-for-profit and, in some cases, willing to help fund and/or fundraise for the event. If a charrette answered an urgent need or seized a ripe opportunity, so much the better. And, if it was likely to influence the course or trigger actual development, better yet. Outside funding was always needed, because university funds were perennially insufficient or non-existent. In

The UW charrettes were sited in the Seattle region, although two were in Italy and one in India. The sites in the majority of the charrettes were relatively open and underused areas. They ranged from ten acres to five hundred acres – large and open enough to exercise the full range of the design talent and experience gathered, and small enough to be handled in four or five days. Sites with more nuanced and smaller scale issues, such as ones in the midst of a mature neighborhood or built out district were generally avoided to keep demolition and displacement of people and businesses to a minimum. These sites were usually better approached with semester-long design studios or as research projects, which are more patient, agile, and suited to the careful assessment and microsurgery often needed.

Because they were primarily or completely underwritten by third party sponsors and essentially gifts to the public, teams were not beholden to or unduly influenced by political pressure. This design freedom and autonomy was conducive to a healthy and open-minded visioning process.
the early years, willing sponsors and funders were harder
to find than in later years, when interested communities
and agencies sometimes asked and even competed to be
selected.

When I moved in 1998 to the University of
Michigan’s Taubman College of Architecture and Urban
Planning, I quickly introduced the annual charrette and
it soon took root in Detroit and in the college during
the decade of my deanship. Eight of the ten charrettes
focused on large, relatively empty or under-developed sites
in the central city, especially ones that needed, or would
benefit from, redevelopment in the near future. In a large
city with a small planning and development department,
the UM charrette became what some citizens described as
the most important annual event in the public discourse
on the future of the city. For the Detroit workshops, the
student and faculty participants relocated 45 miles from
the campus in Ann Arbor to downtown Detroit for the
duration of the workshop. The college has since opened
a community design center in midtown Detroit, which
pro bono
offers architecture classes to high school students, and may
host future design workshops and charrettes.

Figure 3 – The University of Michigan’s Taubman
College organized ten charrettes between 1988 and
2008. Eight of them focused on various sites in central
Detroit, including the seven shown here.

There can be external and internal problems and
challenges. As noted, charrettes can raise the community’s
expectations too high; they can propose unrealistic,
elegant and infeasible schemes; some student
participants may find them disorganized and unevenly
paced; other students feel their ideas are under-appreciated
or overlooked altogether;4 they can cause some students
to miss classes on campus, annoying their instructors; they
consume considerable staff time and resources to mount
which some faculty resented; and, if poorly-conceived or
executed, a charrette can produce more heat than light.
Also, some students were annoyed that participation
was required if they enrolled in certain design studios.
On the other hand, many volunteered and were eager to
participate, even as a curricular overload. Ironically, the
UM charrettes were often appreciated and valued more
outside than inside the school. Indeed, as noted earlier,
some groups and organizations requested, even fought, to
have charrettes in their communities.

For these and other reasons, charrettes must
be well planned and well organized, sometimes needing
three- to six-months lead time needed for recruiting guests
and the many other preparations. Charrettes can also be
costly. The budgets for the UW charrettes in Seattle were
typically $10,000 or $15,000. The UM charrettes in Detroit
were larger and typically had a budget of $50,000 or more,
plus significant in-kind contributions from DTE, the
regional utility company that generously provided space,
equipment, and food.5 One of the major differences
was that in the Detroit events all the students and out-
town professionals, who numbered 60 or more, were
provided hotel lodging and meals for four or five days and
nights. Also, the cost and need for computing and printing
equipment steadily increased over the years, as production
switched from handcraft to machine. Generally, funds
were successfully raised from the university president
and/or provost, local donors, corporations, foundations,
and agencies. The City of Detroit, which was financially
challenged, was never asked for any financial or in-kind
contributions. Although expensive to mount for an
academic institution, it can be argued that their market
value was considerably greater. Indeed, to conduct a similar
event entirely with paid professionals and staff would cost
several hundred thousand dollars.

The charrette can be a highly effective technique
to enlarge the gene pool of ideas for a project or site –
ideas that can later be modified, tempered, amalgamated,
implemented, or discarded. It can also be a highly effective
and engaging way to help stakeholders – community
residents, municipal officials, government agencies,
institutions, and developers – to develop a sense of
shared ownership and common vision essential to moving
projects forward. In short, charrettes were successful in
jumpstarting new development; consolidating diverse
projects; gathering data and input; expanding public
consciousness and imagination, and publicizing ideas and
visions.

4Urban Design and Planning students were generally less bothered by the challenges and constraints of team work.
Architecture students, more accustomed to individual self-expression and solo invention, tended to bristle more at having
to subordinate or ignore their proposed ideas and designs. On balance, this collaborative exercise was good preparation
for professional practice.
Lastly, despite their challenges and shortcomings, the charrettes were an academic success. Uniquely, the charrette embodied, in a single event, the University’s tripartite mission of teaching, research, and service. It’s a rich opportunity to teach students invaluable lessons in design and planning, as well as in working closely and under common pressure with top local and visiting practitioners and visiting academics. It also provided them a chance to interact with their own instructors on a more protracted and personal basis. And it was good practice for students in the challenges and benefits of collaborative teamwork, which some of the students had rarely, if ever, experienced in their design studio work. Many of the professionals also claimed to benefit from the experience and, despite the modest honoraria, some ask to be invited back. Charrettes can also be a form of research in that they explore and test prevailing and new methodologies, as well as proposed solutions to particular problems and opportunities. A community service, they were offered pro bono to the public, supported by corporations, foundations, individual donors, and thousands of hours of student and faculty sweat equity. Charrettes can provide a transparent public process and visible event with which the University can partner with the community to envision and discuss its future. On top of pursing the triple University mission, they are also interdisciplinary, an increasingly important and meaningful imperative in higher education. They can nurture and cross-fertilize academic life and the educational experience by bringing together a diverse mix of people and ideas to address important common issues. For all these reasons and if done properly, they can be a good investment of financial and human resources on behalf of the community and make compelling sense as an integral, even required, part of design and planning education.

5 Sometimes local restaurants and food stores provided free meals and refreshments during the event.

6 Indeed, there can be friendly socializing among faculty, professionals, and students around shared meals and going out at the end of the workday/night.
Historically, impoverished and racially segregated inner-city neighborhoods have been underserved by recreational green open space (Campbell, 2003). This problem is further exacerbated by the growing disparities and fragmentation in cities during the height of Globalization (Marcuse and van Kempen, 2000) and is evident in the post-industrial landscapes of our American cities. Landfills, former industrial manufacturing sites, infrastructure corridors, and abandoned or vacant land are all examples of what the late Spanish architect and critic Ignasi de Sola-Morales termed “terrain vague” (Berger, 2006). Terrain vague, or non-descript, in-between spaces are the result of waste in urban America, and only recently are these spaces being reutilized as a positive land use. Massive U.S. Federal Government spending on brownfield reclamation and the rise of rail-to-trails projects are two such examples. More specifically the Fresh Kills Lifescape on Staten Island, New York, designed by James Corner and his firm, Field Operations, is a large scale project that uses landscape as a medium to transform the world’s largest landfill into an inhabitable green open space that provides natural habitat and recreation while combating environmental concerns. (Corner, 2005). Highlighting projects such as Fresh Kills helps describe recent physical planning and design interventions that seek to reconcile “wastescapes” (Berger, 2006) and the need for green open space that serves both a social and ecological function. However, can projects such as Fresh Kills seek to address the lack of green open space in economically deprived neighborhoods in America’s inner city? More broadly, what are the social equity implications of green open space planning and design and what are some of the possible solutions?

This article sets out to address these core questions in three parts. First, it will define social equity through the lens of physical open space planning in deprived neighborhoods. Then it will spell out several significant challenges planners focusing on physical planning and design face in creating appropriate green open space. Third, it will analyze and evaluate Landscape
Urbanism, a contemporary landscape/planning paradigm, to see if it has the capacity to address social equity issues in green open space planning through embracing “terrain vague.” Throughout the paper, built project examples that aid in the understanding of the two paradigms will be incorporated. Finally, conclusions will be drawn that will serve two purposes: 1) to clarify the social equity implications and challenges of green open space planning; and 2) to evaluate an approach that couples “terrain vague” with the need for better open space in deprived neighborhoods.

Social Equity in Physical Planning Decision Making

One question at the root of our democracy is, how do we define what is fair? Our public open spaces are often reflective of our answer. (Thompson, 2002). Campbell (2003) views social equity as “striving towards a more equal distribution of resources among social groups across the space of cities and of nations.” He takes an equity of outcomes approach, which means that although outcomes may be unequal, they are not necessarily unfair (Steinemann et. al, 2005). Fainstein shares this viewpoint (2003) in describing her “Just City” model of planning theory. She calls for a model of growth with equity that values the democratic participation of citizens, especially those that possess little power or influence. She postulates that a strong middle-class majority is crucial to forming public policy debate because middle-class aspirations are most likely to persevere in normative democracy decision-making processes. This, she implies, will balance the needs of the poor and the wealthy (2003). Obtaining equity of outcomes is a relevant way to view social equity issues in physical planning decisions because it demands that open space for recreation be accessible and usable to everyone in society.

With specific regard to social equity and physical planning and design, cultural sociologist David Harvey (1996) offers this warning: the challenge to designers and planners is not simply a challenge of spatial form, which both Modernist and New Urbanist paradigms posit, but rather a “more socially just, politically emancipatory mix of spatio-temporal production processes...” Basically, the physical planner must simultaneously factor spatial form, social implications, and political power aspects into her decision making process. In this way, it is difficult for physical planners to balance what they can and cannot achieve in social terms. On one hand, if a physical planner becomes too proscriptive in designing the outcomes of social objectives she may be accused of “social engineering.” On the other hand, if she fails to acknowledge the impact of her decision on the social objectives she may be accused of being “ignorant” in a way that is analogous to 1960s Urban Renewal planners (Talen, 2002).

Finally, the ethical guidelines in the American Institute of City Planners (AICP) Code of Ethics help delineate the planner’s duty in addressing social equity issues:

We shall seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. We shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs (AICP:A,1,f; 2005).

This guideline, which largely stems from the influential work and writing of former City of Cleveland Planning Chief, Norman Krumholtz, urges planners to plan for those who have the least voice in society. Taken together these main equity points form a rubric for evaluating open space decisions in terms of social equity. They suggest equal resource distribution and community empowerment – both of which are apt qualities for tackling green open space inequities in deprived neighborhoods. They also highlight the social limits of physical planning and the ethical demands of the planning profession. How do these challenges manifest themselves in reality? What is the relation between open space planning and gentrification, exclusion, and safety?

Three Tensions in Physical Open Space Planning

Tensions exist between social equity issues and the resulting physical planning efforts that seek to remediate those concerns. Green open space planning, in particular, has three central tensions: gentrification, exclusion, and safety. Parks can infuse life back into a neighborhood, but they can also be the impetus behind gentrification. They can be designed for one particular type of need or person while excluding others. They can also restrict certain types of behavior that one group deems “inappropriate,” but that another groups feels is perfectly acceptable such as skateboarding or loud music (Ward-Thompson, 2002). Underlying all three of these tensions is that parks disproportionately exist in higher income areas.

One example that highlights several of these tensions is the High Line Park, which opened in Manhattan’s trendy Chelsea neighborhood to much popular praise and
academic acclaim. In its previous life, the High Line was an elevated railway on Manhattan's Lower Westside that paralleled the Hudson River from Gansevoort Street to 30th Street. The line was abandoned in 1980. In 1999 a grassroots, citizen-led initiative named “Friends of the Highline,” envisioned turning the defunct elevated rail line into a post-industrial “midair oasis” featuring a vegetated recreational pedestrian path constructed over the railroad (Ouroussoff, 2009). A decade after the plan's inception, the park is, on one level, a welcomed green space intervention for public use in an area underserved by green space; and, on another level, a major statement about the future of recreational and ecological green space design in post-industrial America.

However, the park raises significant social equity issues regarding gentrification and exclusion. First, it drastically increased surrounding property values, and was the impetus behind a rapid increase in speculative development schemes that, at times, conflicted with the neighborhood's residents (Ouroussoff, 2009). It is important to note that Chelsea was already a gentrifying area of the city, and this project put the process in hyperdrive. Also, the park project demanded a huge amount of time and money from private and public entities (Friends of the High Line, n.d.). The opportunity cost of this new park is the loss of fundraising resources available to green open space planning initiatives in economically deprived.

Another example that highlights the tension within physical open space planning is a personal account of the McKinley Beach Parking Lot in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The lot is bounded by the shoreline of Lake Michigan on one side and the Lakefront bicycle path on the other. On most warm summer nights large groups of African-American teenagers congregate with their cars and listen to very loud hip-hop music. At times, the group of people obstructs the right-of-way on the path causing some legitimate safety concerns. However, for the most part, the teens do not affect the safety of path users. Nevertheless, many evening joggers, cyclists, and walkers, who are mostly white young professionals, have expressed concerns over feeling intimidated, harassed or inconvenienced by the informal group gatherings. While these concerns have stopped people from using the path after dark, there have been very little reports of crime or misconduct by the teenage gathering. This example highlights the tension between what different groups deem as “appropriate” use of space. Since this issue arose in 2006, police now regulate the noise and size of the informal gathering of teenagers, and the adjacent beach (Bradford) has been substantially upgraded to serve sunbathers, beach volleyball players, and rock music fans, which are mainly groups of affluent white people.

These examples are just two instances of many that illustrate the tensions in open space planning. Campbell (2003) states that these “conflicts” – both the property and development conflict (see Figure One) – need to be addressed by planners with farsighted thinking, effective conflict negotiation, and land-use planning expertise. In his conceptual triangle of conflicting goals for planning, Campbell (2003) posits that sustainable development operates at the center (“the balance”) between social equity, environmental protection, and economic development. In this light, he emphasizes that sustainability is hard to reach, and requires planners to “act as a translator” by assisting and reasoning with various entities in order to communicate disparate goals (2003). Campbell views the planner's position as the interdisciplinary linchpin that can build consensus and focus efforts on the big picture. Working within this conceptual framework, there is one contemporary planning and design movement that seeks to bridge the gap between Campbell's three priorities in order to address sustainable development: the emerging Landscape Urbanism Movement.

![Campbell's Planner's Triangle (2003)](image)

Figure 1 - The triangle of conflicting goals for planning, and the three associated conflicts. Planners define themselves, implicitly, by where they stand on the triangle. The elusive ideal of sustainable development leads one to the center.

Evaluating An Approach to Open Space Planning for Deprived Neighborhoods

The emerging Landscape Urbanism Movement presents a potential framework for addressing green open space and recreational landscapes in post-industrial contexts within deprived inner cities. The movement works within Campbell's triangle, as it is a multidisciplinary design movement that primarily seeks to address environmental
The Bloomingdale Line is an abandoned elevated rail which is also cited as an example of Landscape Urbanism, space planning. Similar to the High Line in Manhattan, has to address social equity concerns in physical open Line. This project shows the potential Landscape Urbanism to embrace the post-industrial conditions of inner-city landscapes through the creation of a dynamic landscape that is malleable by different systems and user-inputs.

The movement is concerned with the merging of landscape and built form. Corner (2006) explains: “… urban infrastructure sows the seeds of future possibility, staging the ground for both uncertainty and promise… emphasizing means over ends and operational logic over compositional design.” In this way, landscape’s potential is fully realized as an open-ended system that can rapidly adapt to change. As people (or other animals) shift from one locale to another, the surface trajectory shifts to record and re-record a variety of cultural and environmental events. This shift demands a withdrawal from permanent object constructs towards "a choreography of elements and materials in time that extend new networks, new linkages, and new opportunities" (Corner, 2006).

Given Landscape Urbanism’s focus on the inter-relation of processes over time, it should consider addressing social equity goals more directly to avoid becoming a one-sided approach to addressing urban issues – as Harvey (1996) warned. The movement exploits “terrain vague,” which exists as a prominent spatial attribute in deprived and fragmented neighborhoods, by tapping the latent energy within abandoned, in-between spaces. The main promise of the movement is its ability to embrace the post-industrial conditions of inner-city landscapes through the creation of a dynamic landscape that is malleable by different systems and user-inputs.

For example, one recent project, which is still in the early stages of planning, is Chicago’s Bloomingdale Line. This project shows the potential Landscape Urbanism has to address social equity concerns in physical open space planning. Similar to the High Line in Manhattan, which is also cited as an example of Landscape Urbanism, the Bloomingdale Line is an abandoned elevated rail line seeking a transformation into a public greenway (Greenfield, 2009, August 12). However, the Bloomingdale Line illustrates how Landscape Urbanism can operate more soundly within “the balance” of Campbell's triangle to address issues of social equity (2003). The 2.5 mile elevated rail exists within an ethnic enclave that greatly lacks open space and is politically marginalized (Chicago Planning Commission, 2004). The planning and design vision for this project has the forethought demanded by Campbell (2003). Its implementation, which requires collaborative participation between professionals and local residents, demonstrates the planner’s role in consensus building between different groups — especially those that don’t have a large voice or political clout. In examples such as this, Landscape Urbanism can truly embrace its poly-professional status and reach beyond the knowledge limits of its landscape architecture origins to answer its goal of “offering coherent, competent, and convincing explanations of contemporary urban conditions” (Waldheim 2006).

The Future of Socially Equitable Open Space Planning

This paper establishes a baseline from which to evaluate socially equitable physical open space planning decisions by fusing together Fainstein's Just City Model with Campbell’s Planner Triangle and AICP’s Code of Ethics. The paper defined social equity as the fair allocation of resource distribution, and it outlined the central challenges in socially equitable open space planning: gentrification, exclusion, and safety. Lastly, it evaluated Landscape Urbanism and identified it as one approach that has potential to balance the tensions that exist between social equity and physical planning and design. Due to its infancy and origin, the movement is still in need of a clear operative strategy to tackle the large, complex projects it seeks to complete (Corner, 2006). As the movement matures, it needs to develop a clear social tenet that addresses Fainstein’s Just City Model and AICP’s ethic rules. Through these means, Landscape Urbanism can truly embrace its poly-professional status and reach beyond the knowledge limits of its landscape architecture origins to answer its goal of “offering coherent, competent, and convincing explanations of contemporary urban conditions” (Waldheim 2006).

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Bridge for Revitalization
An Urban Design Vision for the New Center District in Detroit

Scott Curry, Apoorva Alankar, Yanjia Liu, Nana Adja-Sai

Design Context - Existing Situation
In April 2009, several independent organizations were exploring the possibility of constructing a 3.5-mile light rail corridor along Woodward Avenue in downtown Detroit. This corridor would serve as a crucial initial link in a broader regional transit plan and connect many of Detroit’s most significant cultural, business, and historic institutions. The various Detroit light rail groups had already completed a considerable amount of design and planning, and state and local politicians regularly expressed excitement about their proposals in the popular press. Although there was significant positive momentum at the state and local levels, and a seemingly supportive federal administration in place, to that point planning amongst the various Detroit light rail groups had been fragmented and discrete. Additionally, very little thought had been given to the development that the introduction of a light rail system would generate along the Woodward corridor or the form that this development should take.
Design Challenge - The Future of the Woodward Avenue Transit Corridor

Develop a design proposal for the New Center area of the Woodward Corridor that...

1. Distills the competing plans and designs for light rail along Woodward, incorporating the strengths of each and providing an appropriate common vision.
2. Adheres to the generated investment assumptions given by the M1 Rail planning group.
3. Embraces the cultural significance and historic importance of Woodward Avenue as Michigan’s most prominent pathway, M1.
4. Advocates sustainable urbanism as a guiding approach for development that occurs as a result of the light rail.
5. Considers how the large number of complex and interconnected urban systems on the New Center site can be accommodated and clarified.
6. Inspires stakeholders and development interests to act upon the design recommendations given.

The current AMTRAK station and rail culvert at Woodward Ave. and Baltimore St. (above) is an unattractive and uninspiring shadow of Detroit’s former Michigan Central Station (below). At the time of its construction in 1913, Michigan Central Station was one of the most iconic transportation landmarks in the country and the tallest rail station in the world. Reimagining the current station as a landmark structure that is woven into the fabric of a larger urban development plan is key to our proposal.
Building Key

1. Multi-Modal Transit Station North (AMTRAK Station, mixed-use)
2. Multi-Modal Transit Station South (Bus Transfer Station, Supermarket, Pharmacy, mixed-use)
3. AMTRAK Boarding Platform
4. Light Rail Boarding Platforms and Woodward Pedestrian Bridge
5. North Light Rail Boarding Platform
6. Movie Theatre (6 screens)
7. Detroit Youth Foundation: “Youth Ville Detroit”
8. Detroit Culinary Institute
9. LRT Vehicle Service Building
10. Corporate Suite Hotel (300 rooms)
11. Conference Center
12. Corporate Spa & Hotel Restaurant
13. Relocated Auto Dealer Site
14. New Center Marketplace Development (Outdoor “Fresh Market” and Artist's Market)
15. American Iron Beauty Building: Adaptive Reuse Site 1
16. Adaptive Reuse Site 2
17. TechTown Extension
18. Woodward BP Fueling Station Replacement Building
19. East Woodward Residential Infill
20. Cass Townhome Development Infill
21. Parking Structure and Retail Infill (650 spots including 10 “ZipCar” spots)
22. “Transit Link” Mixed Use Buildings & Plaza
23. Woodward Retail Facade Extensions
24. Grand Boulevard Restaurant & Retail Infill
25. North Transit Mixed Use Infill

A. Albert Kahn Building (Historic Office Building)
C. Cadillac Place (Former GM Headquarters, currently houses State of Michigan Govt. Offices)
F. Fisher Theatre
N. New Center One (Office and Retail)
T. Taubman Center for Design Education (Historic Argonaut Building Reuse includes College for Creative Studies Classrooms & Dormitories, Charter Middle/High School for the Arts, and Gymnasium)
Design Approach

Three primary design principles guided the creation of the development proposal illustrated here. These three principles are:

1. Celebrating Travel
2. Enabling the “15-Minute” Lifestyle
3. Building Upon the Existing Character and Identity of New Center

Design Principles

The “Bridge for Revitalization” Development Proposal Celebrates Travel by...

- Suggesting a monumental transit station to serve as a landmark gateway for the City of Detroit.
- Providing a powerful connection point between a large number of transportation systems in order to create a node of activity and encourage transit ridership.
- Providing ample opportunity for the display of transportation-themed art exhibits (presumably in conjunction with the CCS expansion and the Model T Automotive Heritage Complex.)

The “Bridge for Revitalization” Development Proposal Enables the “15-Minute Lifestyle” by...

- Using the form of proposed development to create strong, direct, physical connections between the existing activity in the New Center area and the two proposed transit stations.
- Prioritizing residential development as well as land uses that are currently lacking in the New Center area.
- Incorporating those uses that are immediately necessary for a variety of urban lifestyles within a 1/4-mile walking radius.
- Promoting pedestrian and bicycle connectivity throughout the site to foster a culture of alternative transportation lifestyles.

The “Bridge for Revitalization” Development Proposal Builds Upon the Existing Character and Identity of New Center by...

- Adaptively reusing existing structures wherever feasible.
- Extending the existing institutions and uses of the area, specifically TechTown, the College for Creative Studies, the Detroit Youth Foundation: YouthVille Project, and Detroit’s culinary wealth.
- Strengthening the streetscape environment along Woodward Ave. through infill development on vacant parcels.

These guiding principles reinforce an ethos of sustainable urbanism by promoting transit ridership and by creating an efficient and vibrant urban density in the New Center area that the City of Detroit so desperately needs.
“Bridge for Revitalization”
Creating a coherent plan for the design of a multi-modal transit station was a key component to accomplishing all three of these greater objectives. The design of the station incorporates a mix of uses and a monumental structure that is meant to become a landmark for the City of Detroit and serve as a literal and figurative “Bridge for the Revitalization of Detroit.”

In an abstract sense, the development proposal is meant to serve as a bridge between…
- Detroit’s automotive past and its future as a renewable energy and alternative transportation hub,
- Downtown Detroit to the south and Metro Detroit to the north, and
- A combination of everyday occurrences and special experiences.

In a more functional sense, the multi-modal station is meant to serve as a bridge between…
- Different forms of transportation (AMTRAK, light rail, bus, auto, bicycle, and pedestrian),
- The different sides of Woodward Avenue, and
- A variety of different land uses and activities.

The monumental nature of the structure itself is both reminiscent of a bridge span in a physical sense, and a nod to the landmark nature of historic rail stations, such as the iconic Michigan Central Station.
A primary focus of the proposal was to create a beneficial mix of uses, if not in the same building, then at least in the immediate area. In general, retail uses were concentrated in the areas designed to generate the heaviest foot traffic. The TechTown area is the largest proposed addition of office space. Residential uses are suggested throughout the entire development, with a handful of residential only developments proposed.

Cost Estimate for Light Rail Construction

- in 3.5 mile Initial Woodward Light Rail Link: $120,000,000
- in .7 mile New Center District: $24,000,000

Economic Development Multiplier Assumption Range

$4 to $8 per $1 of light rail construction cost, gives

$96,000,000 to $192,000,000 of generated investment estimated for New Center District

Building Cost Estimate for Development Proposal by Phase

- PHASE 1: $83,343,806
- PHASE 2: $151,812,820
- PHASE 3: $151,268,482
Phasing Plan

In order to realistically illustrate how development should occur in association with the light rail proposal, it was necessary to estimate the breadth of impact that the introduction of light rail will have for the Woodward Avenue transit corridor. The phasing plan and investment model (opposite) are based upon figures given by the M1-Rail planning group for potential investment along the entire 3.5 mile Woodward Avenue transit corridor. These numbers, generally considered to be on the conservative end of typical generated economic development for light rail construction, have been translated here into the expected investment for the New Center area alone, about a .7 - mile portion of the corridor. In this manner the proposal is grounded in a realistic prediction of generated economic development. Though optimistic, the generated investment and square footage of development illustrated in the proposal is realistic and sound, even for an urban environment as distressed as Detroit.

PHASE 1  (0 – 10 years)

Given these assumptions, Phase 1 is an immediately feasible approach operating at a level of investment well below the conservative investment assumptions given for the New Center area. Phase 1 focuses on the two transit stations themselves, and those parcels we feel should be developed to complement the activity they would generate.

PHASE 2  (10 – 20 years)

Phase 2 illustrates how continued development could begin to take place at a level of investment that more closely resembles the assumptions given. This is the development that we believe would occur as a result of the investment generated over a short-term period after the light rail is constructed.

PHASE 3  (20+ years)

Phase 3 shows what long-term development could likely be leveraged as a result of the light rail and the activity occurring in the initial development phases.

Investment Assumption Data from:

Building Cost Data from:

The A. Alfred Taubman Center for Design Education
A Case Study about the Adaptive Reuse of Detroit’s Historic Argonaut Building

Damon C. Healey

The Purpose of the Case Study

The A. Alfred Taubman Center for Design Education (Taubman Center) has undergone a dramatic transformation: having once housed automotive offices and laboratories, it now serves as a campus for the College for Creative Studies (CCS) and other users. Furthermore, the presence of an anchor tenant, along with the Center’s location near the Fisher Building, the State of Michigan office complex, and the nexus of a proposed regional rail transit system, opens up additional adaptive reuse opportunities for new programs within the building.

Due to the historical significance of the building to the city and the complicated structure of its redevelopment from the financial, planning, and policy perspectives, the Taubman Center is an instructive example of adaptive reuse in a difficult market environment. Further, the Center illustrates one way to spur the economic revitalization of a regionally significant walkable urban place. This case study analyzes the Taubman Center’s development process, which can serve as a useful model for similar projects in comparable places.

Research for the case study took place in three phases: project orientation, stakeholder interviews, and documentation and findings.

The Project

The Taubman Center occupies what was formerly known as the Argonaut Building. A national and local historic landmark, the Argonaut Building was originally developed in 1929 by the General Motors Corporation (GM) as part of its headquarters complex. The building is not only an important part of the city’s automotive heritage, but also contributes to the region’s architectural legacy, having been designed by famous Detroit architect Albert Kahn. The 11-story Art Deco structure, which contains 760,000 gross square feet, is located at 485 West Milwaukee Avenue, approximately three miles north of downtown Detroit, Michigan, in the New Center area. The Taubman Center has been redeveloped by CCS as a campus extension with a mix of uses that include undergraduate and graduate programs in design, community outreach activities, student housing, commercial space, and an arts-oriented charter middle and high school. The redevelopment added a new 10,000-square-foot, two-story gym and fitness center, bringing the total gross square footage of the structure to 770,000. The Taubman Center also includes a new 500-car parking deck and 230 surface parking spaces. The project was completed in September 2009.

Detroit’s economy has been declining for decades. Most recently, the city has suffered the collapse of General Motors (GM) and Chrysler, political instability, and the global economic crisis. These factors debilitated real estate markets, making the redevelopment of the Taubman Center seemingly impossible. In these grim circumstances, the project’s success is an especially striking achievement.

Formerly known as the Argonaut Building, the Taubman Center has a rich history of innovation as GM’s former research and development facility. For instance, innovations such as the Buick “Y” Job, a two-passenger convertible, were created in the Argonaut. However, after 1952, the facility was primarily used as office space and as support for the adjacent headquarters building. GM relocated its headquarters in 1996, leaving the Argonaut vacant for nearly a decade.

While GM was looking for a use for the Argonaut, the College for Creative Studies (CCS) was looking to expand. CCS’s enrollment was growing, and the college needed to expand its facilities to accommodate demand for new programs and student housing. In addition, under the leadership of Richard Rogers, CCS needed a facility to achieve its ambitious vision of creating design-based middle and high schools in partnership with the Henry Ford Learning Institute. Rogers’ chance conversation with Matt Cullen, civic leader and then head of GM’s real estate division, sparked a bold idea: CCS could meet its goals by
The New Center District is the northern anchor of Detroit's greater downtown. The neighborhood is the second-largest employment center in the city and home to the State of Michigan, Henry Ford Hospital, TechTown, Albert Kahn Associates, and many more. The district also offers diverse retail, entertainment, housing, and historic architectural amenities to residents, workers, consumers, and visitors.
“The Argonaut Building will be an educational complex devoted to creativity. It will house an integrated educational community, focused on art and design and extending from middle school through graduate school and beyond into the professional realm. It will be a catalyst for innovation, educational opportunity, and economic renewal. There is nothing like it anywhere in the world.”

-College for Creative Studies
expanding into the Argonaut Building. With the Argonaut Building, CCS could catalyze economic development in Detroit by promoting the city’s creative economy.

The Argonaut presented formidable challenges for CCS, due to the scale, scope, and complexity of the building’s redevelopment. The project, totaling 760,000 square feet, included space not only for CCS’s programs, but also for student residents, partners, and tenants. A small college, CCS needed help and hired the following development team:

- Larson Realty Group, Developer
- Jones Lang LaSalle & Preservation Development, Co-developers
- Albert Kahn Associates & Rich Associates, Project Architects
- Luce et Studio, Design Consultant
- Walbridge & Colasanti, Construction Managers
- JP Morgan Chase & US Bank, Financing
- Clark Hill, Legal

Project Goals and Financial Structure

The goal of the Argonaut project was to accommodate CCS’s campus expansion and its building partners. The CCS expansion, representing approximately 414,585 square feet or 66% of NRA of the building, includes five undergraduate design departments, two master of fine arts programs, a design research center, a 300-bed dormitory facility, and community arts partnerships. In addition, the building is to accommodate the School for Creative Studies (a partnership between CCS and HFLL). The School will occupy approximately 107,826 square feet, or 17% of NRA, and include an art-enriched charter middle school and charter high school of design. A creative business accelerator program, a partnership between CCS and Detroit Renaissance, will also occupy the building. Further, the building was to be flexible enough to host future commercial partners in approximately 83,720 square feet or 13% of NRA. Finally, the project needed to accommodate space shared by CCS and its partners. The shared space includes a conference center, a 500-seat auditorium, a 350-seat dining hall, retail and gallery spaces, an 11,200 square-foot gymnasium, a 500-car parking structure, and 230 spaces of surface parking.

Financing the expansion was remarkable, considering the project’s size, scope, and complexity. The Argonaut project had a budget of approximately $140 million. The building was donated by GM and had a market value of approximately $2.6 million. Argonaut Campus Developer, a Michigan Limited Liability Company made up of multiple entities, has fee simple ownership of the building. The financing sources range from multiple federal and state tax credits to traditional financing sources. The tax credit structure alone is one of the most complex structures in the country. Tax credits made up approximately 46% of the project budget, while partnership contributions made up 54%. Hard costs and tenant improvements made up 85.6% of the budgeted project cost, while soft costs and equity/loan costs accounted for 10.4% and 4%, respectively. A breakdown of the sources and uses of funds follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Uses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tax Credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hard Costs &amp; Tenant Buildout</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Historic Tax Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Historic Tax Credits</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Brownfield Tax Credits</td>
<td>$7,350,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Market Tax Credits</td>
<td>$20,700,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partner Contributions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Soft Costs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>CCS</td>
<td>$56,821,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School/High School</td>
<td>$18,600,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Uses</strong></td>
<td><strong>Equity &amp; Loan Costs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard Costs &amp; Tenant Buildout</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soft Costs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity &amp; Loan Costs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$139,797,779</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Obstacles and Mitigations

The development team faced seemingly insurmountable challenges. In the interviews, team members mentioned the timing, the complexity, and the financial structure as obstacles to the project. However, innovation often springs from confronting obstacles, and this was the case in the redevelopment of the Argonaut. In particular, members of the development team and other stakeholders cited collaborative teamwork, complex financial engineering, superior execution, and creative thinking about the mix of uses as innovative and/or significant aspects of the redevelopment. Innovation alone was not enough to redevelop the Argonaut, though. Team members displayed a strong sense of purpose and a duty to a higher goal, and their ongoing dedication seemed to enable an “aligning of the stars” that kept the project alive.

Timing

The development team faced a very aggressive timeline, with the goal of redeveloping a 760,000 square-foot, nationally significant historic building within 18 months. This nearly impossible deadline created numerous challenges throughout the development process. For example, about halfway into the project, CCS hired Luce et Studio (Luce) for an alternative opinion regarding the design intent. “To inject a dynamic design experience when the budget is already allocated, it is very hard to gain...
the confidence of the team,” says Jennifer Luce, Principal (Luce 2009). “This process didn’t allow for this; there was no time” (Luce 2009). However, this challenge allowed Luce to be innovative, learning how to sell new ideas under tremendous time constraints.

Luce is one of many development team members who struggled to integrate their internal processes with those of other members, given the time constraints. Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL), for example, is a very process-driven organization that has been extremely successful with a systematic approach. However, in this case, “nothing sequenced normally; everything overlapped like a 37 dimensional chessboard,” according to Adriana Calderon, Senior Project Manager at JLL (Calderon 2009).

As a result, Larson Realty Group (LRG), as the developer, interacted directly with the client, navigated the local political environment, and managed the expanding relationships and financial structure. In other words, LRG kept an eye on the big picture while other team members focused on individual tasks. Eric Larson, President and CEO of LRG, explains that, “a more flexible approach was needed to keep up with changing priorities” (Larson 2009). According to Larson, a flexible, specific strategy, as opposed to a resource-based strategy, was crucial throughout the process (Larson 2009).

The complexity, impact, and benefits of the project have implications for urban planners, policy makers, designers, and real estate developers, among others.

“...the unique mix of uses required more regulatory requirements” (Robertson 2009).

not to proceed with leasing space well after the project had begun. The more challenging the project became, however, the more tenaciously the stakeholders rallied to problem solve.

The project’s complexity inevitably led to construction delays and stakeholder frustration. As a result, the entire team tried to anticipate problems and have in place multiple contingency plans as the project evolved. At no point were the project design and finance parameters set. Anne Beck credits the participants’ evolving collaboration, their determination, and sheer luck (“aligning of the stars”) with keeping all of the parts moving in sync (Beck 2009).

Financial Structure

The development team did not anticipate the complexity of the financial structure, especially the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) component. How does a nonprofit college maximize tax credits, while complying with the regulatory rules governing them and at the same time preserving the college’s nonprofit status? How do multiple tax structures intersect with each other? What is the best way to allocate funds among six Community Development Entities (CDEs)? Such were the daunting problems confronting CCS and the financial and legal members of the development team.

The team employed several technical mechanisms to meet the challenges presented by the financial structure. Gordon Goldie, Partner at Plante Moran, said that the solution involved finding the right mix of NMTC equity and loan structures (Goldie 2009). The IRS even made a ruling especially to accommodate the structure. However, the “focus of the project was not only about maximizing the tax credits, but also how to gain as many stakeholders as possible to get them involved to collaborate,” says Cari Easterday, Director of Finance at LRG (Easterday 2009).

The team employed several technical mechanisms to meet the challenges presented by the financial structure. Gordon Goldie, Partner at Plante Moran, said that the solution involved finding the right mix of NMTC equity and loan structures (Goldie 2009). The IRS even made a ruling especially to accommodate the structure. However, the “focus of the project was not only about maximizing the tax credits, but also how to gain as many stakeholders as possible to get them involved to collaborate,” says Cari Easterday, Director of Finance at LRG (Easterday 2009). Marc Hirshman, Senior Vice President at US Bank, agreed, noting that the community impact of the Argonaut project was vital to the involvement of an unprecedented six Community Development Entities contributing NMTC financing (Hirshman 2009). Finally, several participants credit Anne Beck of CCS with generating stakeholder buy-in. David Shon, Partner at Nixon Peabody, and Gordon Goldie both cite Beck’s management skills and ability to understand and communicate the financial structure to relevant stakeholders as keys to the project’s success (Shon 2009). “Anne knew what her financial statements would look like two years out,” explained Goldie (Goldie 2009).
Lessons for Other Communities

The Vision Must Be Compelling

Without the bold vision and commitment of Richard Rogers, Steve Hamp, Matt Cullen and others to transform the City of Detroit and its educational opportunities, the Taubman Center would probably not exist today. Jim Becker, International Director at JLL, explains that “Detroit is a market that has been redlined; this deal is superhuman” (Becker 2009). Superhuman deals don’t happen without a compelling vision that reaches beyond any one stakeholder’s interest in a project. Eric Larson adds, “This project may not have been as successful if not for CCS and the tremendous support of the board (Larson 2009). CCS’s vision caused people to align with the project goals; lots of people wanted to help given the positive impact” (Larson 2009).

Not only was the vision compelling, but it also aligned broader initiatives and economic development goals. Because CCS and the School for Creative Studies provide creative education, the project aligned with Governor Jennifer Granholm’s “Cool Cities” initiative. The project will create approximately 200 new jobs, anchor a “creative corridor” from New Center to the Detroit River, develop a new model for school/college/business collaboration, provide a new pathway for minority students to art and design careers, and increase the diversity of CCS, other colleges of art and design, and the design professions.

Finally, this vision was essential to opening up non-traditional funding opportunities. Six CDEs contributed to the project, as did the Kresge Foundation and Thompson Education Foundation. Finally, A. Alfred Taubman donated $15,000,000 as the lead gift to CCS’s “Advancing the Creative Spirit” capital campaign for the project. In gratitude to Mr. Taubman, CCS renamed the building The A. Alfred Taubman Center for Design Education.

Commitment to Place

Detroit and Southeast Michigan have been battered by the Great Recession more severely than any other metropolitan region in the country. (Katz 2009) This is primarily due to the continuing decline in the relative size of the industrial economy nationally; Detroit has always had the largest industrial concentration in the country. (Leinberger 2009) While industrial economic development continues to be important to the country and to Detroit, increasing productivity and international competition mean that it will have a smaller proportional share of economic growth and employment. In this way it is similar to agriculture, which, although still crucial to the country, has declined dramatically relative to the entire community (and now accounts for only 2% of all jobs) (Leinberger 2009).

The huge industrial concentration in Southeast Michigan has also allowed the region to build enormous wealth, which is reflected in the large foundations and cultural and educational institutions. Such institutions embody a generally unacknowledged strength: commitment to place. Although they have been battered by the economy, people raised in Detroit are generally passionate in their support of and attachment to the place, even if they must leave for economic reasons. The commitment by the sponsors of the Taubman Center, along with the philanthropic contributions, reflects a commitment to Detroit that has fueled many revitalization efforts over the past 30 years. This level of commitment is rare in other American metropolitan regions (Leinberger 2009).

Team Selection is Critical

The development team is critical for three reasons. First and most obviously, the team members must be highly competent in their respective disciplines. Ben Dorer of Plante Moran was encouraged to see that the “best and brightest were working on the deal”; he was impressed by the “brain firepower” of the team members, especially when it came to public finance (Dorer 2009).

Second, the team must be able to solve problems and work collaboratively: According to Anne Beck of CCS, “the development structure also included the collaborative process (Beck 2009). Each stakeholder made sure CCS was positioned to be in the right place at the right time. Even in the financial structure, people kept finding more creative ways to bring more resources to the table” (Beck 2009).

Finally, team members must share key values. In the Argonaut project, team members, partners, and stakeholders with a sense of civic duty and commitment to the community added significant value. For example, GM, which donated the building, continued to assist CCS by serving on the project’s steering committee. GM’s sense of civic duty has been evident in its ongoing commitment to New Center ever since it left the area nearly a decade earlier, according to John Blanchard, Executive Director of GM Worldwide Real Estate (Blanchard 2009). In addition, Matt Cullen adds, “the project connected people who were motivated to do the right thing, who had powerful ideas, and who shared similar long-term vision and values” (Blanchard 2009).

Planning, Predevelopment, and Collaboration Take Time

Nearly every stakeholder interviewed mentioned that more time would have allowed for better execution of the project. Time for planning allows for the proper selection of the development team, alignment of goals and expectations, and assimilation to various stakeholders’ internal processes. In addition, Tim Kolton and Joe
Agora ’10

Economy businesses and institutions along the Woodward Corridor. The Creative Corridor includes a chain of innovative uses and collaborations. catapulting New Center into the new economy through by contributing to the existing character of the place while capitalizes on these initiatives and existing infrastructure other neighborhood improvements. The Taubman Center renovation, and the Tech Town business incubator, among units, the New Center Park, a Charter School, a hotel redevelopment, façade improvements, 300 new residential result, the district has seen nearly $419 million in new mixed-use 24-hour destination neighborhood. As a Detroit adopted the New Center Economic Development and Business Improvement District, and the City of 1990s, the New Center Council, the Business Association Plagued by General Motors’ exit from the district in the late Center district with a much-needed positive impact. Significant Impact on Urban Areas

Higher Education Institutions Have a Significant Impact on Urban Areas

CCS and the Taubman Center provide the New Center district with a much-needed positive impact. Plagued by General Motors’ exit from the district in the late 1990s, the New Center Council, the Business Association and Business Improvement District, and the City of Detroit adopted the New Center Economic Development Plan in 1997 with the goal of making the area a walkable mixed-use 24-hour destination neighborhood. As a result, the district has seen nearly $419 million in new and pending investment in the form of new construction, redevelopment, façade improvements, 300 new residential units, the New Center Park, a Charter School, a hotel renovation, and the Tech Town business incubator, among other neighborhood improvements. The Taubman Center capitalizes on these initiatives and existing infrastructure by contributing to the existing character of the place while catapulting New Center into the new economy through innovative uses and collaborations.

The Taubman Center serves as an anchor, not only for New Center, but also for Detroit’s larger Creative Corridor. The Creative Corridor includes a chain of creative economy businesses and institutions along the Woodward Avenue corridor. A development plan was recently created to link existing nodes of activity, promote new activity, increase the density of creative economy businesses, and increase density of housing for creative economy workers. The Taubman Center will bring approximately 2,000 new people to the district daily, helping to establish the New Center district as a walkable node. In addition, the redevelopment created approximately 1,000 full-time equivalent construction jobs and will create approximately 200 permanent new jobs. Finally, the 300-bed dorm facilities contribute to a new 24-hour population.

The Taubman Center is two and a half blocks from the Detroit Amtrak station, which also will be the future home of M-1 Rail. M-1 Rail is a light rail starter system that will run along Woodward Avenue from New Center to downtown, linking CCS students to their existing campus located in the Cultural Center in Midtown. Thus, the Taubman Center serves as the northern anchor of the Creative Corridor.

Evidence of the positive impact of higher education on neighborhood redevelopment efforts can be found in Chicago’s Loop and South Loop, which are now home to over 20 institutions of higher learning. As Tom Fuechtmann, director of DePaul University’s Community and Government Relations Office, said, “These institutions do more than educate the next generation of business, community and civic leaders. They generate significant business activity and job creation, promote real estate development and preservation, and contribute to the vitality of downtown through cultural events and student residential communities” (DePaul 2009).

Fuechtmann directed a study of the impact of higher education institutions on Chicago’s Loop in 2005, commissioned by the Greater State Council and Central Michigan Avenue Association. It demonstrated that Chicago’s Loop is “the largest college town in Illinois.” Higher education institutions within the Loop spend more than $345 million on goods and services annually, generating $777 million in direct and indirect economic activities and creating approximately 13,500 jobs (Hewings 2005). Special events by these institutions drew an average of 500,000 people annually, and ten educational institutions spent approximately $159 million on renovation and new construction from 1997 to 2002 (Hewings 2005). The sector expects to spend $339 million more in capital projects by the end of the decade (Hewings 2005).

Although the scale of the Taubman Center’s impact in New Center is, at least so far, much smaller, the impact of higher education within walkable urban places in general, and within New Center and Midtown in particular, is unquestionable. Midtown is located in greater downtown Detroit, south of New Center and north of the downtown core along Woodward Avenue. The district houses Wayne State University, Detroit Medical Center, and Detroit’s Cultural Center, as well as a cluster of significant public buildings, museums, galleries, and theaters. It has become
one of the most vibrant walkable urban places in the State of Michigan.

Similar opportunities exist for New Center with CCS and the Taubman Center as an anchor to engage the desirable demographic known as the “creative class” (a term coined by Richard Florida of the University of Toronto). Sue Mosey is President of the University Cultural Center Association, Midtown’s Business Improvement District. She believes that the Taubman Center redevelopment provides opportunities to encourage a pedestrian-friendly environment. CCS could create a “mini district” by working with the New Center Council to create a human-scale development with retail and/or student activities on the ground floor (Mosey 2009). The vacant parking lot adjacent to the Taubman Center is a logical spot for such a development, according to Mosey. “It could encourage retail and transit, serving as a gateway to the area” (Mosey 2009). In addition, this “mini district” would “link New Center and Midtown via Cass Avenue through TechTown. Cass Avenue is becoming a major pedestrian college district with 10 new projects” (Mosey 2009). Members of the creative class tend to be attracted to walkable urban places and are pioneers of this type of development. The location of the creative class within New Center and Midtown may be viewed in the future as one of the primary causes of the economic rebirth of Southeast Michigan.

Conclusion

A one time factory of innovation for General Motors Corporation, by 2000 the vacant Argonaut Building had become just another symbol of decay amidst the Detroit skyline. The unprecedented conversion of the large automotive office building into a center for creative education however, has transformed the Argonaut from a reminder of a bygone era to a catalyst for creativity within Detroit’s New Center District and generated transformative economic development opportunities. In this regard, the Taubman Center is an instructive example for other communities seeking to incorporate new creative uses to support their own historical character and spur new economic activity.

The complexity, impact, and benefits of the project have implications for urban planners, policy makers, designers, and real estate developers, among others. The project gives stakeholders, in cities with declining industries, hope for the future of their historical places and landmarks. In addition, the project enables communities’ to think about adaptive reuse and economic development in new ways.

Finally, the Taubman Center’s development process provides a model of the vision, competence, and tenacity necessary to implement similar projects in difficult market environments. Revitalizing a regionally significant walkable urban place is especially difficult in a declining local and national economy. However, as the Taubman Center demonstrates, when passionate stakeholders unite under a common goal, seemingly impossible projects may be realized.

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Afterschool Programs to Increase Retention and Outcomes in Detroit Public Schools

Karey Quarton

Detroit has a high-school graduation rate of 58%, the worst rate in the nation for a large city (Kellog, 2009). State funding for public education is based on enrollment. The high dropout rate in Detroit Public Schools means that the system loses funding that it desperately needs to provide a quality education for remaining students.

Compared to their peers with a high school diploma, youth who don’t graduate from school earn less money, have fewer job opportunities and have poorer health. They are less likely to pay taxes, more likely to collect welfare, and eight times more likely to attend jail or prison, imposing huge negative externalities and financial burdens on the rest of society (Afterschool Alliance, 2009).

Studies show that quality afterschool programs can help resolve many of the issues that lead students to dropout by providing mentoring, personalized instruction, parental and community engagement and opportunities for experiential learning.

However, existing federal aid does not meet the need for afterschool programs in Michigan (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). Additional funding is needed to provide the maximum number of students with the opportunity to benefit from afterschool programs, especially in high risk districts like Detroit Public Schools. In order to increase retention rates, DPS should seek funding from local foundations to provide afterschool enrichment programs on school grounds.

Afterschool Makes a Real Difference

Afterschool programs improve attendance rates, decrease deviant behavior, and prepare youth for employment

Students enrolled in afterschool programs display better attendance rates and are significantly more likely to graduate from school than their peers who are not. Students in LA’s BEST afterschool program and the Youth in Quantum Opportunities afterschool program were 20% and 50% less likely to dropout than the average student in their district, respectively (Hahn, 1994).

In addition to reducing dropout rates, afterschool programs keep students engaged and occupied in constructive activities during the crucial after-school hours, which are the peak times in which teens commit crimes or become victims of crimes, smoke, drink and use drugs (Afterschool Alliance, 2007). Afterschool programs can also provide a viable alternative to gang activity, which is a significant problem in many DPS schools. Unsupervised youth have a significantly greater risk of engaging in deviant or high risk behaviors (Afterschool Alliance, 2003). 27% of children in Michigan are unsupervised after school, and this figure is likely significantly higher in Detroit (Afterschool Alliance, 2008). According to one study, teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes and use marijuana or other drugs, and are also more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity than teens who are enrolled in afterschool programs (YMCA, 2001).

Afterschool programs are a critical tool to prepare Detroit youth to compete in tomorrow’s workforce. Job growth is greatest in fields that increasingly require postsecondary education, but the US Chamber of Commerce reports that only 32% of high school graduates are prepared for college (Afterschool Alliance, 2004). The five most important skills valued by the nation’s largest employers are professionalism, teamwork, oral communication, ethics and social responsibility, and reading comprehension (The Conference Board Inc, 2006). Afterschool programs are an excellent place for young people to develop and practice these skills so they can be prepared for further education or employment.

The Time is Now

Even in Today’s Economy, Funding for Afterschool Exists

Several large foundations exist in the Detroit metropolitan area with the desire and the resources to fund improvements at Detroit Public Schools, including the Skillman Foundation, the Knight Foundation and the Kellogg Foundation. The Skillman Foundation alone has an annual budget of $30 million, and has already invested $50 million into Detroit Public Schools.

Everyone Benefits

Although critics may argue that afterschool programs are too costly to implement in a struggling economic climate like Michigan’s, exactly the opposite is true. If we don’t take decisive action to prepare young people for further education and employment, Michigan’s economy will only get worse.
If retention rates were increased through quality afterschool programs, Detroit businesses would benefit from having access to a local pool of graduates with the skills for employment. With more youth engaged in constructive activity during the crucial afterschool hours, Detroit police would benefit from a reduced juvenile crime rate and gang activity.

Michigan taxpayers will also reap the long-term benefits of quality afterschool programming. When outcomes are considered, the returns clearly exceed the cost of implementation of afterschool programs. According to one study, every dollar invested in afterschool programs will save taxpayers about $3 in reduced need for grade repetition and remedial education. If savings from reduced juvenile crime rates are factored into this equation, savings could amount to $12 (Brown et all, 2002). In addition, each grade of high school dropouts cost the U.S. more than $17 billion in Medicaid and expenditures for uninsured health care (National Dropout Prevention Center). Preventative measures must be taken to ensure that Detroit youth are able to graduate with the skills to become successful, contributing members of society.

Afterschool is a Politically Sound Policy

The political will is present in Michigan to provide these programs. According to a 2004 survey, 88% of adults in Michigan agree that there should be “some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities to learn” and 81% support public funding for afterschool programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2009). According to a survey of police chiefs nationwide, 69% felt that after-school and child care programs are “the most effective strategies for reducing juvenile crimes” and 86% agreed that expanding after-school and child care programs will greatly reduce youth crime and violence (Fight Crime, Invest in Kids, 2007).

Barriers to Afterschool

Current restrictions require that any after-school programs funded by federal Title I money be academic in nature. However, this requirement prevents schools from using the funds to provide youth with opportunities to participate in programs that build important life skills. According to Detroit Principal Norma Hernandez, because of this requirement, the chess club at her school can’t afford to attend an annual regional competition because they aren’t allowed to use Title I funding for transportation purposes. These students miss out on an opportunity for friendly competition and exposure to other children that are enjoyed by Michigan students who attend more affluent schools. Many high quality programs would not meet Title I’s funding requirements, but they are important to the success and development of Detroit youth.

While many community groups provide quality after-school programs for Detroit youth, transportation is a barrier for students who wish to access these services. School closures mean that many DPS students do not attend school within walking distance from their homes, and rely on bussing to get to and from school each day. Principal Hernandez said that she would like to be able to provide a bus to shuttle children to afterschool programs in the area, but that in order to do so, she would have to rent a bus for a minimum of four hours due to company contracts.

“The Afterschool programs are a critical tool to prepare Detroit youth to compete in tomorrow’s workforce.”

The expense of doing so prevents her from being able to consider this option.

If funds are made available that allow schools the freedom to design programs that meet student needs, the school itself can extend its role as a center for student growth and community engagement. Schools should work with students, parents and teachers to determine what programs are needed the most in their community. The efficacy of the programs should be routinely evaluated, and student outcomes should be monitored to ensure the highest quality results.

Next Steps

Several schools in Detroit have already implemented comprehensive after-school programs that can serve as models for further expansion. The Skillman Foundation provided a $100,000 grant to help launch the Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) afterschool program at Harding Elementary School in 2008. BELL students participate in after-school activities three days a week for 2.25 hours a day focused on literacy skills, math tutoring and enrichment activities in technology, the arts and physical education. On “Mentor Days,” BELL scholars listen to community members share stories about careers, heritage and service in the community. Parents are involved in the program as much as possible.

Several nonprofit organizations and neighborhood organizations run successful afterschool programs in Detroit that can serve as models for future afterschool programming on school grounds. Partnerships between schools and nonprofit organizations could serve as one way to bring these services to a larger number of students. At the All Saints Neighborhood Center in Southwest Detroit, students aged 7-17 are able to receive afterschool tutoring, practice computer skills, and participate in cultural activities. They are also able...
to participate in community service projects, recreational sports activities, and learn about nutrition. Nonprofit groups like Urban Neighborhood Initiatives help run these afterschool programs, which help “enrich, challenge and support learning” that students receive in the classroom (Urban Neighborhood Initiatives, 2010).

Alternatives for Girls Prevention Program provides services to about 150 participants between ages 5 and 18 who are at risk of teen pregnancy, gang involvement and school truancy (Alternatives for Girls, 2010). These prevention programs take place in after-school workshops, study groups and girls’ clubs, and help at-risk girls build character on “a foundation of positive choices.” AFG’s programs provide mentorship, emphasize education and introduce positive alternatives and new experiences into the lives of their participants. Youth develop leadership skills and decision-making skills, with the goal of building and encouraging social responsibility.

Quality afterschool programs like these require quality staff, effective curricula and community collaboration in order to succeed. Federal, state and local governments must develop policies to support and evaluate these programs to ensure their success. In order to prepare Detroit youth for graduation, employment and the skills to succeed, quality afterschool programs are almost certainly a necessity.

While foundation money can be used to implement these programs, federal action will ultimately be required to improve education outcomes in urban areas. The federal government must recognize that programs like No Child Left Behind are not adequately serving inner-city youth. According to census data, the Detroit metropolitan area is the most segregated area in the nation (Kurth et al, 2001). Decisive federal action and urban investment will be necessary to begin the process of desegregating metropolitan school districts to improve education, limit urban sprawl, and encourage the development of the metropolitan region (Baum, 2004).

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The recent mass demolition of all public housing projects in the city of Atlanta spurred the closure of an era to make way for the formation of mixed-income communities and gentrified centers. By eradicating public housing, officials believe that poverty can be reduced by dispersing low-income residents throughout the city. Yet, individuals displaced from their former communities still maintain ties to, and memories of, their lives within these communities. I argue that demolishing public housing signals to low-income individuals, the majority of whom are African Americans, that city planners and policy makers do not care about their needs. Since 1974, The Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) has issued Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to low-income, elderly, and disabled individuals whose income does not exceed 50% of the median income of their respective county. A housing voucher is a government issued certificate, which subsidizes private housing for low-income individuals. The recent expansion of the Section 8 Program in the 2009 Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA) has been a necessary step to increase voucher portability and streamline eligibility. Voucher reform has long been overdue, with as many as 150,000 individuals facing a lengthy and obsolete application process and no guarantee of immediate housing placements (Sard and Fischer, 2007). To continue reform, social advocates and agencies such as Atlanta’s Task Force for the Homeless and the AHA must ensure that federal dollars actually reach Atlanta’s poorest communities; otherwise, the cycle of poverty and homelessness will continue.

Policy makers and city planners must look at actual societal constraints inhibiting the poor from fundamental democratic participation. These societal constraints find their roots in historical racial segregation that has pushed African Americans into urban peripheries. Urban housing, education, and health care disparities still exist as reminders of a not so distant past of racial segregation. African Americans born during the Great Depression lived through the Jim Crow “separate but equal” legislation that excluded them from democratic participation and access to private housing equal to their white counterparts. As a result, black urban ghettos emerged as a means of survival to resist the exclusionary policies of private housing and local officials. Redlining began with the 1934 National Housing Act and became a policy through which local officials could deny black ownership of homes through inflated interest rates and denial of loans (Dedman, 1988; HUD, 2007). Slum clearance programs, endorsed by the federal government at the time, became a means to revitalize urban areas while also squeezing out inhabitants of the urban core. Many minorities, including African Americans, could only secure mortgages in certain areas leading to endemic residential racial segregation. In an effort to revitalize urban slums, the Housing Act of 1937 allotted funding to local governments for the construction of public housing projects. These early public housing projects became a new means to serve the needs of the poor.

Years later, however, Atlanta’s urban renewal from 1958 to 1968 focused on the construction of the interstate connector, stadiums, the rail system, and convention facilities. These renewal efforts destroyed more than 30,000 low-income housing units, thereby displacing nearly 20% of inner city African Americans (Beaty, 2007). At the start of the 1990s, Atlanta was the fourth most residentially segregated city in the U.S. Historically, policy makers have sought to diminish the African American vote through indirect segregation by rezoning formerly integrated neighborhoods, schools, and congressional districts (Beaty, 2007; Keating, 2001). Furthermore, Dedman notes that residents of South Atlanta (who are predominately African American) have historically witnessed a decline in their property values because of banks’ refusal to lend to low-income minority communities: “When people cannot borrow money to buy or fix up houses, property values decline. Real estate agents direct their best prospects elsewhere. Appraisers hedge their bets by undervaluing property [and] businesses close” (1988). The decline in property values places low-income communities at a disadvantage to accessing social services critical to their well-being.

Rather than let urban slums continue to decay, Atlanta City Council and AHA have invested in their renewal by demolishing failed housing projects and encouraging mixed-income communities. Developers commonly remain hesitant to build in areas without established amenities because their existence makes it easier to attract new residents. Dennis Keating suggests that abandoned housing is widespread in the U.S. and occurs when property owners fail to repair and sustain their buildings to “minimal occupancy standards” (2007). The low rent rates in poorer neighborhoods prevent
landlords from refurbishing and maintaining apartment buildings. Thus, the chances of abandoned lots in low-income neighborhoods become much higher because landlords cannot easily pass repair costs to the tenants. Property remains vacant until developers decide to invest.

The 1996 Olympics provided a catalyst for urban renewal in Atlanta to rehabilitate once desolate areas and generate city revenues. To prepare for the Olympic Games and to pursue privatization of the city’s 50 year-old housing projects, planners sought to demolish Techwood Homes, Clark Howell Homes, and East Lake Meadows to transform them into mixed-income communities (Beaty, 2007). Keating argues that the loss of these public housing apartments “destroyed a sociological community close to downtown services and employment” (2001). Techwood Homes, the nation’s first public housing project constructed in 1936, is now the site of Centennial Place, where the rent ranges from $850 to $1700 per month. These high rental rates make Centennial Place out of reach for many low-income individuals and families. Long-term Techwood residents deemed the close proximity to jobs, health care, and transportation crucial to their wellbeing (Keating, 2001). Techwood and Howell Homes formerly included 1,195 units, but Centennial Place only has 360 subsidized units reserved, 30% of which are not available for former residents. Furthermore, East Lake Meadows formerly housed residents in 650 units, but became The Villages at East Lake, which only offers 270 units to low-income residents (Beaty, 2007). After being uprooted and dispersed from their former residences, it is common for low-income families to only move to “slightly less impoverished neighborhoods” (Brown, 2009). Only 20% of former public housing residents return to their communities once they have become mixed-income, and the vast majority of displaced families relocate in “10 of Atlanta’s poorest zip codes” (Brown, 2009).

In addition to mixed-income housing, Atlanta City Council members and politicians also support gentrification as a positive means to transform a dilapidated area into an attractive economic center. Atlantic Station – home to shopping, coffee shops, and pricey loft apartments has replaced the former site of the Atlantic Steel Mill Company. While gentrification generates revenue and tourism in formerly distressed areas, it also excludes the poor from newer housing options (Beaty, 2007). Citizens flocking to gentrified centers represent many ethnicities and races, but share one distinction: affluence. Occupants of trendy loft apartments and patrons to coffee shops and specialty stores share a common purchasing power to afford high rental prices and commodities. In effect, gentrification overturns white-flight because people representing diverse races and ethnicities are now relocating to gentrified centers to shorten the work commute (Goldberg, 1993). The city has moved its efforts from assisting those in need to helping affluent members of society who have social mobility and purchasing power.

In spearheading the urban renewal effort, the AHA has established goals focused on de-concentrating poverty, utilizing private sector and market principles, and elevating personal responsibility among residents (AHA, 2010). Local public housing agencies (PHAs) like the Atlanta Housing Authority disperse the federal Section 8 vouchers to eligible individuals. Supporters of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers claim that people who relocate...
from struggling neighborhoods to flourishing conditions have a better chance of finding jobs, and school children have higher academic achievement (Brown, 2009). Furthermore, supporters argue that vouchers incentivize low-income individuals’ advancement by granting the poor greater personal responsibility, purchasing power, and mobility to find private housing.

The 2009 Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA) is the recent companion to the 1974 Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. SEVRA has established an annual budget for each public housing agency to ensure that they receive enough funding to renew vouchers for residents. SEVRA allots an estimated $568 to $758 monthly and $7,500 annually to assist more families in affording secure, clean, and quality housing within the private market. According to the Congressional Budget Office, however, the increased demand for vouchers will substantially drain HUD’s budget and further contribute to the federal deficit by approximately $1 million (2009). SEVRA also safeguards against market fluctuations by allowing local public housing agencies to pull from a reserve fund to maintain housing commitments to tenants. Improved voucher portability reduces arduous paperwork and red-tape to allow tenants to relocate with vouchers in the event of a new job offer (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008). Even so, the AHAs dispersal of Section 8 vouchers to low-income individuals for the purchasing of private housing still perpetuates a class-based power structure through which low-income citizens face a permanent stigmata of low-income families access to the market (Brown, 2009). A privatized system gives individual landlords and property managers the authority to grant low income individuals access to housing. Within Atlanta, low-income families face a lengthy application process to verify income level with residents’ employers and banks. If applicants meet the eligibility requirements, the local housing authority places them on a waiting list for the voucher; long waiting times are common. Moreover, a landlord can decide not to approve low-income individuals for housing during the background check if they feel uncomfortable renting to voucher-holders. Landlords prefer residents who can already afford the market rate for apartments, so low-income individuals have difficulty seeking housing in more thriving communities. A voucher-holder unable to find a landlord willing to accept the Section 8 housing voucher faces the potential loss of the certificate. To prevent this, SEVRA has streamlined inspections to facilitate and incentivize landlord participation in the program, “by requiring inspections only every two years rather than every year, and by allowing families to move in right away if a property…meets [the] federal housing quality standards” (National Alliance to End Homelessness). Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless Director, Anita Beaty still contends, however, that “the subsidies are ending for thousands of units owned by landlords who [do not] need the subsidies because the market has changed in their favor” (2007). A market approach to urban poverty reduces the role that safety-net structures likes public housing projects formerly played. These issues exhibit the intricacies of new efforts for voucher system reform and responses to the underlying problems pervading impoverished communities.

The Atlanta Housing Authority must continue to reassess the voucher system, and acknowledge that urban renewal efforts do have their costs if projects cater to one echelon of society. Grassroots advocates must work to reintegrate those individuals who have been displaced and make poverty visible in order to generate awareness among decision makers (Shaw, 2001; Zeolle and Josephson, 2005). The Department for Family and Children’s Services (DFCS), Atlanta Community Food Bank, Metro Atlanta’s Task Force for the Homeless, and religious congregations are some existing organizations at the local level which must pressure the AHA to ensure that federal dollars reach Atlanta’s poor. In order to stop the cycle of urban poverty, social workers and policy makers must target root causes of urban poverty though the formation of programs (i.e. job training, health care, and after school care for children of working parents) to mitigate the social problems pervading marginalized groups. These advocates should work to empower the urban poor to demand that the city address their housing needs. This will demonstrate to the city and AHA that all stakeholders including the urban poor must have the opportunity to participate in the decision making process. At both the local and macro levels, the state must take the lead in intervening and reestablishing a social welfare safety net to help individuals escape the cycle of poverty. The American socio-political structure has historically been biased against the poor as well as racial and ethnic minority groups. Oscar Lewis’s conception of a culture of poverty should not hold true (Zeolle and Josephson, 2005). While impoverished individuals should take responsibility for their choices in life, the structural mechanisms forcing people into poverty are not their fault. Public housing should remain a temporary option for those individuals and families who, due to unemployment, foreclosed homes, and bankruptcy from high health care costs, have no other option.

“A market approach to urban poverty reduces the role that safety-net structures likes public housing projects formerly played.”
To reintegrate the urban poor back into Atlanta, policy makers and reformers can learn from the past to realize the impact that instances of legislated segregation and social exclusion have in the present. Historically, reformers of U.S. social welfare policy operated under the misconception that the poor should work rather than protest inequalities (Zoelle and Josephson, 2005). This conception of poverty fails to understand material conditions, such as limited access to affordable housing and jobs that will pay living wages. Atlanta’s urban poor are caught in a fight for their survival, and a continued voucher reform effort and restoration of public housing will work to address the structural inequalities that low-income individuals face. By giving displaced individuals a seat at the table, policy makers can meet the interests of the urban poor. Advocates and policy makers must resist additional gentrification, which further displaces the urban poor away from social services that are critical to their survival. With this understanding, city planners and politicians can then move to target root causes of poverty, and allow low-income individuals a chance to become socially mobile.

References


Detroit's People Mover in the Context of a Southeast Michigan Regional Transportation System

Leanna First-Arai

Describing his business plans as early as 1909, Henry Ford’s intentions to “build a motor car for the great multitude” were as clear as ever (Jackson, 1985). He envisioned this car, affordable to any man making a good salary, to enable him to “enjoy with his family the blessings of hours of pleasure in God’s great open spaces” (Jackson, 1985). Contrarily, the great motor-accessibility that Ford offered American markets made necessary the literal concretization of “God’s great open spaces,” and in doing so paved the way for the decline of many American cities, Ford’s own Detroit in particular. As if burdened with the legacy of his grandfather’s creation in all its capacity to fuel the decline of the city out of which it rose, as CEO of Ford Motors, Henry Ford II in his own words, “heartily” endorsed the Detroit People Mover in 1976 from the removed comfort of his Dearborn headquarters (SEMTA, 1976). The public light-rail, which currently makes an elevated 2.9-mile loop around the city’s Central Business District, was intended as a means of reconnecting areas of the city sliced up by freeways and parking lots, in hopes of triggering economic revitalization. However, in all of its potential to revitalize through linking buildings and activity centers with shops and offices, the People Mover is itself the product of failed linkages. The story of its conception, construction and controversy points towards the geographical-made-ideological, urban-suburban, auto-enabled division which prevented its incorporation into a larger transit system and therefore compromised any potential for the rail to act as the “savior of a dying city” that many optimistic Michigan residents had imagined (Wilkerson, 1987).

“People Movers” appeared as a potential urban transportation solution during the spring of 1972. In Chantilly, VA four private companies showcased their versions of what were technically referred to as “Personal Rapid Transit” systems (Witkins, 1972). Granted 1.5 million each in development funds by the Department of Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA), four private contractors, one of which was Ford Motors, offered alternative versions of a six to thirty person, gondola-like vehicle and guide way system that would “help rescue urban America from strangulation by automobile traffic” (Witkins, 1972). In a nation addicted to the ever-convenient “freedom of mobility” granted by auto use, planners anticipated the “personal” taxi-like nature of the people mover concept to be an attractive public transportation alternative to personal vehicle users (Witkins, 1972). Throughout the country, politicians envisioned that the implementation of a successful downtown People Mover model would warrant a car ban in congested downtown areas for the first time in history: a move that could allow for the return to mixed-use streets as opposed to the “no-man’s-land” traffic brutalized areas that had become the urban American norm (Duany et al., 2000).

Four years later, President Gerald Ford offered the Southeast Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) $600 million for the construction of a rail transit system, allowing the region a great deal of freedom to draft and deploy a coherent system of mass transportation (Michigan House of Representatives). Under these circumstances, the People Mover appeared to be a winning component of a larger system and was overwhelmingly supported by then Governor William Milliken, both houses of Michigan’s legislature, SEMTA, as well as the Central Business District Association (Michigan House of Representatives). The project made particular sense in light of the specific problems outlined by SEMTA’s proposal, which identified traffic congestion within the Central Business District as a significant factor in its lack of appeal to visitors and pedestrians. At the time, vehicles entered the district from three freeway-bordered sides, and a fourth side from the Detroit River Tunnel (SEMTA, 1976). Within such a small and confined area, where on and off ramps were concentrated amidst one-way streets and numerous parking lots, drivers had to be significantly “well oriented” if they were to successfully navigate the area. Likewise, only “well oriented” pedestrians could navigate the district without putting themselves in danger (SEMTA, 1976).

How could an area with these problems expect to allure visitors, shoppers, diners or any sort of reliable economic activity? The SEMTA proposal made the People Mover out to be a solution to this congestive demise. In addition to its “major aesthetic appeal,” the People Mover would attempt to separate vehicular and pedestrian activity, locating parking lots outside of the 13 planned stations and freeing up land previously used as parking space for higher density use (SEMTA, 1976). The elevated railway was planned to act as a pedestrian friendly matrix between major activity nodes such as the Renaissance Center, Joe Louis Arena and the Cobo Center (SEMTA, 1976). In theory, such drastically improved mobility would further stimulate total demand for trips within downtown.

Quantified, the projected benefits of Detroit’s People Mover were equally if not more impressive.
Economists anticipated an increase of 10.6 million in retail sales in addition to significant increases in property tax revenue due to the intensive development of the city’s core. Additionally, the surge in income tax revenue due to employment gains was expected to reach seventeen million per year (SEMTA, 1976). Generating $6 to $11.1 for every dollar expended on the initial capital cost, the presumed self-sufficient People Mover, at least in SEMTA’s report, appeared to truly exhibit potential to “serve as an extremely important catalyst in the continuing plan to enhance and revitalize Detroit” (SEMTA, 1976).

Recognizing that a lack of high quality transit service to the Central Business District (CBD) was responsible “at least in part, for the declining position of the CBD as the major regional activity center,” a crucial component to the proposed People Mover was its intended use as a link between present and future modes of transportation. Released in 1974 and approved by SEMTA in 1979, the Southeast Regional Transportation Plan envisioned a coordinated hierarchy of transit systems comprised of five major components (Michigan House of Representatives). The detailed plan included six rapid-transit corridor guide ways connecting the major activity centers in the Southeast metropolitan region complemented by 179 miles of radial and circumferential rapid transit bus lines within the same area (SEMTA, 1976). A commuter rail would provide service beyond the range of the metropolitan system, and buses would fill in the gaps by providing increased sub-regional and community level routes (SEMTA, 1976). Given these four constructs, SEMTA planned for the People Mover to collect and distribute riders of the bus and rail system, thereby expanding the cohesion and area of influence of the system in its entirety.

As promising as this Regional Transportation Plan appeared in 1976, the People Mover is the only component that has since materialized, and illogically so. From 1970 to 1975, years during which the People Mover concept was in its formative stages, the population in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties remained unchanged (Wayne and Oakland County Road Commission, 1977). However over the course of these five years, the three counties saw a dramatic shift in population from Wayne County, which had a -5.6 percent growth rate over the period, to Oakland and Macomb counties, which grew by 7.2 and 7.0 percent respectively (Wayne and Oakland County Road Commission, 1977). Given Wayne County’s significant population loss over this five year period, the last thing the Southeast region needed was a 2.9 mile elevated railway that allowed only Detroit’s remaining million residents to ride around in circles, basking in the absence of their tax dollars. Rather than circulating in isolation, Detroit needed some sort of physical lifeline—he it a connection to jobs outside the city or the facilitation of tax dollars generated by city visitors. Various committees proposed regional transit plans only to be neglected and then dismissed in 1979, again in 1984 and once more in 1985 (Michigan House of Representatives). Meanwhile the People Mover continued moving through its many phases of development, and was completed in 1987.

Skeptical of the People Mover’s ability to truly benefit Detroit, UMTA officials within the Reagan administration attempted to eliminate federal money allotted for the light-rail in 1985 (Detroit Free Press, 1987). Yet despite the continual decline of daily ridership projections, which had fallen from 55,000 to 16,000 by the People Mover’s opening day on July 31, 1987, mayor Coleman Young’s perseverance won back federal money for the project (Detroit Free Press, 2000). Despite the symbolic value of its completion, the entire process was laden with technical problems ranging from cracked and shattered concrete beams and broken glass, to a year-long service disruption resulting from the Hudson building demolition in 1998 (Detroit Free Press, 1999). During the thirteen months of disrupted service in 1998, dramatically longer riding times made ridership plummet from the already low 8,000 per day to an excruciating 1,500 upon its reopening in 1999 (Detroit Free Press, 1999). Soon after, a General Motors effort to improve the Renaissance Center People Mover station closed the loop for a short period of time, requiring its riders to use a much less convenient two-way shuttle leaving one Detroit Free Press interviewee to wonder “if the elevated light-rail system will ever live up to its promise as a lynchpin for a much needed mass transit system” (2000). A 1987 article in the New York Times attributed the inability to incorporate the People Mover into a larger rail system to cost overruns and the drying up of Federal transportation funds. While requiring significantly more capital than initially projected, the People Mover consumed 157.2 million, roughly one quarter of the 600 million Gerald Ford had originally offered in 1976 (Detroit Free Press, 2000). Squandered on carelessly planned and poorly designed projects intended to strengthen the People Mover’s route, 442.8 million of President Ford’s initial grant remains unaccounted for (Detroit Free Press, 2000).

Though structural and cosmetic construction are important when considering both the quality of life in Detroit as well as the city’s ability to allure visitors, no such project, regardless of its intent, should have been permitted to stand in the way of any component of the city’s day-to-day functionality. Had regional oversight been involved, adherence to a shared goal of connection and a focus placed on the equitable and efficient distribution of funds to the People Mover project would have likely resulted in fewer segments of useless train track, and a chance for a successful, better incorporated light-rail in the long-term.
Along Alter Road in Detroit runs a wall dividing “Disneyland” and “West Beirut,” or wealthy, neatly trimmed, largely white Grosse Point from the poor, burned out, primarily black East Side of the city (Jackson, 1985). Physically separate from the city so in need of a regional transit lifeline, suburbanites appear perfectly happy within the bubble in which they have chosen to live. In a market opinion survey conducted in 1976, Southeastern Michigan suburbanites expressed their contentment with remaining physically and economically within the suburbs they had fled to. For work and shopping trips, the two activities that most frequently require transportation, the majority of those surveyed expressed greater personal utility for improved in-county public transportation rather than out-county public transportation. The survey shows that 88% of participants in Wayne County, 76% of participants in Oakland County, and 73% of participants in Macomb County expressed such desire (Wayne and Oakland County Road Commission). Yet these opinions are largely the product of pragmatism: zoning regulations responsible for the many dense shopping facilities that characterize suburbia make shopping trips in downtown Detroit largely impractical.

When regional transit system concepts have been proposed, as in 1979, 1984 and 1985, taxpayers accustomed to using their personal vehicles resent the allotment of their tax dollars to a system that they do not intend to utilize and often heavily oppose construction of local transit links (SEMCOG, 2000). The few transportation connections to and from Detroit that do exist have been the first to be eliminated in times of economic hardship. For example, in attempt to save some $10.5 million during a 1975 budget deficit, SEMTA eliminated seven daily trips from its service: three of which connected Crocker to Detroit, and three of which connected Jefferson Beach to Detroit (Gross Point News 1974). When paired with auto-enabled suburban independence from the city, the elimination of rider sourcing by way of bus route removal makes a mockery of the empty People Mover, which cannot play the part of collector/distributor of people if there is no collection or distribution to be made. As anticipated by one resident on the day of its opening, disconnected from the suburbs, the People Mover is nothing more than a “nice looking Stonehenge” (Wilkerson, 1987).

Politicians have also played an integral role in the prevention of a consolidated, functional regional transit system in Southeast Michigan. Former Republican House Speaker Craig DeRoche is a perfect example of a blatant impediment to cohesion between Detroit and its suburbs (Schneider, 2005). Not even attempting subtlety, DeRoche identified himself in 2004 as a “representative of sprawl” (Schneider, 2005). With the majority of his campaign contributions coming from energy, real estate, concrete, utility and development companies, DeRoche earmarked a significant portion of Michigan’s annual $10 million of economic development funds for new highways and other auto-oriented projects outside of Detroit throughout his three terms (Schneider, 2005). By crafting the policies and controlling the funds responsible for sprawl, politicians like DeRoche fuel a perpetual cycle disallowing the implementation of regional public transportation projects like that released by SEMTA in 1974 (Michigan House of Representatives). With a significant portion of tax dollars allotted to development by politicians’ campaign donors in the outermost suburbs, newer, well-maintained infrastructure naturally allures mobile residents out of the city and its inner suburbs. As people spread out over vast amounts of space and grow increasingly dependent on the 1.6 million cars that have been added to the road since 1970, public transportation becomes both less rational and less desirable in the eyes of suburban taxpayers and their representatives (Schneider, 2005). In 2007, suburban Livingston County’s unemployment rate was 5.2 percent with 5.5 percent of households earning an income under $14,999 per year (US Census, 2007). In stark contrast, Detroit’s 2007 unemployment rate was 11.7 percent, and 28.1 percent of households earned under $14,999 (US Census, 2007). As the physical space between the suburbs and the city grows, trips past the Alter road division are less rational and less desirable for affluent suburban dwellers living nearby. Meanwhile, city dwellers find car ownership the key to mobility beyond their means. With politicians like DeRoche “standing for sprawl,” what are Detroiters stranded in the city, literally without inlet our outlet supposed to do?

The Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), a regional planning partnership whose mission is “to solve regional problems by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the region’s local governments,” has played no lesser a role in preventing a coherent system of regional public transportation than the politicians it aims to coordinate. In theory, SEMCOG facilitates cooperation between 147 local governments, institutions and state and federal agencies (Schneider, 2004). However, in practice, delegates within the organization are principally loyal to the desires of their constituents at the expense of intended cooperation and regional transportation. Systematic in its approach to seeing local projects through, constituents active within...
SEMCOG nominate projects that are discussed and given priority by an advisory committee (Schneider, 2004). Once nominated, selected projects are passed on to SEMCOG’s executive committee, which retains the ultimate say in project decisions and in how much money each receives. The problem with this system is one of disproportionate representation. Within the 51 member executive committee, a sparsely populated new suburban area like Livingston County has four votes to represent its 172,000 residents. Detroit, a city containing a population more than five times the size of all of Livingston County has a mere three representatives on the executive committee despite its 920,000 residents. The consequences are far reaching. Despite the fact that a third of the Southeast region’s residents don’t drive, only $145 million per year is given to the region’s two bus lines while amounts of one to two billion are spent just to widen single portions of Interstate-75 because of auto-dependent suburban overrepresentation (Schneider, 2004). Though in a 2000 conference report SEMCOG members brought to attention the need for increased general connectivity of regional public transit, the overrepresentation of suburban delegates on an executive committee possessing the power to deny funding to regional makes the materialization of a coherent public transportation system unlikely without a fundamental shift in attitude.

Indicative of Southeastern Michigan’s notorious uncooperativeness, during a visit to Detroit in mid-October of this year, US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood made his message clear: “get your act together regionally, or forget help from Washington” (Gerritt, 2009). Until Michigan's private and public sectors share in the realization that the urban-suburban divide has been actively broken and public money should be turned towards the strengthening and connecting of the central city and its existing suburbs, Detroit’s People Mover will remain “no more than a tail without a dog” (Detroit Free Press, 1987). Presently, a regional high-speed rail running from Ann Arbor to Detroit with stops in Ypsilanti, Detroit Metro Airport, and Dearborn is scheduled to begin service in October of 2010 (SEMCOG, 2009). Though exciting indeed, once functional, this commuter rail will comprise only one of many corridors recurrently planned and dismissed. This collaboration must persist into the future to ensure the fruition of a comprehensive mass transit system which would truly allow for, in Henry Ford’s words, the “great multitude” to “enjoy with his family the blessings of hours of pleasure.” Only in the event of collaborative success will there be people to follow the People Mover brochure’s suggestion to “Go! See! Shop! Eat!” in the downtown area. Only under these circumstances can Detroit and the People Mover’s empty, isolated 2.9-mile loop of perpetuity be broken.

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Healthy Planning
How Community Planners Can Solve the Healthcare Crisis

Michael Glynn

Introduction
“We seem to have surrendered community excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things... GNP – if we should judge America by that – counts air pollution and cigarette advertising and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for people who break them. Yet the Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play... it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”


What is this elusive thing called community and how might we better harness its mysterious powers? As Senator Robert F. Kennedy’s famous words suggest, community is difficult to precisely measure, so we tend to overlook its value in favor of the more tangible. Robert Putnam has made perhaps the best attempt to address the mystery of community value, which he equates to “social capital,” or the “social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from [connections among people]” (Putnam, 2000). Though investment in social capital in local communities may offer the best solution to some of the nation’s greatest challenges, it continues to be overlooked.

Overlooking the value of community capital can have severe implications. One explanation for the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009 was the breakdown of community relationships. For much of the 20th century, mortgage lending took place at community banks where face-to-face interactions between lenders and borrowers built trust and understanding. In the decade leading up to the financial crisis of 2008, faceless transactions proliferated where mortgage lending was instigated by brokers, packaged by Wall Street, and sold off across the world. The disunion of the banker and borrower at the community level led to bad loans and defaults, which eventually resulted in a credit crunch, financial meltdown, stock market crash, deep recession, and high unemployment. But, has society learned its lesson not to overlook the value of community capital?

The intent of this article is to warn that another danger – a healthcare crisis – is looming and explain why effective planning at the community level is the best and perhaps only effective solution. The healthcare crisis – the decreasing access Americans have to the type of healthcare on which they have come to depend – is a result of unsustainable costs and diminished financial resources. To effectively address the crisis, we must shift focus away from the traditional measurement of progress for just as GNP “counts special locks for our doors and the jails for people who break them” (Kennedy, 1968), it counts the expensive biotech drugs and invasive surgery needed to clean up our unhealthy living.

Yet, as David Goldhill recently pointed out in The Atlantic, “Medical care, of course, is merely one component of our overall health. Nutrition, exercise, education, emotional security, our natural environment, and public safety may now be more important...in producing further advances in longevity and quality of life” (2009). Because of society’s obsession with measurement, we overproduce that which can be easily measured – pills and surgeries – and underproduce that which cannot – healthy communities.

Community planners can change this and prepare America for the day when pills, surgeries, and institutional care are no longer as accessible as they are today.

I. The Healthcare Crisis
“Planning is a systematic, creative approach to addressing social, physical, and economic problems... [Planners] study the interconnections between the various forces that shape places and quality of life in them, and develop policies around these interconnections...”

- Jonathan Levine, Chair of Urban & Regional Planning, University of Michigan, 2009
Complex attributes of the healthcare crisis make it a challenge that community planners are uniquely prepared to address. The U.S. healthcare system has depended on the free market and government, or vertical forces, for too much and for too long. The broad, centralized nature of vertical forces ineffectively addresses the complex and customized health needs of individuals and communities. Overlooked as a solution is the untapped value of community-based solutions, or horizontal forces. Planners not only have an intimate understanding of horizontal forces, but they also examine the interconnections between various forces that “shape places and quality of life” (Levine, 2009).

The American Planning Association (APA) places health problems related to the built environment into three categories: land use, automobile dependency, and social processes (Morris, 2006). The former two are physical problems, the latter is a social problem, and the aggregate has exacerbated the economic problem of the healthcare system. At the center of the healthcare crisis is a cost problem that limits access to products and services, compromises quality, and reduces overall healthcare value. Examining the healthcare crisis from a social, physical, and economic level helps demonstrate why this is a challenge particularly suited for planners willing to reshape how America thinks about health.

The Physical Crisis

The healthcare crisis is a physical planning problem since the position of our buildings and infrastructure governs our daily lives by influencing accessibility to where we live, work, and play. Thus, the “built environment” is the passive dictator responsible for directing our level of physical activity. According to the APA, automobile dependency creates health problems related to air pollution, asthma, car crashes, and pedestrian injuries, while land use problems include water quality, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and obesity (Morris, 2006). Furthermore, obesity is linked to numerous health problems such as diabetes (The Obesity Society). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are 24 million diabetics in America and 57 million characterized as pre-diabetic. In addition, a recent study from Rutgers University demonstrated the strong inverse correlation between auto-dependency and obesity across
The Social Crisis

The healthcare crisis is a social problem since the built environment impacts our mental health (Morris, 2006). Different types of environments have shown varying correlations to mental health disorders. For instance, in Urban Sprawl and Public Health, authors Howard Frumkin, Lawrence Frank, and Richard Jackson suggest that sprawl undermines the social fabric of a community as it restricts opportunities for civic engagement, as well as informal social interactions (2004). This begets isolation and loneliness, which studies have linked to cardiovascular disease, strokes, injuries, and other health risks (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004). Science is not entirely conclusive on the matter, but careful attention is warranted: “as the built environment continues to evolve, and as mental disorders continue to loom large in absolute and relative terms in our nation’s health profile, we need to remain alert to possible links between sprawl and mental health” (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004).

Social problems of the built environment are exacerbated by the vulnerability of certain populations. Women, children, minorities, the elderly, the poor, and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable owing to, among other things, economic and transportation barriers (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004). These groups face support and access challenges that are linked to mental and physical health problems (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004). A growing social challenge in the United States is the rapidly expanding elderly population. Looming questions related to the elderly include where to house them, how to care for them, and where to find the funding to pay for the government’s promises to them. The number of seniors (aged 65+) is projected to double in the first thirty years of the 21st Century (CDC, 2003). Since all seniors qualify for Medicare, a government-funded safety net, this social issue is also perhaps the largest economic problem in the United States.

The Economic Crisis

The healthcare crisis is an economic problem because it impacts every taxpayer and puts the nation’s finances at great risk. The Peter G. Peterson Foundation estimated that at the end of 2008, U.S. government liabilities were $56.4 trillion, or $184,000 per American. The Medicare portion of this was $36.3 trillion, or $118,000 per person and $311,000 per household. In 2009, national healthcare expenditures were $2.5 trillion, or 17.3% of the U.S. GDP, according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). A Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) survey in 2009 found that medical-related bankruptcy had stung 2% of respondents and 7% had been unable to pay for necessities like food, heat, or housing in the preceding 12 months as a result of healthcare bills. These problems and others are behind a July 2009 KFF poll that showed 56% of Americans believe “health reform is more important than ever.”

A demographic analysis shows how the healthcare financial crisis related to Medicare and seniors may permeate to the entire economy. The Economist magazine warned readers to “stop thinking for a moment about deep recession, trillion-dollar rescue packages and mounting job losses. Instead, contemplate the prospect of slow growth and low productivity, rising public spending and labor shortages. These are the problems of ageing populations” (6/25/09).

The magnitude of the economic burden indicates that the government and seniors are on an unsustainable fiscal path and fresh solutions are desperately needed. The inevitable result is a combination of cuts from the government, increases in the portion of individual out-of-pocket spending, and a reduction in traditional healthcare consumption. Establishing natural healthcare supports within the built environment of communities may soften the blow of these economic realities.

II. Failed Healthcare Strategies

“Neither managed care, nor wage and price controls, nor regulation, nor voluntary action, nor market competition has had a lasting impact on our nation’s health care costs. Reformers should not overpromise.”

– Drew Altman, President of the Kaiser Family Foundation (Pear, 2009)

Both the free market (“managed care” and “market competition”) and government intervention (“wage and price controls” and “regulation”) are failing to restrain the costs of traditional medical care – drugs, surgeries, institutional care, etc. Efforts should continue on re-thinking and improving the delivery of traditional medical care through healthcare markets and government policy, but Altman’s discouraging statement suggests the system, as we know it, is destined for collapse. While there are numerous specific reasons to explain the failure, the consistent, long-term systematic failures suggest we should look for an explanation on a macro level.

Human behavioral tendencies can explain some of the failure. Free markets operate effectively with transparent, easy-to-measure products and services, but our decision-making is limited when it comes to complex interconnections that affect our health. Furthermore, the government cannot be relied upon to set effective centralized policies since policymakers consistently fall victim to human behavior that leads to inefficient healthcare delivery and unsustainable costs.
Why the Free Market is Not the Answer

The free market alone is incapable of solving the healthcare cost problem. In theory, the free market allows scientific thinking and reason to govern the distribution of resources, which tends to lead to greater efficiencies through an individual’s rational decision-making.

However, the rational mind is limited in its ability to handle complex data that are difficult to quantify. Citing several neurological studies, Lehrer notes “the conscious brain can only handle about seven pieces of data at one moment” (2009). One experiment by psychologist Ap Dijksterhuis showed that when choosing a car, consumers make the objectively correct choice when considering four characteristics. However, rational thought led consumers astray when twelve categories were rated (Lehrer 2009). Those forced to make an emotional decision were more likely to choose the best vehicle than those using rational thinking. Lehrer notes that “consumers aren’t always driven by careful considerations of price and expected utility…Instead, you outsource much of this calculation to your emotional brain and then rely on relative amounts of pleasure versus pain to tell you what to purchase” (2009).

Thus, there is a “measurement problem” in the more complex decisions because the rational brain can neither identify all relevant metrics nor apply accurate values to the identified ones. In a perfect world, all information would be included in every decision we make; this would allow us to rely on the rational and a pure free market could not be improved upon. In the real world, this is not possible. Lehrer writes “it is the easy problems – the mundane math problems of daily life that are best suited to the conscious brain. Complex problems, on the other hand, require the processing powers of the emotional brain, the supercomputer of the mind” (2009). If we cannot appropriately account for all costs, we should be hesitant to assume the rational mind in a free market setting is the way to maximize productivity and appropriate allocation of resources.

Healthcare is one of the most challenging parts of the economy to measure and therefore plug in to the free market system. In fact, Bill Gates, the chairman of Microsoft, directs much of his foundation’s grants towards healthcare since where “measurement is hard, capitalism, at least so far, hasn’t worked that well” (Harvard Business School, 2008).

Overvaluing the ability of reason to lead us to better health outcomes in a free market framework can lead to over-treatment that is both harmful and expensive. When it comes to medical practitioner behavior, “people make theories out of coincidences. They latch on to medical explanations even when the explanations don’t make very much sense” (Lehrer, 2009). Too much information can be harmful because plugging it into a theory can lead to over-confidence in the treatment. Lehrer cites a specific report from the American College of Physicians that “strongly recommended…not to obtain imaging or other diagnostic tests in patients with nonspecific low back pain” because tests usually show imperfections of the spine and people make incorrect conclusions that lead to needless surgeries (2009). People need “to find a reason for the pain so that the suffering could be given a clear anatomical cause” (Lehrer 2009). Human behavioral tendencies suggest how a free market framework can easily be overcome by irrational decision-making that results in higher costs and potentially worse health outcomes.

Why the Government is Not the Answer

Though government intervention can complement free markets to enhance healthcare value, behavioral risks compromise government’s ability to establish cost-effective policy. In some cases, the government can apply policies that help capture the free market’s externalities. For instance, improving an incentive structure (as in rewarding patients for preventative care) or simply informing the public of externalities (as in FDA warnings) can result in net gains to society unavailable in a pure free market. However, human behavioral tendencies show how the government tends to gravitate towards inefficiency and an unsustainable financial state. As President Calvin Coolidge noted, “nothing is easier than spending the public money. It does not appear to belong to anybody. The temptation is overwhelming to bestow it on somebody” (Coolidge, 8/5/30).

Perhaps the biggest danger to government intervention is the “ratchet effect.” A policy may be initially effective, but over time it is bound to become stale. History shows that the ratchet does not move backwards. The Economist magazine noted, “Crises usually bring about clamor for more government. It sometimes shrinks afterwards, but never back to its original size” (5/28/09). Thomas Jefferson warned of this danger by saying, “the natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and for government to gain ground” (Petrie, 2010). Government intervention tends to lead us down an unsustainable financial path even if policy is initially effective.
Since people tend to have an irrational and varying sense of fairness (Akerlof, Shiller, 2009), government intervention to create more “fair” policies can easily lead to a downward spiral of value destruction. Of course we are easily duped into sympathizing with special interests. Even well intentioned legislators are tricked into creating counterproductive policy. As Jonah Lehrer wrote, “The mind often surrenders to the temptation of shoddy top-down thinking” (2009). The more centralized an organizing structure is, the more vulnerable it is to biased, ‘unscientific’ thinking as decision makers are removed from the individual ‘facts’ on the local level.

It is admirable that policymakers want to deliver what the free market fails to deliver in healthcare. Yet, as David Goldhill notes, “Because healthcare is so complex and because each individual has a unique health profile, no system can be perfect.” Yet, behavioral tendencies continue to blind policymakers to this reality and the impossible task of meeting everyone’s healthcare needs through central government intervention is leading to financial disaster. In 1960, the government’s share of national health expenditures was 24.7%, according to HHS. The public portion jumped to 38% in 1970, to 42% in 1980, to 44% in 2000, to 46% in 2008. This runaway train shows no indication of slowing down.

The Decision Crisis

David Goldhill asks, “By what mechanism does society determine that an extra, say, $100 billion for healthcare will make us healthier than even $10 billion for cleaner air or water, or $25 billion for better nutrition, or $5 billion for parks, or $10 billion for recreation, or $50 billion in additional vacation time” (2009)? While the perfect balance of resources will remain forever elusive, it is time to recognize that the free market and government have not and likely will not ask these difficult questions and deliver a comprehensive response. Yet, the status quo means that “healthcare simply keeps gobbling up national resources, seemingly without regard for societal needs; it’s treated as an island that doesn’t touch or affect the rest of the economy” (Goldhill, 2009). It is time to look elsewhere for answers.

III. Community Building and Smart Growth

“Smart Growth is like a medicine that treats a multitude of diseases—protecting respiratory health, improving cardiovascular health, preventing cancer, avoiding traumatic injuries and fatalities, controlling depression and anxiety, improving well being. In the medical world, such an intervention would be miraculous. In the worlds of land use and transportation, it is a thrilling, and attainable possibility.”

- Urban Sprawl and Public Health (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004)

The financial reality of the healthcare crisis is that reductions in consumption of traditional medical care are inevitable. As Urban Sprawl and Public Health suggest, the opportunity for community planning to fill this void “is a thrilling, and attainable possibility.” Smart Growth, which is generally undifferentiated from a number of related concepts such as “livable communities” and “New Urbanism,” is characterized by a neighborhood design that encourages physical activity and social interactions through its mixed-use development, automobile-independence, and relatively dense building. A growing body of research shows the health benefits of strong social capital created through horizontal trust in a community.

Though we lack “a full understanding of the mechanisms,” numerous studies tie stronger networks to lower mortality rates and better mental health (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004). These studies, among other factors, have resulted in a fresh look at urbanity and Smart Growth as healthy residential options for the mainstream. It is time we recognize the important role of healthy communities can play in solving the healthcare crisis, since half of the deaths in the America, including those from “heart disease, diabetes, lung cancer, homicide, suicide, and accidents… are arguably influenced as much by lifestyle choices and living environment as by healthcare” (Goldhill, 2009).

Renewed Faith in Urbanity

Owing to diseases common to dense areas, health conditions tarnished the reputation of American cities for centuries, but there is no better time to turn that reputation around. Now, perhaps for the first time in American history, health is on the city’s side as a result of sanitary conditions and new research suggesting the indirect benefits of density.

Still, planners are faced with overcoming biases against denser communities that have been institutionalized since the founding of the country. Thomas Jefferson believed that cities were “pestilential to the morals, the health, and the liberties of man” (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004). Indeed, diseases like yellow fever ravaged American cities during Jefferson’s time. Furthermore, inadequate sewage, clean water, and garbage removal made American cities a breeding ground for disease. As noted...
in *Urban Sprawl and Public Health*, “A ribbon of anti-urban bias has stretched throughout American history. Cities have been viewed as unwholesome, morally degrading, and unhealthy. From a public health point of view, cities have indeed been hazardous” (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004). Though the inertia of the anti-urban bias remains today through misperceptions and archaic zoning laws that are remnants of a bygone era, there is hope.

Changes in the economy, modern infrastructure, and current research suggest that now is the time for proponents of denser community designs to play the health card. A shift from an industrial and manufacturing economy to a service economy has reduced pollution in American cities. Furthermore, modern technology and infrastructure allow for garbage removal, sewage treatment and disposal, clean water, and fresh air in densely populated areas. With these issues under control, disease and infection are now far less of a concern for urban areas.

Without this headline risk, planners can focus on the sometimes subtle, yet often-powerful positive health benefits of urban living. Smart Growth and similar institutions are promoting health-conscious urban principles—mixed land use, compact design, open natural space, and walkable neighborhoods. While community planners may be familiar with the logical connection between health and design, numerous studies are now emerging to make the claim more scientific (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004).

**Smart Growth and Health**

While Smart Growth offers health benefits for the population in general, there is a particularly strong case to be made for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Demographics suggest a “quiet crisis” is brewing with a shortage of housing for seniors. Between 2010 and 2030, the CDC reports that the number of seniors in the U.S. is expected to increase from 40 million, or 13.0% of the population, to 71 million, or 19.6% of the population (CDC, 2003). This is alarming from a financial standpoint given the higher expense of the individuals who are elderly and disabled. For instance, these groups account for roughly 25% of Medicaid beneficiaries, but make up more than 60% of expenditures (National Association of State Budget Offices, 2009). This cost problem is related to the delivery of long-term care, which is where housing and healthcare services intersect and exactly where community planners and Smart Growth can help.

The goal of long-term care is “to allow an individual to attain and maintain an optimal level of functioning...[I]t encompasses a wide array of medical, social, personal, and supportive and specialized housing services needed by individuals who have lost some capacity for self-care” (Special Committee on Aging, 2000). Not including the more informal costs and some community-based services, a conservative estimate for the LTC costs in 2006 was roughly $178 billion, or just under 10% of national healthcare expenditures (Rowland, 2009).

Community based long-term care can reduce costs and improve quality of life relative to institutional long-term care. The Journal of Health and Social Policy reported that nursing home eligible people that were given Home and Community Care Services (HCBS) waivers saved the system an average of $44,000 per person per year because they avoided more expensive institutional care (Kitchener, 2006). Furthermore, advocacy groups work to promote community living through missions similar to that of the Administration of Aging, which works to help “elderly individuals maintain their health and independence in their homes and communities.”

Despite the cost and quality benefits of community-based long-term care, market forces and government programs have failed to create the housing necessary to extract these synergies. The government continues its attempts to spur development of community-based housing that will help lower costs, but results have been humbling. The Medicaid Money Follows the Person (MFP) demonstration, which was created by the Federal Deficit Reduction Act, is spending $1.44 billion in grant money to transition 38,000 elderly and disabled persons from institutions to community-based settings. However, the demonstration is significantly behind schedule owing to the challenge of “identifying safe, affordable, and accessible community housing for MFP participants” (Watts, 2009). Furthermore, 331,000 people were on waiting lists for home and community-based services at the end of 2007 in part due to a shortage of housing that could complement the needs of this population (Watts, 2009).

There are a number of reasons why Smart Growth could add to the value of long-term care in a community-based setting. Seniors and individuals with disabilities are more dependent on walkable communities and public transportation than the general population (Morris, 2006). Thus, the density and walkability that Smart Growth engenders would decrease transportation costs for health care services and increase social interactions and physical activity (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004). Furthermore, the American College of Sports Medicine argued in a recent paper that regular physical activity reduces the age-related progression of chronic degenerative diseases (2009). Further studies are needed to strengthen evidence of the link between Smart Growth and physical activity, but the potential for alleviating financial stress on the healthcare system is tremendous considering chronic diseases may account for as much as 95% of Medicare expenditures (Wolff, 2002). Given HHS projects Medicare expenditures...
in 2010 to be $515 billion, or 3.5% of the entire U.S. economy, the impact of Smart Growth could be a powerful force in reshaping the U.S. healthcare system.

**Intangibles of Local Community Support**

Behavioral tendencies show that horizontal trust unlocks valuable social capital in tighter local communities. The value of local connectedness is explained in *Bowling Alone* - “as economists have recently discovered, trusting communities, other things being equal, have a measurable economic advantage and...life expectancy itself is enhanced in more trustful communities. A society that relies on generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society... Honesty and trust lubricate the inevitable frictions of social life” (Putnam, 2000).

Though the value of community trust and support cannot be properly measured on the state or federal level, natural behavioral tendencies demonstrate that people recognize it on the local level. This is crucial since knowing we can make a measurable difference is a key behavioral motivator to action. Jonah Lehrer noted, “We donate thousands of dollars to help a single African war orphan featured on the cover of a magazine, but ignore widespread genocides in Rwanda and Darfur. As Mother Teresa put it, ‘If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at the one, I will’” (Lehrer, 2009). Supportive behavior, whether conscious or subconscious, is inspired by the specific and definable because in some ways, it connects us with visible results. Acting locally gives us the certainty that we crave even if benefits are difficult to precisely measure. Regarding healthcare, this means we tend to act on the micro level and do not bother with the long-term system-wide issues. This is the primary reason comprehensive healthcare reform has been such a challenge.

Behavioral tendencies also suggest why face-to-face interactions are crucial to social capital creation. Lehrer writes, “Once people become socially isolated, they stop simulating the feelings of other people” (Lehrer, 2009). If we know we can have an impact, we are exceedingly generous. Creating communities with strong connections among people can go a long way in enhancing the horizontal trust portion of social capital.

Improving the healthcare system is therefore a local community challenge. Effectively, the social capital phenomenon enables communities to tap the support of their neighbors, which means less is being demanded on the near-bankrupt, crisis-level vertical trust. Given the economic challenges of the vertical institutions, local community development can be a holistic strategy to not only improve health, but also alleviate the financial healthcare crisis.
IV. The Planner Revolution

“[Physician Stewart] Wolf and [sociologist John] Bruhn had to convince the medical establishment to think about health and heart attacks in an entirely new way: they wouldn’t understand why someone was healthy if all they did was think about an individual’s personal choices or actions in isolation. They had to look beyond the individual. They had to understand the culture he or she was a part of, and who their friends and families were… They had to appreciate the idea that the values of the world we inhabit and the people we surround ourselves with have a profound effect on who we are.”

– Malcolm Gladwell, Outliers (Gladwell, 2009)

The excerpt above, taken from the introduction to Malcolm Gladwell’s New York Times Bestseller, Outliers, references the findings of Dr. Stewart Wolf and John Bruhn. The two found that residents of a tiny, self-sufficient eastern Pennsylvania town had vastly superior health to all comparable populations. After years of interviews, medical tests, and in-depth studies, the pair concluded that the only explanation for being a health outlier was the strength in the community, their horizontal trust (Gladwell, 2009). The challenge of Wolf and Bruhn is the new challenge of community planners—explaining the vast but difficult to measure health benefits of horizontal forces.

To understand the task at hand, community planners should understand the behavioral bias toward vertical solutions. New research in the field of behavioral neuroscience helps explain why people are biased towards vertical forces. Simply put, peddlers of both free market theory and government intervention feed confidence and certainty to the masses in the form of simplified solutions to vexing problems; and certainty feels good. As Susan Jacoby writes, political and intellectual life has been infected “by a culture in which disproportionate influence is exercised by the loud and relentless voices of single-minded men and women of one persuasion or another” (Jacoby, 2008). History shows that the healthcare crisis will not be solved by government regulations or more innovative technologies from the free market. Community planners face a great challenge, but they may be the best hope.

Vertical Out

We tend to have too much vertical trust because the free market and government are established institutions that feed us the certainty we crave. As Jonah Lehrer wrote, “It feels good to be certain. Confidence is comforting” (2009). It is no coincidence that our corporate and political leaders tend to exude confidence. They are not necessarily more intelligent than others, but we elevate the status of those who give us certainty. Just as religious stories fill the void where facts are scarce, confident leaders give us stories in certain terms allowing us to establish hypotheses and simple deduction. Certainty and shoddy theories become religion.

Our “thought leaders” are particularly susceptible to the seduction and make a living by selling us certainty. CEOs and lobbyists simplify issues to advance corporate interests; politicians sell slogans to get elected, while independent thinkers are cast out for “flip-flopping.” Influential cable news opinion shows paint a black and white picture on issues with lots of gray. We crave certainty like a drug, and drug trafficking pays.

Political parties may be the ultimate traffickers of certainty given membership loyalty means working to strengthen an ideology, not pursuing a scientific search for better policy. This is not necessarily conscious laziness, evil, or irrational, for “once you identify with a political party, the world is edited to fit with your ideology. At such moments, rationality actually becomes a liability, since it allows us to justify practically any belief” (Lehrer, 2009). Party officials are especially vulnerable. It may not be a coincidence that a disproportionate number of elected officials are lawyers who trained to be rational, articulate, convincing, and, of course, certain.

Ideology is adopted using the emotional part of the brain. But supporting data is cherry-picked, even subconsciously, using the rational part. According to Jonah Lehrer, “when it comes to making ethical decisions, human rationality isn’t a scientist, it’s a lawyer” (2009). We tend not to investigate, but advocate. Where facts are obscure we employ simple deduction, or “advocate” a hypothesis. Over time, the mind gravitates to greater, though misplaced conviction because it continuously adds emotionally charged, unscientifically acquired data to support its beliefs.

“The planner challenge is for community leaders to overcome embedded institutions and behavioral biases toward market and government solutions, and take a leading role in solving the nation’s healthcare crisis.”
Community Planners In

Community planners can and should become the architects drawing the blueprints to construct a better healthcare system. Since community planners are investigators, act on a local level, and have a humble respect for the benefits and dangers of market and government forces, they are ideal candidates to lead the effort of promoting less biased and flexible nudges to society.

Community planners understand the behavioral tendencies on a macro scale that prevent Smart Growth. In *The Option of Urbanism*, Chris Leinberger points out that the reason “every place looks like every place else” is because of the “commodification of the built environment” (2008). The obsession of plugging real estate development into free market forces led to the creation of nineteen standard real estate product types (Leinberger, 2008). This standardization makes the opportunity cost of creating Smart Growth much higher since the value is less measurable and the stakeholders more dispersed.

Community planners understand the behavioral tendencies on a micro scale that prevent Smart Growth. Jonah Lehrer analyzed studies that showed homeowners being misled by their own rationalizations. Misguided reason led people to “prefer” a “McMansion” in the suburbs to a smaller place in the city that had a much shorter commute. Because “it’s easier to consider quantifiable facts than future emotions such as how you’ll feel when you’re stuck in a rush-hour traffic jam...prospective homeowners assumed a bigger house would make them happy, even if it meant spending an extra hour in the car every day” (Lehrer, 2009). They were wrong about their happiness according to a study by Ap Dijksterhuis that revealed people’s behavioral tendency to make the “weighting mistake.” As Dijksterhuis pointed out, extra square footage or an additional guest room and bathroom are often “superfluous” assets for all but a few days a year when guests are staying over, “whereas a long commute does become a burden after a while” (Lehrer, 2009).

The Planner Method

Jonathan Levine noted that planners “study the interconnections between the various forces that shape places and quality of life in them, and develop policies around these interconnections” (Levine, 2009). Embedded in this statement is the respect the planner method has for the various forces and the practical application of their interconnections.

Planners have a natural respect for various forces thus are called on to take a scientific approach to studying the value of each, whether the vertical forces of the free market and government or the horizontal forces created in local communities. Planners understand the costs and benefits of working with government entities (City Hall), private market forces (development companies), quasi-public/quasi-private institutions (business improvement districts), and individuals, including those who fight for development “not in my backyard” (NIMBYs).

Planners know how to harness these forces and construct practical applications to “shape places and quality of life” (Levine, 2009). Planning is based at the local level, which means applications are less vulnerable to the dangers of top-down, central government policy. Therefore, planning healthcare on the local level can enable the necessary customizable approach to an individual’s health.

Most importantly, however, planners recognize the limitation of the forces. Zoning codes can be economically damaging, environmentally harmful, and insensitive to social equity. Solutions to these three problems can be reinforcing in some instances, and mutually exclusive in others. There is no perfect balance because science, an individual’s needs, and individual opinions are always evolving. The key is not to design the mythical utopia, but to constantly adjust and improve. To maximize value in a system with an unpredictably evolving path, the adoption of a method that values humility and flexibility is crucial. The planning method recognizes there are benefits, costs, and trade-offs. It seeks to constantly analyze and improve, but humbly respect both the power of the various forces and their limitations.
The Movement Has Begun

“The most striking characteristic of seniors’ housing and health care in this country is the disconnection between the two fields. With few exceptions, seniors obtain their housing from one source and their health care and supportive services from a completely different source.”

- Congressional Commission on Affordable Housing and Health Facility Needs for Seniors, 2002

Community planners have an opportunity to assert themselves like never before and play the central role in addressing one of the nation’s greatest challenges - the healthcare crisis. The healthcare challenge has infiltrated physical, social, and economic realms. Free market forces and government intervention have proven no match for the complex problems of the healthcare system. However, renewed faith in urbanity, an expanded body of empirical evidence from the Smart Growth movement, and a greater understanding of social capital suggest great strides can be made at the community level. The planner challenge is for community leaders to overcome embedded institutions and behavioral biases toward market and government solutions, and take a leading role in solving the nation’s healthcare crisis. Thankfully, the stars are beginning to align for just this.

The most momentum in connecting healthcare with a smarter community design appears to be with populations that may benefit the most – seniors and individuals with disabilities. As the excerpt from the Congressional Commission above suggests, the “disconnection” between the housing and healthcare fields is gaining acceptance as a core challenge of the healthcare system. The Commissioners noted that the “policy disconnects have long histories and may not be easily reconciled” (2002). This is further evidence that government and market forces have structural challenges preventing them from offering solutions. The Commissioners also asserted “poor communication, differing vocabulary, and few opportunities to share experience separate professionals, policymakers, academics, and even media in the two fields” (2002). Community planners may have the best answer for this communication breakdown since they “study the interconnections between the various forces that shape places and quality of life” (Levine, 2009). The Commissioners have no specific design to connect healthcare and housing for seniors, yet planners have the opportunity to help define healthy communities and proliferate Smart Growth development, which is also consistent with well-established environmental and social strategies.

Planners are beginning to rally to this cause as the February 2010 publication of the American Planning Association demonstrated. In Planning, the article “Healthy Planning in Action” highlighted places where the disciplines of public health and planning are “forging together.” In an acknowledgement of the value that Smart Growth offers to healthy communities, the article argued that “it is much more cost-effective to create higher density, compact development along corridors than it is to operate senior buses and other mobility programs” and that seniors express “a strong interest in being able to walk to meet their daily needs, with safe and convenient access to restaurants, services, and entertainment.”

Creating healthier communities by merging the housing and healthcare worlds is in the early stages, but it is a great challenge that needs to be taken. As Urban Planning and Public Health notes:

“Architects, planners, designers, and transportation engineers need to understand that they are public health professionals—land use and transportation are profoundly important “upstream” determinants of health. Similarly those directly responsible for protecting and promoting public health—members of boards of health, public health officials, doctors and nurses—need to understand that their concerns extend to the built environment. And the two worlds need to come together” (Frumkin, Frank, Jackson, 2004).

Community planners are in the unique position to unite the worlds of healthcare and the built environment. Only time will tell if they are willing to accept the challenge and address the healthcare crisis by tapping the elusive and powerful resource that is “community.”

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1. A place of congregation, originally a market or public square; the Agora, the chief marketplace of Athens, center of the city’s civic life.

2. A primary locus of social exchange, emblematic of a great diversity of cultures; A marketplace of ideas.