

Progressive Planning

The Magazine of Planners Network

2011 Planners Network Conference



Also In This Issue

- **The Austerity Scam**
- **Sustainable Community Development**
- **Lessons from 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike**
- **Recreational Opportunities in Low-Income Communities**

The Seventh Generation

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

—From The Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

The Austerity Scam

By Peter Marcuse



VERY SIMPLY, the United States is a rich country. It has a larger GNP than any other country in the world, and on a per capita basis, only Switzerland, Norway, Singapore and Luxembourg have higher. Austerity is not a characteristic of our private sector; our level of consumption, both gross and per capita, is higher than that of any other country. It is only in the public sector that there is talk of austerity, and even here not in every sector: our military expenditures are the highest in the world, and are effectively insulated by our political leaders from the budget cuts that they claim are needed elsewhere. Yet our present income tax code permits up to half a million yacht owners to deduct mortgage interest on the purchase of their yachts from their taxes—as these are considered a second home. There is no need for public austerity. It is a scam. The money is there to do everything we might reasonably wish to do, certainly enough to be able to continue to support those of our fellow residents who, through no fault of their own, are unemployed, sick, elderly, disabled or in need of assistance.

The money is there—but where? Ay, there's the rub. It is in the hands of one percent of our population, and they do not want to share it. The top one percent owns 35.6 percent of the nation's wealth, more than the bottom 90 percent, and it has 21 percent of the nation's income. The total wealth of the Forbes 400 richest Americans is \$1,370,000,000—that's \$1.37 *trillion*. The top 10 percent have a 48.2 percent share of the nation's income.



Peter Marcuse is professor emeritus at the Columbia University School of Architecture and Urban Planning in New York.

The purpose of taxation is to raise money to permit government to do for us collectively what we cannot do for ourselves separately and alone. It is only fair that that burden of taxation should be distributed equitably. Paying \$100 is immensely more of a major burden on someone earning poverty level wages than it is to a millionaire, for whom it's a flea bite. Hence we logically tax millionaires more than we tax poor people, and always have. How much more? Well, in fact, today, not very much more. The effective tax rate on the richest taxpayers was as high as 91 percent from 1950 to 1963, then over 70 percent through 1980, then over 50 percent until 1987. It's gone down steadily since then, and today it's only 35 percent—and that's only on those declaring income of over \$379,150, or the top one percent of all households. The really rich don't pay anywhere near that amount in reality; the top 400 taxpayers ended up paying only 18.1 percent of their incomes in taxes in 2008, according to the IRS. In fact, 97.4 percent of those earning \$200,000 or more pay less than the top rate, and 50 percent pay less than 20 percent. And in general, U.S. taxes as a percent of Gross Domestic Product are low—only 22.6 percent versus the average for all OECD countries, 35.5 percent.

Fear of running up the deficit is no reason for austerity. It's a scam, one to benefit the very rich at the expense of the very poor, as well as all the rest of us, neither very rich nor very poor, who rely on government to provide highways, public transit, help with medical bills, public education, disease control, police and fire protection, criminal justice or the protection of our environment.

Is there any plausible argument for austerity in the face of all this? The only one we hear is that to raise

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ON THE COVER

Participants at the Planners Network 2011
Conference in Memphis: The lively group
from University of Illinois/Urbana

Photo: © 2011 Tom Angotti

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Planning in an Age of Austerity — 1979 and 2011

By Pierre Clavel

“PLANNING IN AN AGE OF AUSTERITY,” the theme for the keynote panel at the 2011 Memphis Planner’s Network Conference, harkened back to a conference in 1979 and a book by that title that John Forester, Bill Goldsmith and I co-produced. Then, like now, mainstream politics shifted from a pump-priming, consumer-friendly approach to budget cutting and belt tightening, challenging local planners to go along. We resisted that and thought that the answer was to find “new opportunities”—mainly in the emerging social and non-profit sectors. Our analyses of problems and cataloging of new opportunities for planners still seem relevant today. But three decades later, the challenges of organizing in the non-profit community development sector and maintaining a progressive voice—while greater than we knew—are perhaps better understood.

New Opportunities for Planners — 1979

The opening paper in the book, “New Opportunities for Planners,” first authored by Sander Kelman, made three main points.

First, we attacked the mainstream argument for an austerity policy grounded in the belief that the private-sector economy would resume growing if government could just provide incentives for investment, cutting back on wages, taxes and government regulation.



Pierre Clavel was a professor of city and regional planning. He is the author of *Activists in City Hall* (Cornell University Press, 2010). More information on progressive cities and neighborhood planning can be found at: www.progressivecities.org.

This was an illusion, we wrote, which served to 1) “reinforce the willingness of the population to suffer regressive measures; and 2) create a larger dependent population. We argued that “. . . an alternate diagnosis and therapy for the economic crisis will be necessary—in particular, a therapy that promises economic recovery without austerity.” And whatever the therapy, it “would have to overcome the hegemony of private capital and involve a major national commitment to planned public investment.”

Second, we suggested “new opportunities for planning.” We saw plenty of energy and at least some funding at the grassroots level: “Fortunately, in the face of attempted national retrenchment, it is not likely that the legacy of the past twenty years of social action will be political silence.” And we presented a catalogue of evidence, expecting “a pendulum effect of workplace efforts and popular organizing, a further proliferation of consumer, neighborhood and environmental organizations, setting a potentially more progressive context for planning in the years ahead.”

“Whatever degree of federally sanctioned austerity is forthcoming, planners can expect a continued, increasingly important response of local organizing efforts oriented to such issues as neighborhood preservation, municipal power, housing, locally controlled economic development, programs for the elderly, local tax reform, human rights, alternative technology use and production, environmental management, community health, occupational health and safety and so on.”

We went on to quote some of our friends (Norman Krumholz et al. in the 1975 *Cleveland Policy Planning*



Report) and cite a set of new institutions: Carter administration programs that could be adapted locally like the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and Urban Development Action Grants (UDAGs), but also authentically grassroots innovations like Mass Fair Share, Ohio Public Interest Campaign, ACORN, National Peoples Action and Tom Hayden's Campaign for Economic Democracy; also think tanks or information centers like the Center for Community Economic Development, the Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies and the Institute for Policy Studies.

Third, we outlined "political skills for planners," which were less a matter of spending money and scheduling projects, and more a matter of "organizing"—or at least responding to organizers—seeing what was happening at the grassroots and responding. Planners needed to do two things, according to Krumholz: "... become activists prepared for protracted participation. . . . Second, planners must offer . . . information, analysis . . . which are relevant to political decision-making [because] . . . politicians . . . confront . . . problems without adequate information, a long range perspective, or even a clear idea of what they wish to achieve. This presents a great opportunity. . . ."

Austerity Plays Out 1979–2011

How did these anticipations play out after 1979? Unevenly, but not entirely wrong.

The 1979 analysis of the austerity policy, despite a failure to anticipate thirty years of artificial stimulus, seems eerily familiar in 2011. In the face of uneasiness on Wall Street in 1979, democrats charted a deflationary course that made things worse. In 2011, Obama faces similar

from the keynote panel—

First, we attacked the mainstream argument for an austerity policy grounded in the belief that the private-sector economy would resume growing if government could just provide incentives for investment, cutting back on wages, taxes and government regulation.

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pressure and is poised to compromise. The immensity of the mainstream folly, now approaching that of the contractionists of the 1930s, is something we did not predict, nor did we anticipate public enthusiasm for the Reaganite attack on government, or the “willingness of the population to suffer regressive measures.” In effect, the middle class served as a cash cow for unsustainable economic policy and, now decimated, faces the consequences in housing, health care, and job prospects.

The “new opportunities for planning” turned out to be real, though complicated. There was a shake-out, but many 1970s initiatives survived and grew, like the remarkable emergence of CDCs in the 1980s. We omitted labor from our discussion in 1979—as did many liberals, who thought a new democratic politics could be built from a “new left” without regard to the traditional labor movement. Aside from that, we had the beginnings of a good catalogue, but not a good gauge of the strength and persistence of these institutions. Instead, the mainstream media and academics alike inundated us with evidence of the rightward surge so that whatever happened after the Reagan election was magnified further. A similar thing goes on today.

Accounts of the experience of cities in succeeding decades support the premise of an expanding set of opportunities for planners. The Reagan presidency found limits to privatization. Budget cuts at the national level were countered by state and local actions that were more responsive to needs at those levels. Clinton stemmed the tide to some extent, and when George W. Bush doubled down, demonstrating the “government is the problem” hypothesis, elections in 2006 and 2008 went the other way. Even Keynesian public investment had a brief revival.

The experience of the community development sector since the 1970s is illustrative of these principles at work. There had been inspiring beginnings, but by 1979 many community development corporations were bankrupt or limping along on diminishing streams of federal money. By the early 1980s, with Reagan’s budget director wanting to “defund the left,” it didn’t look bright for CDCs or many other “social programs.”

Instead, for CDCs at least, there was explosive growth in the 1980s, primarily fueled by the Low Income

Housing Tax Credit Program created in the tax reform legislation in 1986. By the end of the decade, the National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED) claimed 2,000 members.

Many planners went to work in CDCs in the 1980s and 1990s. At one point I looked in my department’s alumni files and found dozens of alumni—I think 20 percent—working in that sector. Our dean organized a group expedition to New York City, where one alumnus organized sessions with a set of CDC executive directors who seemed eager for contact with our ideas and our graduates. Columbia planning graduate Peter Medoff went on to become executive director of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston. His co-authored book, *Streets of Hope*, stands out in the literature of community development.

By the 1990s, CDCs and other non-profits had transformed the environment for public planning in many cities. Public planning departments, after some false starts, began to see them as “delegate agencies,” as in Chicago, where Robert Mier, as director of economic development, simply gave CDBG funds to the highest capacity agencies, and Boston, which put major emphasis redirecting HUD and private banking capital to CDCs that were willing and able to meet that city’s needs for lower cost housing.

CDCs faced many issues, however, largely not analyzed. There was debate about the extent to which a focus on housing (and real estate development) was impinging on the original mission of CDCs—to organize the people in low-income neighborhoods and communities so they could themselves advocate for their needs. One suspects there was a lot to this, but the NCCED “census” numbers kept rising through the 1990s and into the present century, and there are still stories of organizing and local commitment.

Regarding “political skills for planners,” we were a little narrow on this one. We were right on with the insight that planners needed to develop their political skills—since in the past they had been able to relegate “politics” to a sort of black box managed by others, not their concern in any systematic, theoretically informed sense. And we did point to one serious dimension of this: the idea that planners mobilize voice and organize attention.

But it would have been better to add a different point. Mobilizing the voices of the poor was one thing, injecting a redistributive point of view to that voice was another. We did not emphasize this, but Krumholz did in a review of Chicago efforts under Mayor Harold Washington in the 1980s, pointing to the redistributive possibilities in transit route spacing, retention of a municipal power company and industrial retention.

I think there are further relevant planning skills that come from the analysis in the first sections of the article that we did not mention, and might have: new approaches to municipal finance, alternative models of business organization and revolutionary local economic development practices used in some places.

Austerity Today

Despite sharp breaks in the U.S. and world politics, 2011 presents an underlying parallel to 1979. The idea then was that a new generation of planners (and other activists) had emerged in the 1970s; they likely would find their way not only into public sector planning agencies but also to new institutions; and the planning profession needed to link all these together. These could ultimately be the basis for new redistributive policies, but in the shorter run there would develop great capacities and experiences.

What now? Much of this happened, enough of it that the general premise still holds in 2011.

Fundamentally, whenever reactionary policies sought to tear the social fabric, a countervailing force also seemed to emerge. The rightward shift was uneven, not monolithic. Reactionary and progressive currents still co-exist. This is still the case—the Obama presidency is nothing if not uneven.

At a more concrete level, cities still present an uneven landscape for planning. The 2009 stimulus package presented some opportunities, while the effects of recession and its political aftermath in the form of new calls for contractionary policies seem problematic, even among some conservatives.

But uneven means opportunities still exist. For progressive planners, some cities, some states, will offer more opportunities than others. Some ideas will start well, and die; others will present sustained growth. There is still reason to think of “new opportunities for planners.”

But there is a caveat. Since we wrote in 1979, the growth of non-profits in housing and other sectors has been a long-run success story, but it has never had sufficient institutional support. City planners had ASPO and AIP, later the merged American Planning Association, and there were also the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Municipal League and other organizations. There were also over one hundred university graduate planning programs in 1980. Community development organizations, and probably other non-profits, had nothing of similar scale. They put together the National Congress for Community Economic Development in the 1980s; it went out of existence, replaced by the National Alliance of Community Development Associations (NACEDA), after 2000. This sector of the non-profit world is in serious need of institutional backup, and progressive planners would be well served to take a leading role in creating it. **P²**

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Memphis, MLK and the 1968 Sanitation Strike: *The Struggle Continues*

By Chad Johnson

AS ELECTED LEADERS in city halls, state capitals and Congress attack collective bargaining, propose massive cuts to public services and attempt to dismantle Medicare, working people and the laws that ensure they get fair treatment are at peril. But the attacks are provoking working people to bring the values of fairness and opportunity to the forefront—in the streets, through recalls, referendums and perhaps a movement that would spur a sea change from the pro-corporate policies that have dominated American politics since the 1980s.

Chad Johnson is an International Organizer working at the historic Local 1733 in Memphis, TN.

In Memphis, where Martin Luther King's life was taken as he rallied with local sanitation workers, attacks against public services are still being fought. Proposals to sell off city assets and privatize sanitation services and other public works are being led by pro-business city council leaders who believe any service can become a profit-making entity and reduce wages and benefits. But workers, their unions and the community are fighting back and succeeding in bringing Main Street values back into the political discourse. They have been flooding council members with phone calls and emails, filling council meetings with working people who are against selling off city assets and proposing solutions

that serve both working people and the business community. As a result, the Memphis City Council voted in June not to privatize sanitation services.

Similar struggles have sprung up across the country. In Florida, Governor Rick Scott's budget attacks on state worker pensions, his attempts to privatize the state Medicaid program and his budget cuts for schools, health care and the state's social safety net left him with a 29 percent approval rating. Voter disapproval of his policies extended to the mayoral race in Jacksonville, where Alvin Brown became that city's first ever African-American mayor and the first Democrat to hold the office since 1991. Said





an Orlando Sentinel editorial after the race, “With the election coming so soon after the most radical legislative session in memory, Florida’s republicans would be wise to reconsider the take-no-prisoners course they’ve charted. The results in Jacksonville might be the public’s way of answering GOP hubris.”

In Wisconsin, unprecedented attacks on public service workers were led by the newly-elected governor, Scott Walker, and a group of freshman state senators. Laws were passed stripping state workers of their collective bargaining rights, payroll deduction laws for union

facing recall campaigns. “The stakes are high,” according to an editorial in Manitowoc, Wisconsin’s *Herald Times Reporter*. “Democrats, with three victories, stand to regain control of the state Senate and could derail—or at least slow—the GOP bullet train conducted by Gov. Scott Walker.”

In New York, Democrat Kathy Hochul scored an upset victory in May in the heavily conservative 26th district, an election that was deemed to be a referendum on Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan’s proposed budget and Medicare cuts. Hochul was elected by a 6-point

In Ohio, a Main Street movement threatens to overturn Republican Governor John Kasich’s Senate Bill 5, which prohibits all public service employees from collective bargaining, affecting 350,000 Ohioans. More than 11,000 supporters rallied at the Ohio Statehouse in April to launch the effort, and the “We Are Ohio” coalition is collecting the required 231,149 signatures needed to place a citizens’ veto on the ballot in November. In a recent Quinnipiac University poll, Ohio voters disapproved of the law 53 to 35 percent. “It’s incredible,” We Are Ohio spokeswoman Melissa Fazekas said of the enthusiasm for the campaign.



dues were stripped and cuts to pay and pensions were enacted. This brought tens of thousands from across the state to the capitol to voice their outrage. Some of the state senators who voted for the anti-worker legislation are



margin in a district that ordinarily sees 12-point Republican victories. “We got Republicans to look beyond party lines and focus on the issues,” said Hochul. “This is a lesson to learn and a campaign that can be replicated across the country.”



“We have been inundated with requests. People not only want to sign the petition, but to circulate it to family and friends. They want to know what they can do to help.” **P2**

The Right Fit for Scale

Crafting Progressive and Sustainable Community Development

By Jeffrey S. Lowe

with Marshall E. Crawford, Jr., Marla K. Nelson and Sigmund C. Shipp

A Synopsis of the Planners Network Conference Session



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Marshall E. Crawford, Jr., MPA is a management consultant-relationship manager with NeighborWorks America, Southern District.



Marla K. Nelson, Ph.D., AICP is an associate professor and program coordinator in the Urban and Regional Planning Program, Department of Planning and Urban Studies, University of New Orleans.



Sigmund C. Shipp, Ph.D. is director of the Urban Studies Undergraduate Program, Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Hunter College.

Introduction

The 2011 Planners Network Conference theme, “Promoting Economic Development through Regional Cooperation and Planning,” arose out of an acknowledgement that many Americans live in economically distressed communities and that approaches to eradicating poverty often do not fit local contexts and sometimes undermine efforts to improve the quality of life in a progressive and sustainable way. A critique of community development continues to be that it is territorial, parochial and only marginally improves quality of life. According to Pastor, Benner and Matsuoka in their book *This Could Be the Start of Something Big: How Social Movements for Regional Equity Are Reshaping Metropolitan America* (2009), community development traditionally focused on neighborhood revitalization must now be supplemented with an outside game that connects with regional opportunities. However, as these connections take place, are they progressive and sustainable?

Three presentations exemplified how the private sector, quasi-governmental entities and faith-based approaches grapple with these issues. First, Marla Nelson highlighted the intent and impact of the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. Second, Marshall Crawford, Jr., offered his perspective as a NeighborWorks America administrator seeking not only to stabilize communities experiencing a high degree of foreclosures, but also to sustain them. Third, Sigmund Shipp discussed research findings about the establishment of community development corporations (CDCs) among black churches and black colleges and provided an example of each. Overall, the presenters showed the continued



tensions between local versus regional development, poverty alleviation versus broader growth, work focused on housing versus wider community development and interventions led by non-profits versus government. A new mindset focused on community participation in decision-making and community control of local assets, particularly among the most disadvantaged communities, is an important step toward making community development more progressive and sustainable.

How new markets tax credit investments are shaping recovery and redevelopment in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans

The NMTC Program was created in 2000 to incentivize commercial investment in low-income communities that have traditionally lacked access to capital. After Hurricane Katrina, the NMTC Program was used as part of the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act for disaster recovery. The NMTC Program has proven popular with investors and with Community Development Entities (CDEs) competing for annual tax credit authority allocations. Reviewing how well the program has performed as an investment inducement is relatively easy, but how well the program has performed with respect to community development and disaster recovery is harder to judge.

A fundamental tension has long existed in community economic development programs between the pursuits of broad-based growth on the one hand, and targeted poverty alleviation strategies on the other. The NMTC Program as it has been implemented has been no exception. Although targeted to low-income communities, the program defines these broadly, al-

lowing projects in census tracts such as central business districts, which are not among the neediest communities. Additionally, because there is considerable flexibility in the types of projects allowed, projects do not necessarily benefit low-income individuals.

Within the context of recovery planning, NMTCs are unlike many other forms of community development assistance, such as Community Development Block Grants or Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, where funds are channeled through state or local government. Public agencies attempting to implement their own disaster recovery or community development plans may, of course, actively seek out CDEs and their assistance, or partner with them on particular projects by helping leverage NMTCs with grants or other incentives at the agencies' disposal. Ultimately, though, it is the CDE's decision whether investments are socially and financially worthwhile, and whether the priorities of public planners have merit. Both the flexibility of the NMTC Program and the lack of local control in how tax credits are invested present challenges to ensuring that NMTCs promote sustainable and progressive community development.

In New Orleans, the NMTC Program has leveraged an inordinately large amount of capital for recovery and redevelopment, with CDEs investing over \$596 million in forty-one distinct projects in the city between 2004 and 2008. While the program has brought significant investment to businesses that might not have found adequate financing otherwise, the bulk of NMTC investment has been in two downtown neighborhoods, the central business district and the warehouse district, where access to capital relative to the rest of the city has not been a particular problem. Nearly three-quarters of

NMTC investments have been in non-flooded or marginally flooded areas, and less than one-quarter have been in areas in or adjacent to local government-designated recovery zones. New Orleans' experience demonstrates that while NMTCs have been crucial to recovery and redevelopment, they are not enough; more work needs to be done to reach neighborhoods beyond downtown and promote the city's coordinated recovery efforts.

**A broader perspective than stabilizing communities:
*The NeighborWorks America approach***

NeighborWorks America (NeighborWorks) is one of the primary national intermediaries engaged in affordable housing and community development, essentially creating opportunities for lower income people to live in affordable homes in safe, sustainable neighborhoods that are healthy places for families to grow. Based in Washington, D.C., NeighborWorks operates through a national office, two regional offices and three district offices. Many of its programs and services are provided through a national network comprised of 235 independent, community-based non-profit organizations serving more than 4,500 communities nationwide. More than one-third of partner organizations serve rural communities. With its national and local partners, NeighborWorks provides grants, programmatic support, training and technical assistance to its national network.

NeighborWorks decided to tackle the foreclosure issue head on by establishing StableCommunities.org, the centerpiece of the Stable Communities initiative, a national response to the local challenges that arise when foreclosed homes remain vacant or abandoned. The website provides information and strategies to non-profit organizations and their public and private partners, including state and local governments, rehab contractors, researchers, funders and servicers, on how to stabilize and revitalize communities in the wake of the foreclosure crisis. Broader thinking that goes beyond the confines of "stabilization planning," however, can help communities to unlock these opportunities.

Though many organizations involved in stabilization work are housing organizations, experience indicates that comprehensive revitalization work should involve many non-housing groups, and may also require significant shifts in how housing strategies are shaped and delivered. Organizations contemplating getting involved in revitalization work must think through how they will respond to the many new and different demands this work will place upon them and respond to at least the following three questions:

- Should organizations wait to work on these "bigger issues" until after they've stabilized from the foreclosure crisis?
- Do broader issues associated with the community's economy, quality of life or other factors impact how the foreclosure crisis is impacting a community?

- Does the foreclosure crisis itself create new opportunities for the long-term health of a community—such as creating affordable homeownership opportunities for lower-income households or acquiring key parcels for an important neighborhood project?

There are benefits to creating a sustainable community beyond just dealing with foreclosures and real-estate owned properties (i.e., bank repossession of unsuccessful auctioning of the foreclosure). Community residents will enjoy a fuller set of opportunities to advance themselves, improve their lives and meet basic needs for themselves and their families.

Overall, the basic approach of NeighborWorks in creating sustainable communities involves three elements: 1) building partnerships at the neighborhood, local and regional level from which commitments are obtained to champion and fund the process from conceptualization to implementation; 2) understanding the dynamics at play in the neighborhood, including not only housing market dynamics but also physical conditions, social and demographic dynamics and economic conditions; and 3) engaging residents in understanding neighborhood and regional dynamics, and in identifying and implementing strategies. NeighborWorks takes the position that nothing in a plan will happen without the agreement of the people who can implement it and make it work. Negotiations are a critical

part of any progressive planning process that results in sustainable community development.

The Black College and Church Community Development Corporation (CDC): Their successes and challenges

The black college and church have been venerable institutions in the black community. Historically, they stood strong during the bitter times of legalized segregation and more recently when disinvestment in black neighborhoods made life for residents miserable. The commitment to serving the black community reflects an ethos. For the black church, this ethos comes from its Christian focus on providing needed services to the “least of us” as a way to achieve a heavenly reward. The black college ethos represents a commitment to educating black students for service and leadership roles in the black community. Today, the historic missions of these entities continue in the form of CDCs, formed first by black churches and later by black colleges. These CDCs have provided housing, social services and economic development options that have improved life for some residents of low-income black neighborhoods.

Terry Heights CDC, based at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, is an example of a black college CDC. The CDC’s target area is a low-income area characterized by abandoned housing, high joblessness and a large amount of rental housing. Founded in the early 1990s, the CDC staff initially

focused on purchasing and rehabilitating abandoned housing but that proved costly. Over time, priorities shifted to after-school tutoring and adult computer education. Terry Heights CDC allows Oakwood College to remain faithful to its commitment to preparing students mentally, physically and spiritually to offer service to those in the black community most in need.

Metropolitan CDC is an example of a black church CDC. Metropolitan AMEZ (African Methodist Episcopal Zion) Church formed and sponsors the CDC, which is located in the small community of Washington, North Carolina. The CDC founder, Rev. David L. Moore, true to a faith-based ethos, was inspired by “a vision that was brought upon by God to go out and change the way people were living” [in the town of Washington]. The CDC began its work by forming a task force of low-income residents who conducted a survey about local housing conditions. From this point, the CDC began to provide housing for the elderly, abused women and individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Over time, the CDC would establish a credit union with more than 1,600 accounts and a health center, which served over 3,000 patients annually on a budget of \$4.2 million. Despite its success, according to Rev. Moore, there are challenges. For example, he indicated that the CDC needs to operate more like a business and be more vigilant about raising money. However, when taking on more business-like characteristics, community involvement could be diminished and result in

the most needy residents experiencing less improvement in quality of life. Still, many black church and college CDCs continue to pursue a mission that focuses on low-income, black communities, using their power and resources, as well as the resources of others, to revive neighborhoods and their residents.

Conclusion

Progressive planning promotes fundamental change in political and economic systems. This type of planning is very difficult to accomplish in the United States, however, given the context of the democratic-capitalistic structure and differences in regional political economies. Put another way, it is tough and often lonely work.

Many U.S. cities struggle as a significant portion of resources go towards private developers for downtown, suburban and exurban growth, which undermine progressive and sustainable community development strategies. Moreover, equitable approaches that empower community residents through participation in decision-making regarding development and capacity-building should not have to take a back seat to private-sector control. A changing mindset, even amongst planners, from the superiority of the market to one that fosters greater appreciation for community control of affordable shelter and ownership options are key initial steps to achieving progressive and sustainable community development. **P²**

Urban Safety and Gender in Hyderabad

Findings from a Pilot Safety Audit

By SriPallavi Nadimpalli

I glance into the mirror one last time to see that I am dressed “appropriately” before I venture out. In spite of this there will likely be staring and, possibly, inappropriate behavior. I hate it when the staring never stops or when men take the liberty to pass lewd comments about my appearance. I feel violated and uncomfortable.

I took this behavior for granted until the day I realized that this is a violation of my fundamental right to enjoy the public space like any other individual. Why should my gender restrict my movement and create anxiety and fear?

If societal behavior and attitudes have created restrictions, so has my physical environment. At dusk, I increase my pace between the better-lit zones. Insufficient lighting and isolated spaces create more opportunities for assault or maybe rape. I know that this may never happen, but the fear of a possible assault is sufficient to keep me on my toes. My movement is further restricted by the fact that I need to choose my routes based on availability of public toilets. I have learned to control my bladder and avoid drinking water when out and about.



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STUDIES across the globe have shown that safety in public spaces ranks a close second after domestic or partner violence and sexual violence with respect to women's safety concerns. Nonetheless, this is not a concern generally taken seriously in large-scale planning agendas. Space is not neutral and cities are designed for the neutral user. In India, according to Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade in their book *Why Loiter?: Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets*, the neutral user is usually “the middle- or upper-class young male, usually a Hindu, a heterosexual who is able-bodied.” Cities can be designed to be more inclusive, but only when designs reflect an awareness of how characteristics



SECUNDERABAD HUB

Dumpster located in the space provided for the sidewalks

such as age, sex, sexuality, caste, religion, economic status and difference in ability lead individuals to experience the same space quite differently.

When I became aware that I could not enjoy urban space equally with men, I decided to research the connection between gender and women's perceptions of safety in public spaces. My research is based on the safety audit process first developed in 1989 by The Metropolitan Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), a non-profit organization located in Toronto, as a method to evaluate the environment from the standpoint of those who feel the most vulnerable to violence and to make changes that reduce opportunities for assault.

I began with a pilot safety audit in Hyderabad, India. Based on findings from the pilot safety audit, I will conduct a larger research study with the goal of recommending ways of including a gender lens in planning policies regarding public spaces in the city. In terms of my research, urban public space includes all the areas in between built structures and other spaces the public is attracted to. In addition to streets, roads, public toilets, bus stops, railway stations, modes of transport, promenades and parks and playgrounds, the new "hang-out" spaces of Indian metropolitan cities, like shopping malls, coffee shops, movie theatres and restaurants, are also included. The term safety includes not just the actual physical and psychological impacts of an act of aggression or violence but also



SECUNDERABAD HUB

An open urinal located in the middle of the road



Space for sidewalks used by street vendors

the fear or anxiety associated with the anticipation of violence in an urban public space.

The Pilot Study Area

Hyderabad is the capital of the state of Andhra Pradesh, in the southern part of the country. It is the administrative, financial and economic capital of the state and the sixth most populous city in India, with a population of 4 million. Hyderabad has been recently recognized as a metropolitan city and with its fast economic growth, it is striving to be a world-class city. Two areas were selected for the pilot safety audit:

- Secunderabad Hub, a one-kilometer stretch covering Secunderabad Railway Station, a major inter-city rail station and a commuter rail hub; Rathfile Bus Terminal, a major inter-city bus station; and two other major bus stops in the area; and
- Osmania University, a three-kilometer stretch along University Main Street on a campus that is home to over 300,000 students from different parts of India and abroad.

Initial Findings of the Pilot Safety Audit

Although my initial findings are limited, they are nonetheless provocative and certainly indicate directions for the larger research project to explore in more depth.

In both sites, issues of accessibility and mobility are readily apparent.



Secunderabad Hub has no sidewalks, and spaces where there are provision for them are occupied by street vendors, hawkers, illegal extensions of shop fronts, municipal dumpsters and in some areas open urinals for men. As the pedestrian and vehicular movement is high in this area, the people have to compete for space on the same road.

In contrast, University Main Street has wide sidewalks, however, they are not continuous and are interrupted periodically by trees, making the sidewalks inaccessible to indi-

viduals in wheelchairs. The portion of the street in the study area also lacks public phone service, dustbins and sufficient street lighting.

The Dilemma of Public Toilets

Public toilets have an incredible influence on how women use urban public spaces and how they navigate through the city. Over the last few years, many public toilets have been installed as part of the municipality's infrastructure improvement agenda. While this represents a significant



SECUNDERABAD HUB

Left: Public toilet block designed in two levels

Right: The metal staircase

improvement over not having any facilities at all, the design and management of these facilities is terribly flawed. Public toilets were apparently just an item on the infrastructure improvement checklist to be checked off, but no thought was given to anybody except the neutral user.

Secunderabad Hub has four toilet blocks in the one kilometer stretch. Two of these blocks are in two levels, with four urinals for men on the lower level and three toilets for women on the

upper level. The upper level is accessed by a metal spiral staircase, making it inaccessible to disabled and elderly women. In each case, the toilet blocks are operated by a male caretaker who sits outside the block to collect a user fee. Men pay one rupee, but women have to pay four times more, with no guarantee of cleanliness.

The Social Framework

In India, the patriarchal system dictates the role and responsibility of a

woman—she is expected to behave, talk, walk and dress in a certain way. By doing so she maintains the respect of her family and upholds her honor. A woman who challenges this prescribed behavior may achieve a questionable position in the society and will certainly experience harassment and even violence. Women's movements through public spaces are thereby limited by societal pressure to conform, yet even when they do conform, women are likely to experience harassment.

“It gets uncomfortable when I walk in the university at night; we usually prefer walking in groups. Even then, there isn't a time when someone hasn't passed a lewd comment or tried to approach and misbehave with us. I don't even have to dress 'provocatively' for that. Ultimately, I need to take care of myself and avoid situations where I have to go out at night. Even if there is police around, they are mostly male, it doesn't make too much of a difference!”

—A female student and resident of the Osmania University Girl's Hostel

“If it gets too late in the night my father, my brother or a friend (usually a male) picks me up from work. Yes, there is always some kind

of harassment in the buses or on the streets, but what can we do about it? We have gotten used to it now.”

—A frequent bus commuter and user of the Secunderabad Hub

The constraint that women feel is evident in where and with whom women gather and even in the body language a woman displays in public. In the University Main Street audit, it was interesting to note that men were loitering outside the academic blocks either alone or in small groups, whereas very few women were doing the same. Women sat in groups mostly with other women, never alone. In their body posture, men appeared relaxed in comparison to women. Sitting on the lawn, men sat with their arms and legs carelessly stretched out while women sat cross-legged with their backs straight.

It was startling to find that in the Secunderabad Hub, women com-

muters did not perceive the issue of daily harassment on streets and public transportation as a safety concern, as long as it fell short of outright molestation.

“Safety? Yes this area is very safe, but we are not out during the night. Oh! Are you talking about harassment and eve-teasing? Of course, it exists! You can’t help it now, can you?”

—A female commuter at the bus shelter in Secunderabad

Another group of women, who appeared more affluent, declined to participate in the research, saying, “We are not the right people to talk to—we don’t use public transportation at all.” Are public spaces and the use of public transportation viewed as unsafe spaces by the upper economic classes? Does one’s economic class status create a variation in the perception of safety in public spaces? Is private

transportation a convenience or also a means of “escaping” the dangers in public spaces? If people in the lower economic class only commute via public transportation, is the safety not really a concern for society as a whole? Is it “okay” to be objectified and feel uncomfortable?

“After a while you get used it. Sometimes I retaliate and shout back or complain to the bus driver,” said one respondent. Another student from the university, however, felt that retaliation is perceived as encouragement, leading to more advances from men. “It’s less trouble if I bend my head down, ignore it and walk away. If something were to happen to me, my reputation would be at stake and I have to deal with the consequences in the society, not the guy.” Although saying “no” is the first step in challenging the accessibility limitations of women, greater awareness is required before there can be a change in how a society behaves.



OSMANIA UNIVERSITY

Difference in the loitering patterns of women (above) and men (at right).

The Policy Framework

At the national level there are policies like the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women 2001, which aims to advance, develop and empower women through gender sensitization and by ensuring access to some fundamental rights for women in India. These rights include access to basic infrastructure and amenities. Although this policy deals with the primary concerns of women, it is still in the preliminary stages of the implementation process.

At the planning policy level, in 2005–2006 the government of India launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, which requires cities to prepare development plans to address gaps in service delivery and propose better infrastructure facilities, especially for marginalized communities. These plans, however, do not specifically address gender disparities.

The city of Hyderabad has multiple agencies responsible for policy-making and due to the overlap of responsibilities, most projects are implemented piecemeal. Currently the city's agenda is focused on developing the economy at a rapid pace to become a world-class city. But what good is a world-class city when the streets are not designed to be accessible for all residents and the city is unable to provide the safety people need?

The Way Forward

Both societal norms for behavior and the built environment affect a woman's safety in public spaces. Knowledge of women's issues might begin to make a shift in the way women are treated and respected in the society. While retaliation and rejecting the notion that it is okay to be inappropriately treated in public is perhaps a beginning, the journey is much longer.

A crucial step is to generate more awareness about women's safety issues in public spaces. The behavior and attitudes of the society cannot be transformed overnight, but the built environment can be controlled and can be used as a medium for change. Further research needs to be done while engaging various community organizations, municipal authorities, police departments and other important stakeholders. Workshops need to be organized and future women's safety audits need to be designed and led by community members. This would help form crucial links between the community and decision-making organizations. No change can be achieved without creating a dialogue between the users and the designers of the space. Active participation is the only way to bring about a revolution in the way cities and spaces are conceived and created for residents. **P²**



The RSVP Cycles

A Creative, Participatory Design Approach

By Judith R. Wasserman

LIKE MANY designers and planners of the 1960s and 1970s, landscape architect Lawrence (Larry) Halprin saw that standard top-down urban renewal planning practices were rampantly destroying neighborhoods, communities and the vital pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use urban fabric. While assisting his wife, dancer Anna Halprin, in graphically notating her complex participatory dance choreography, Halprin developed *The RSVP Cycles*, a creative approach to structure participation for community design and development. His intent was to provide an alternative vehicle for civic engagement. The techniques he developed allowed community members and designers to experientially understand place, and provided tools for visually articulating multiple design and planning ideas. This led to new and innovative ways to analyze a site and project program, as well as alternate approaches for creating pub-

lic environments, leading to more informed and inclusive decisions. Although Halprin was sometimes criticized for heavy handedness and a dictatorial approach to the process, his work was revolutionary for its time and remains a tool for community empowerment in planning and design practice.

While trained as a landscape architect and horticulturist, the scope of Halprin's practice also encompassed large-scale land planning and urban design. In this work he was well respected within progressive planning circles. At the invitation of progressive planner Paul Davidoff, Larry participated in the 1973 Suburban Institute conference *The Environment and the Open Society* to address land planning, the environment and new community development. His firm led the 1968 HUD planning effort evaluating open space and housing options for the City of New York, leading to the publication of the book *New York, New York: A Study of the Quality, Character, and Meaning of Open Space in Urban Design*. His influential 1969 book, *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* led the way for

landscape architects to understand participation and creative design.

Halprin's prolific design practices included large-scale works such as the celebrated Portland Open Space System and the FDR Memorial in Washington, D.C. He lectured extensively on the need for individuals and communities to engage in defining themselves and their communities, and established how that could inform the planning, design and development of built spaces. His work with Anna Halprin led to creative applications of artistic exploration applicable to multiple artistic and community processes. One of his unique contributions to the participatory planning movement was his ability to integrate multiple art forms into his ideological framework, and his translation of these methodological lessons into a participatory toolkit.

Anna Halprin, Choreography and Community Planning

Lawrence Halprin met Anna Schuman in 1939 at the University of Wisconsin. Since then, their work intertwined, informed and



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influenced one another's awareness of space, movement, political inclusiveness and the psychology of place. She introduced him to the possibility of becoming an architect, and joined him at Harvard where he studied landscape architecture. While there, Anna became involved with Walter Gropius and the Bauhausian integration of the arts in design and planning within a progressive context. In 1945, after Larry completed his degree and service in the United States Navy, they moved to San Francisco, where both established their careers in a rapidly evolving, growing and transforming community. By the 1960s, the Bay Area was the epicenter of experimentation, change and the rejection of standard conventions in art, design and lifestyle—and the Halprin's embraced all of it.

While many factors contributed to the development of the choreographic "score" in Lawrence Halprin's participatory technique, a defining breakthrough emerged when Anna needed Larry's visual and design sensibility to conceptualize and graphically notate her complex participatory dance cho-

reography. Anna's choreography broke out of the rigid modern dance structure by replacing dictatorial movement patterns with open-ended instructional tasks. Further complexity emerged as dancers worked on a different order of tasks at different tempos. And finally, in 1962, Anna's dancers literally stepped out of the proscenium arch and re-defined the role of the participant (the dancer) and the observer (the audience). Both Larry and Anna were re-evaluating the authoritarian voice in their respective professions.

Anna Halprin's innovative approach to dance also led her to collaborative interdisciplinary endeavors with poets, artists, musicians and alternative healers of the Bay Area in the early 1960s. To develop a productive creative process, Anna and her collaborators experimented with new techniques of crossing artistic barriers. Larry credits Anna with opening up his ideas of the creative process and collective thinking. In his autobiography, *Halprin: A Life Spent Changing Places* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), Larry writes, "Anna's approach was reminiscent of what we both learned

from the Bauhaus. She brought together diverse teams of artists and used their multiple forms of creativity to expand the group potential."

Resolving the challenge of communicating across different artistic "languages" offered tremendous potential when applied to community participation in design and planning processes. Larry recognized this application and was able to codify the process. In *The RSVP Cycles* he discusses how he connected Anna's work to his own. "Increasingly," he explains, "we face the need for organizing and controlling large numbers of people performing different activities in different places but with a common or interrelated motive. The scores for these kinds of activities are very similar to the theater pieces or happenings which we have been observing."

In order to organize the dance structure and work with multiple artistic "voices," Lawrence Halprin developed a notational system akin to a musical score and began his search for a new approach to the participatory process. Thus was born the system that continually evolved

and became honed into what is now known as *The RSVP Cycles*.

Ceremony of Us

Both Anna and Larry embraced social change and liberation movements. During the racial unrest and urban violence of the period, Larry and Anna actively sought out opportunities for racial inclusivity. In *New York, New York*, Larry recommends empowering African-American neighborhoods to determine housing and open space solutions: “What we need here, as it is elsewhere, is self-determination and complete participation in all phases of planning and programming.

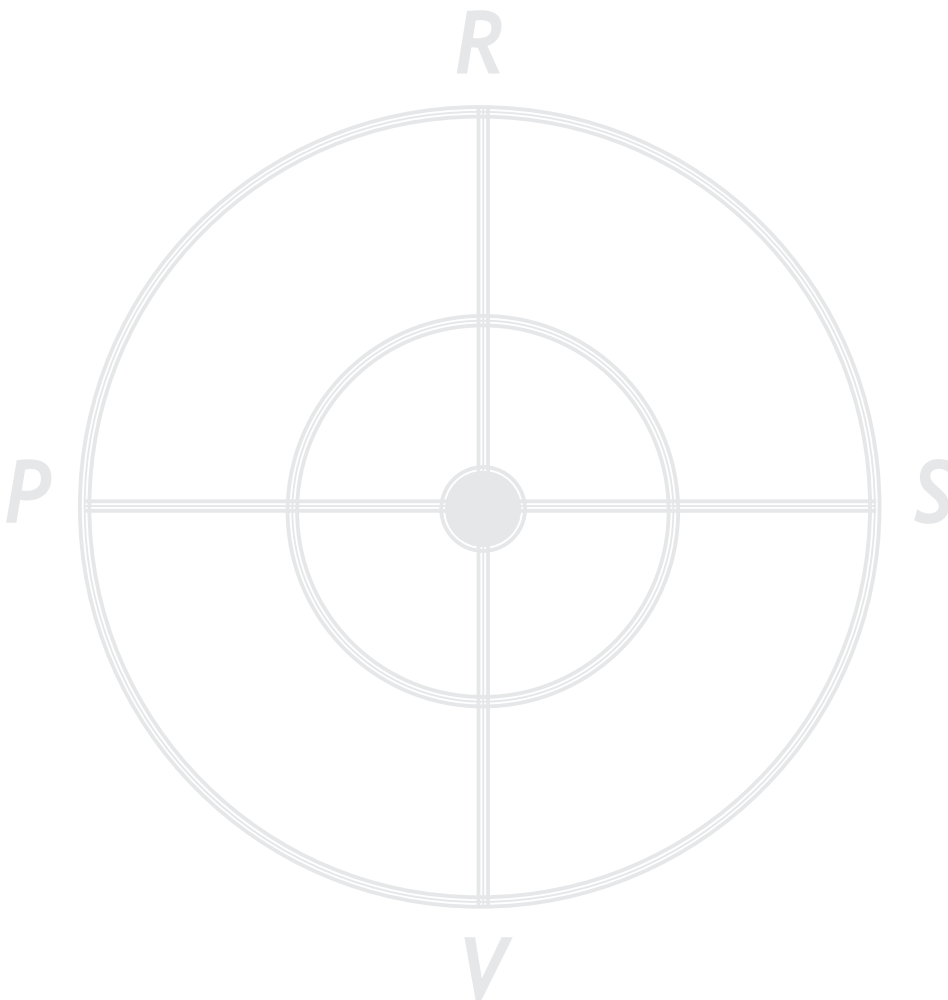
The black community must, we believe, structure its own renewal.”

Anna moved out of the comfort zone of white counter-cultural San Francisco and worked in the midst of the volatile and enraged Watts community in Los Angeles. In 1969 Anna’s dance company, The Dancers Workshop, was invited to perform at Studio Watts, an art studio in the heart of Watts. Instead of simply accepting this performance opportunity, Anna insisted on a much deeper engagement. In a 1969 interview, Anna stated that she “wanted to do a production with a community instead of for a community.”

For five months Anna commuted to Watts on a weekly basis and worked with the same choreographic score she presented to her San Francisco dance company. Once each group established its own dancers’ voice in the work, the Watts group came to the San Francisco studio for ten intense days of working with The Dancers Workshop. At the time, an inter-racial group made up of an essentially privileged white group of dancers and a group of dancers arriving from a devastated and underserved African-American community was radical and emotionally charged. Communicating was difficult and strained. Anna Halprin revealed: “. . . we didn’t have a common language for communicating. Our way of speaking, and our language and our images, were so different we weren’t hearing each other. We didn’t know how.”

The RSVP Cycles process offered a vehicle for bridging the communication barrier and creating community. According to Larry Halprin, the process and performance led to a direct confrontation of “decades of assumptions, stereotypes and biases. . . . The whole concept was a call for social change.” The dance performance, entitled *Ceremony of Us*, was revelatory for both the performers and the audience.

For Anna, the goal was not simply to bring two diverse communities together. Her ultimate aim was the creation, through dance, of one creative community. She credits *The RSVP Cycles* for allowing her



to accomplish this. Planners and designers face similar challenges in civic engagement—bridging communication barriers to accomplish planning and design efforts to better service the community.

Take Park Workshops

Anna and Larry Halprin initiated the *Experience in the Environment* workshops to further delve into the relationship of dance and design within a participatory framework. The first one occurred in 1966. Designers, dancers and other artists took part in a *happening* carefully crafted to assist designers to develop a heightened sensorial understanding of place, while dancers learned to embrace the idea of place specificity to determine movement patterns. *The RSVP Cycles* shaped and structured the event. Through a guided *score*, participants were led out of their analytical mindset and invited to investigate new ideas in creative understanding and production. Limited information was provided ahead of time to ensure authentic experiences. These month-long events occurred at three locations: San Francisco, the Halprin's home in Kentfield (north of San Francisco) and at Sea Ranch. Each location contained its specific instructions and intended outcomes. For example, a community-building process *scored* at Sea Ranch resulted in the creation of a driftwood village.

These *Experience in the Environment* events occurred on a regular basis. They were large in scale, long

(typically lasting a month) and only available to those who had the luxury and leisure to be involved. However limited they were to a specific social strata, they were instrumental to Lawrence Halprin in expanding and exploring notions of participation, experiential learning and engagement in group processes. Through these events he was able to distill the important essences of each activity and condense the activities into a format with applications within a traditional planning timeframe for community involvement.

RSVP Cycles for Contemporary Progressive Planning

In line with planners engaged with participatory processes in the 1960s and 1970s, Lawrence Halprin's intent was to provide a vehicle for creative civic engagement. He offered techniques for deep understanding of place, and provided tools for visually articulating multiple design and planning ideas. In his participatory process he first would reveal place and *resources* by guiding participants to physically experience the site through a choreographic *score*. *Resources* were both physical site resources, the human and community motivation necessary to develop a project, and the psychological resources of the individuals involved. This was followed by intensive *valuation* to analyze the emotional content and intrinsic values of the experiences, and finally, the *performance*, to construct place or develop a

plan. At any point, steps could be repeated and refined to ensure a comprehensive approach. Through this process, a more holistic interpretation of place could lead to more informed and inclusive decisions.

Using this process in contemporary planning environments requires each planner to experiment and explore *The RSVP Cycles* to determine the best use of this approach for different types of projects within different communities, and in line with the group leaders' vision. Halprin himself never saw his idea as being fixed or dictatorial, but instead a point of departure for each person to creatively reshape.

The brilliance of Anna and Larry Halprin was their ability to acknowledge the unique times in which they lived, evaluate community and environmental issues and use their individual skills and creativity to address those issues. For contemporary planners and designers, *The RSVP Cycles* offers a point of departure for an engaged community process. Transforming the steps to fit the project is the best way to understand its application. Through experimentation and exploration of the potential of a project using the techniques found in *The RSVP Cycles*, inclusivity of community ideas, holistic site evaluation and creative problem-solving techniques are made possible. **P²**

CAMERA/ACTION!

Film as Planning Intervention

By *Leonie Sandercock and Giovanni Attili*

IN 2006, soon after the release of our first documentary, *Where Strangers Become Neighbours*, we were invited to the small town of Burns Lake in north central British Columbia by an anti-racism coordinator and community activist. The activist had seen the film and thought we might be interested in a story that was unfolding in her community. Two anecdotes were sufficient to grab our attention and persuade us to make the journey north.

The first anecdote told of a conflict between the Village (i.e., municipality) of Burns Lake and the Burns Lake Band, a sub-tribe of the Carrier Nation, who has inhabited this region for thousands of years. As part of a dispute over land and taxation that culminated in the year 2000, the Village had shut off water, sewer, and fire services to the reserve in the middle of winter (with temperatures typically around minus 30° Celsius.) How could such a thing happen in twenty-first century Canada, a country with an international reputation as a defender of human rights? Was this an anomaly, or an instance of an ongoing history of colonization, we wondered.

The second anecdote described how, in 2005, some local youth in the town, Native and non-Native, had

written and performed a song about racism and violence in the town, calling their song “Leave It Behind.” This raised another question of whether and how, amidst a history of segregation and conflict, some people were struggling to change things? How well were they faring?

As planners who had begun to explore the potential of film as a catalyst for social transformation, we were eager to see whether there was a role for us as researchers/planners/filmmakers in helping to bring about a shift towards more equitable economic, social and political relations between Native and non-Native peoples in this town. Could we become involved in a local struggle for both reconciliation and the decolonization of planning, through the tools we could bring: film technology and artistry, and our values and skills as planners?

Thus began a five-year (and still continuing) action research project using film as a way of approaching collaborative and transformational planning. In what follows we discuss the role of film in a deeply divided community, asking to what extent it can open up a new space for dialogue about the past, present and future. And, beyond dialogue, to what extent film can lead to action, to different ways of doing things, to alternative imaginings that can re-shape the fragile co-existence of two peoples, Native and non-Native Canadians, towards reconciliation and partnership.

We begin with a description of our collaborative filmmaking approach. Then we describe the action piece of the action research, how we took the finished film back to the communities whose stories it tells, organizing screenings followed by dialogue circles, evaluating that process and then engaging in ongoing planning activities with those communities.



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In conclusion, we ask what has been achieved and whether film can be seen as a way of advancing transformative planning and contributing to the decolonization of planning in (post)colonial societies.

Collaborative Filmmaking

Burns Lake has a population of six thousand, almost equally divided between First Nations and non-Native Canadians. The Carrier people had been forced onto reserves by the provincial government in 1914. In the absence of any treaty process, the Burns Lake Band was allocated 400 acres of land, one-third of which was appropriated when the town site was laid out a year later, setting the stage for almost a century of conflict over stolen land. We entered this community in 2006 with a specific action research agenda. What was the nature of the conflict between the Village and the Band that came to a head with the Band taking the Village to the Supreme Court and the Village shutting off water

and sewer services to the reserve? What if anything had changed in the five years since the Supreme Court case? What opportunities and obstacles were there for First Nations social and economic development? Who were the change agents? And what might our role be?

We spent a year doing the work of developing relationships (with both the Band and the Village), conducting library research and making sense of what we were reading and hearing. The more we learned about the operations of power and privilege in this small town, the more compelling we found the story to be. In spite of some significant changes in attitudes and social relations since the Supreme Court case, there were clearly ongoing struggles and frustration in the relationship between the Village and the Band. Our dawning perception was that the state of the current relationship was grounded in history: in a lack of awareness on the part of most non-Native residents of the consequences of First Nations' lived experience of colonization and particularly of the dysfunctional and intergenerational effects



Map (created by Giovanni Attili) shows allocated Reserve land in 1915, and land appropriated from the Reserve for the settler townsites in 1916.

of Indian residential schools; and anger and frustration on the part of First Nations residents, since historic injustices had never been acknowledged, were ongoing and were not being addressed. In other words, the past was still very much present, distorting what contemporary goodwill existed, and blocking a path forward.

The more we talked with Native people, the more we heard about healing, about the kinds of healing that they had undertaken, as individuals and as a community. What struck us was that there had been very little, if any, healing between Native and non-Native people, and we wondered how planning issues could be dealt with without first dealing with that healing across the cultural divide. We believed that a film might be a way to begin such a process.

We began to imagine a film that would begin with an investigation of the causes of the Supreme Court case and the shutting off of the water and sewer, revealing not only a contemporary quarrel over the taxation of a mill on Band land, but also the preceding eighty years of conflict between the Village and the Band over expropriated land. Then we would excavate even further, to uncover the story of colonization and its technologies of power. Finally, we would look at attempts from within the community to begin to shift these toxic relationships, and pose the question, Is there a way forward?

We saw the film as a potential way of opening a difficult dialogue, of changing the lens on the past. And because we wanted to encourage dialogue, but starting from a different point, we envisaged a collaborative filmmaking process in which we were creating the space for new stories to be told, by voices hitherto unheard. We approached both the Band and the Village seeking their collaboration. We explained our ethical protocol, which was to bring back rough cuts of the film to the community (Native and non-Native) at every step of the editing process to ask for their input; to offer every individual we interviewed the opportunity to withdraw from the film if they didn't like how we used their words; and to bring the final cut back to the community for a community-wide dialogue. And we asked the Band and the Village what they would like to see come out of such a process.

The mayor, somewhat guardedly, agreed to cooperate. We had made the case that the film could potentially contribute to a shift in understanding within the village between Native and non-Native residents that might result in a less confrontational stance and more willingness to collaborate on joint projects for economic and social development. The Band was more enthusiastic. Members wanted their story to be heard, and they trusted us to tell it. They weren't sure what, if anything, might change as a result of the telling, but they recognized, as Chief Rob Charlie explained in the film, that they could not survive alone and they were willing "to forgive, although not to forget, in order to move forward as a people."

Returning the Film to the Community

We spent four months filming interviews in 2007, then two-and-a-half years editing the 90-minute, three-part film, *Finding Our Way*, during which time we returned to the community eight times for their feedback on various rough cuts. Once finished editing, we partnered with a social justice and community development NGO in applying for provincial (anti-racism) funds to use the film as catalyst for intercultural dialogue. We then embarked on three months of careful process planning in preparation for two community events (one for youth, one for the wider community) involving a screening followed by facilitated dialogue circles.

We convened an advisory committee of local leaders, which included the long-standing antagonists, the mayor and the chief, two new village councilors, the police chief, the high school principal, the high school drama and dance teacher and our own expanded team, which included skilled facilitators and community development planners. We ran a day-long workshop with this group, showing them the film, discussing their reactions and asking their advice on how best to organize a community screening. Among this leadership group there were diverse reactions, from shock and confessions of ignorance about this dark history by some, to an admission of mistakes on the part of other non-Native leaders, while the chief was happy that his people's story had finally been told. Somewhat surprisingly, both the

mayor and the chief declared that it was important for the community to see this film, in order to move forward, even if it was hard to watch and likely to produce strong emotional responses (from anger to denial, shame and guilt). We suggested a process of breaking into small dialogue circles following the screening and having these facilitated by local people whom we would train, ideally a mixture of Native and non-Native, youth and adults, possibly in pairs. The advisory group offered to help us recruit these facilitators. Chief Rob Charlie suggested a joint press release with the mayor encouraging people to come see the film, and also that he and the mayor should take the stage before the screening to express their support for this process and to ask people to watch it with an open mind. The mayor agreed.

We trained the facilitators, again by showing the film and having a dialogue circle to discuss their responses to it, which were moving and profound, bringing out further confessions of ignorance about the history of colonization as well as the specific local version of that, anger that this history was not being taught in the schools and a powerful desire to start making changes, especially on the part of the youth. We also held a special screening for the high school teachers in the town in anticipation of the high school students wanting to have discussions after the youth event. Teachers expressed relief that “the veil of silence about what’s been going on in this town has been lifted,” and showed great empathy for the lived experience of Native people, especially concerning the impact and ongoing effects of Indian residential schools. (One hundred and fifty thousand Native children across Canada in the twentieth century had been forcibly removed from their homes and placed in these schools, with the official intent of “killing the Indian in the Native child.” Forty percent of these children died, either in the schools or trying to escape from them.) Teachers were eager to have the film as soon as possible for classroom use and offered to help us with the community events.

Inspiring!

That was the word used to headline an editorial in the local paper (*Lakes District News*, June 2010) following



Photos courtesy of Chief Rob Charlie

TOP

Chief Rob Charlie (in headdress) and Burns Lake band members protest the shutting off of services to their Reserve in 2000.

BOTTOM

Chief Rob Charlie with protest sign invoking Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and Pauline Geortzen, non-Native anti-racism community leader.

the two dialogues/screenings. We structured the dialogues around three questions. What struck you most in the film? Is the history of relations depicted in the film still present in this town? What if anything should be done about that, and what would *you* like to do?

Fifty youth attended the youth screening, half of whom were First Nations, and forty remained for the dialogue, twenty-one of whom completed our evaluation questionnaire (required as part of our grant funding). In response to the question “How well did this screening and dialogue help your community address racism?” seventeen of twenty-one responses gave the highest possible score. In response to the question “How well

did this screening and dialogue help your community identify pathways to working together across cultural differences?” twenty of twenty-one responses were very good or good. (These responses were similar in the community-wide screening.) Additionally, there were very positive responses to a question inquiring about people’s overall awareness of historical and current day relations between Native and non-Native peoples before and after the workshops, with many respondents noting a significant increase in awareness. Approximately 150 people attended the community-wide screening, 80 stayed on for the dialogue circles and 45 stayed to complete the evaluation, with 37 of the 45 noting a significant increase in awareness.

Qualitative answers from both youth and adults to the question “How will you act on what you have learned through the screening and dialogue?” contained many expressions of the desire to volunteer to work on community projects such as the Gathering Place (the conversion of the old high school, now the Band office, into an intercultural gathering place). And the two most common answers to the question “What other types of activities or events that bring people together would you recommend for anti-racism projects?” were either “more films or plays like this one” or “take this film on the road.”

The mayor and the chief fulfilled their promise of both opening and closing the two events. In closing, the mayor acknowledged past mistakes made by the Village, and Chief Rob Charlie publicly buried his resentment, noting that four years earlier he had given up on the town, but now he was filled with hope in seeing the young people energized for change and the spirit of hope for moving forward reflected in the dialogues.

During the months of organizing the community screenings, our project team had also been working with the Band to develop a strategic plan for moving forward with the renovation of the old high school as a gathering place for First Nations and venue for youth, and discussing the possibility of leadership training for some of the youth who had volunteered as facilitators or who had expressed a desire during the workshops to get involved in community development projects. (The old high school was on Band land, and this was leased

back to the Band after the new school was completed, although only after the Band occupied the premises.) This has been ongoing work for us in the year since the dialogues. In the three months following the dialogue circles, further significant changes occurred. In August of 2010, the Village Council adopted a motion of support in principle for the renovation of the Gathering Place as an intercultural facility that will serve the entire community in a meaningful way, and for the development of a youth leadership program.

Reflections

Will the film succeed not only as a catalyst for dialogue but also for mobilizing commitment and resources around future planning projects? Like all good stories, ours must end on a note of suspense. We can say that the first community screenings were definitely successful as a catalyst for apparently transformative dialogue. But we don’t know yet whether this will result in the mobilization of resources around community development projects.

Pondering the success of the film in opening new relational spaces and prospects for reconciliation in this community, the Gathering Place project is not necessarily the ultimate test. Word keeps coming back to us from the folks interviewed in the film that they are often stopped in the supermarket or gas station by community members who saw the film and want to talk about it, expressing compassion for what First Nations have endured, and confessing that it opened a window for them onto a history about which they had known next to nothing.

The planning intervention that we have designed begins with a healing process (catalyzed by dialogues that the film enables), proceeds through recognition of “the past as present” and moves on to a visioning process engaging with how things might be different. That final step can evolve into action projects of a more typical planning nature (from land use to economic development to facilities planning to health planning to improving governance). This is very much a work in progress, one way of moving towards the decolonization of planning in deeply divided communities. **P²**

The Austerity Scam

By Peter Marcuse

continued from page 2

the taxes on millionaires will reduce their incentives to make money and thus create jobs that the rest of us need. But, on the face of it, that's nonsense. No hedge fund manager is going to trade less because his tax has gone up 2 percent, or 4 percent, or 6 percent—or any particular figure. On the contrary, it may be an incentive for him to work harder and keep making as much money as he made before. And that's assuming that hedge fund managers do create jobs; the evidence is rather that speculative trading and mergers and acquisitions destroy jobs, particularly in small businesses, replacing workers with machines and exporting jobs, both to increase profits. There are ways to help the small corner grocer, or the computer whiz kid, or the fledgling dress designer or the inventor in the garage get a start—without letting Bank of America off without paying *any* income tax, which is the situation we have today.

The reason we have budget deficits today is not that we spend too much, but that we tax unfairly and too little. It's not a spending problem, it's a revenue problem. Every time some politician tells us there's no money for this or that, this service must be cut, we can't afford that one right now, we should tell them, "So get the money, stop being afraid of those that insist on tax immunity for corporations and embarrassingly low tax rates for the rich, and then talk to us about what we can afford and what we can't." Of course, having said that, we still have to deal with the here and now, but not until we've said that.

And in the here and now, look at a few figures. The feared Social Security shortfall in 2030 could be simply eliminated by eliminating the cap of \$106,800 above which no Social Security tax is collected. That's all it would take; it's simple. Corporate profits last year were \$1,650,000,000,000—that's \$1.65 *trillion*. A flat tax on corporate income, if it were really collected (maybe an alternative minimum tax such as individual taxpayers already pay) of only 10 percent would produce \$1,650,000,000, or \$1.65 billion a year. Two particularly attractive proposals are a Financial Speculation Tax, raising \$77.4 billion a year, and a 5.4 percent surcharge

on the incomes of millionaires, which would raise \$53.2 billion. Either one of those would have been more than enough to make unnecessary the \$38 billion in budget cuts the GOP imposed on the country in May 2011 as a condition of passing a budget for the following year.

Don't let them get away with the austerity scam. The chief executive of Viacom made \$84,500,000 million—yes, that's millions!—before taxes last year, and that's without perks. There's enough wealth in this country to cover all our needs and then some, if it went around. It just needs to go around a little more. That would help most of us a lot, hurt a tiny fraction a tiny bit and probably help the economy a lot.

Of course, in practice, those whom we're dealing with may not have the power to rewrite the tax code. But we can say to them: "If you claim you're limited by necessary public austerity and we have to compromise, we'll talk about it as soon as you commit yourselves to push real hard for the tax reforms that will make it clear the austerity is a scam." And be clear: raising taxes on the rich *is* tax reform, and we shouldn't be reluctant to say so. Critical Planning begins with *exposing*, and has to end with *politicizing*, even if we need to *propose* for immediate action only what's presently realistically feasible. But coupled with any such short-term proposal should be a clear realization of what's needed in the long term, and the ability to convey this in a forthright and politically effective way.

Making it clear that talk of austerity is a scam should be part of that effort.

P²

To read more about the issues in this article, the author recommends the following sources.

Holly Sklar and Scott Klinger, "Real Patriots Pay Taxes," *The Capitol Times*, July 4, 2011.
http://host.madison.com/ct/news/opinion/column/article_1776299a-32ea-5f93-a110-eaf156730376.html

Chuck Collins, Allison Goldberg, Scott Klinger and Sam Pizzigati, *Unnecessary Austerity, Unnecessary Shutdown*, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, DC, 2011.
<http://www.ips-dc.org/files/3053/unnecessary-austerity-unnecessary-government-shutdown.pdf>

Demos, The Economic Policy Institute and The Century Foundation, *Investing in America's Economy: A Budget Blueprint for Economic Recovery and Fiscal Responsibility*, November 21, 2010.
http://www.ourfiscalsecurity.org/storage/Blueprint_OFS.pdf

Citizens for Tax Justice, Tax Policy Center and the World Bank are also good sources for detailed data.

Alternative Approach to Meet the Recreational Needs of Underserved Communities

The Case of Florence-Firestone

By Clement Lau

THE LACK OF PARKS and recreational services in the underserved areas of Los Angeles County is an issue that demands urgent attention. Nearly two out of three children in the county do not live within walking distance (one-quarter mile) of a park, playground or open space. There are significant park and health disparities in Los Angeles based on race, ethnicity, citizen status and income. Children of color disproportionately live in communities of concentrated poverty with few parks in which to play or exercise, and without transportation to reach parks in other neighborhoods. The consequences are dire—numerous studies suggest that children with limited access to parks are more likely to be obese and at higher risk of developing asthma, diabetes, or obesity-related diseases.

Traditionally, park agencies address the shortage of urban parks by trying to increase the number and acreage of parks. Given the scarcity of land in urban neighborhoods and the government expense involved in acquiring, improving and maintaining new parks, new approaches to providing recreational opportunities in low-income communities are called for. These may not be an adequate substitute for

park expansion but they are worthwhile pursuing by themselves to maximize recreational opportunities.

Alternative Approach

This article presents an alternative approach that focuses on the provision of recreational services through multiple-use facilities and partnerships with a wide variety of public, nonprofit, and private organizations. This approach seeks answers to the following question: how do we offer more opportunities for recreation or physical activity? Unlike the traditional approach of simply trying to provide more parks, this approach allows for combinations of physical, social, and other solutions. It rightfully recognizes parks as a means to address recreational needs rather than an end itself. Instead of focusing alone on developing new parks and devoting significant resources on land acquisition and facility construction, park agencies would attempt to marshal a wide range of public, nonprofit and private resources, identifying alternative ways, locations, and partners to offer recreational services. Emphasis remains on the public responsibility to provide sufficient and equitable recreational opportunities, but in this era of anti-tax and anti-government spending mania, public agencies must consider public-private partnerships as well as more conventional methods of meeting the recreational needs of low-income communities. The table at right summarizes some possible combinations of partners and activities.

To illustrate the how this approach might be implemented, the remainder of this article focuses on the case of Florence-Firestone, an underserved community in South Los Angeles.



Clement Lau, AICP, is a planner with the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, and was the primary author of the Florence-Firestone Community Parks and Recreation Plan. He recently received a doctorate in policy, planning, and development from the University of Southern California. This article is based on his doctoral project entitled "Alternative Ways, Locations, and Partners to Meet the Recreational Needs of Underserved Communities: The Case of Florence-Firestone" (available online through USC's Digital Library at <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/>).

Meeting the Recreational Needs of Florence-Firestone

Florence-Firestone is located six miles south of downtown Los Angeles and is home to approximately 64,000 residents, almost 90 percent of whom are Hispanic/Latino. Health and safety issues of particular relevance in the community are:

- High prevalence of obesity: Nearly one-third of children in Florence-Firestone are obese due in part to the lack of physical activity and the shortage of safe spaces for recreation. These kids are at higher risk of developing asthma, diabetes, or obesity-related diseases.
- High crime rates: The area suffers from high crime rates and significant gang activity. This negatively impacts community identity and cohesion. Even though parks in Florence-Firestone are generally safe, residents may not visit a park due to the lack of lighting, perceived risks, and awareness of gang boundaries or territories.

The Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) offers a variety of recreational programs, and owns and operates five well-used parks in Florence-Firestone. The parks have a total area of about 70 acres, translating to a ratio of about one acre of parkland per 1,000 residents. Given budget, land, and other constraints, DPR must be creative and bold in how it meets the diverse and growing recreational needs of Florence-Firestone. Just as no single agency can do it all, no single solution will be adequate.

Discussed below are examples of alternative ways to offer more and improved recreational services in Florence-Firestone. These ideas are based upon community input received through the public participation process for the Florence-Firestone Community Parks and Recreation Plan, as well as the latest approaches in the provision of recreational services.

1. Joint Use at Schools

Increasing access to recreational facilities that already exist at schools is one of the most effective ways to provide more opportunities for physical activity in neighborhoods. Florence-Firestone is served by the

Alternative Ways, Locations, and Partners to Offer Recreational Services

Way	Location(s)	Partner(s)
Joint-Use at Schools	Schools	School districts
Use of Utility Corridor and Rail Rights-of-way for Recreation	Utility corridor and rail rights-of-way	Utility and railroad companies
Development of Pocket Parks and Community Gardens	Small vacant lots	Land trusts, residents
Reuse of Existing Buildings for Recreation	Existing buildings	Private operators of recreational facilities
Temporary Use of Parking and Vacant Lots for Recreation	Parking lots and vacant lots	Individual property owners, churches, local planning and public works agencies
Temporary Street Closures for Recreation	Streets	Local planning, public works, public safety, and transportation agencies
Mobile Gyms	Any location where the vehicles may be parked	Private vendors, non-profit organizations
Transportation to Outside Parks and Recreational Facilities	Parks and recreational facilities outside of community	Rental car companies, transportation agencies, nonprofit organizations
Donations of Home Exercise Equipment or Active Video Game Systems	Individual homes	Exercise equipment/sporting goods manufacturers/retailers, video game manufacturers and retailers
Vouchers for Nonprofit and Private Recreational Facilities	Nonprofit and private recreational facilities	Nonprofit and private operators of recreational facilities, private donors
Sponsorships for Parks	Parks	Local chamber of commerce, professional sports leagues and teams, commercial interests



Photo: <http://maps.google.com/>

An elementary school in Florence-Firestone



Photo: Clement Lau

Pocket Park in Florence-Firestone



Photo: http://maps.google.com

Church parking lot in Florence-Firestone

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) which operates seven elementary schools and two middle schools in the community. Also, two new elementary schools and a new high school are under construction as of this writing. If recreational amenities at all schools were open for community use during non-school hours, Florence-Firestone would be very well-covered from a service-radius perspective: much of the community lies within a half-mile radius of a public school. DPR and LAUSD should enter into a joint-use agreement to make school grounds available for public recreation.

2. Utility Corridor and Rail Rights-of-way

Utility corridors and railroad right-of-ways are prime potential locations for multi-benefit parks. A major electricity transmission corridor owned by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) cuts across the community. The linear nature of this corridor makes it a suitable location for a narrow park and/or an urban trail which could meet both the community's recreation and alternative mobility needs. With DWP's permission, portions of this 27-acre corridor may be used for recreational purposes. The neighboring City of South Gate was able to work with DWP to develop a 9-acre park under a portion of the utility corridor in the city.

3. Development of Pocket Parks and Community Gardens

Although small in size, pocket parks and community gardens can be significant assets in dense, underserved communities. Using its Geographic Information System (GIS), DPR conducted an assessment of vacant land in Florence-Firestone which revealed that a variety of properties may potentially be acquired for park purposes, including land owned by public agencies, tax-defaulted properties, and privately owned parcels which are vacant or underutilized. Size is not always important provided that the property offers an amenity or amenities that meet community needs.

4. Reuse of Existing Buildings for Recreation

The conversion of existing buildings for recreational use is growing in popularity and has been carried out by both commercial interests and public agencies. Warehouses, for example, have been converted to sports facilities for indoor soccer, badminton, handball, and batting cages. Even vacant stores or art gallery spaces may be transformed into indoor parks as illustrated by the "Park Here" installation in New York. Made available in the winter when it was too cold to use outdoor parks, this well-patronized "pseudopark" featured artificial turf, fake trees, light boxes through which sunlight emanates, and even a sound system broadcasting bird chirps.

5. Temporary Use of Parking and Vacant Lots

Another idea is the temporary use of public spaces for park and recreation purposes. An example is the

“PARK(ing) Day” event which began in 2005 when Rebar, an art collective, converted a single metered parking space into a temporary park in an area of San Francisco that was underserved by public open space. Since then, the project has grown into PARK(ing) Day, an annual worldwide event. Florence-Firestone has numerous vacant lots and parking lots that could be improved for temporary use in the evenings and on weekends for sports such as basketball, soccer, or skateboarding.

6. Temporary Street Closures for Recreation

Closing some streets for recreational activities temporarily is another way to create additional opportunities for physical activity. Inspired by Bogotá’s *ciclovía*, Los Angeles has held two *CicLAvia* events which opened up some city streets to pedestrians and bicyclists, creating a temporary network of public space where participants could walk, bike, socialize, and learn more about their city. Closing streets temporarily recognizes the urgency of addressing the recreational needs of residents. DPR could learn from New York City’s Playstreets Program created by the city’s Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, Transportation, and Parks to battle childhood obesity. This program is a quick and low-cost way to create active play space, and is a health measure that directly targets children, the city’s most important at-risk population.

7. Mobile Gyms

Given the success of mobile libraries, and the lack of land and money to develop permanent recreational facilities, mobile park spaces should be considered as a way to bring in outside resources to a community in need. Mobile gyms provide additional opportunities for residents to work out and are flexible in that they can be parked at any location where vehicles are allowed. For example, the Gymagic Bus in Pennsylvania is a mini-gym on wheels equipped with bars, beam, incline mats, barrel mats, a zip line, monkey bars, mini-tramp, and rock climbing wall for kids.

8. Transportation to Outside Parks and Recreational Facilities

Florence-Firestone residents are more dependent on public transportation than other residents in the county.

Lacking cars, residents are unlikely to visit recreational areas outside of their immediate community. With the provision of appropriate transportation residents can travel to destinations outside of Florence-Firestone, including arts and cultural facilities, beaches, and regional, state, and national parks. The idea of transporting inner city residents to outside recreation areas is not new. Started in 1877, The Fresh Air Fund was one of the first organizations created to give inner city kids in New York summer vacations. Other organizations nationwide have since adapted and expanded upon this idea, from Inner City Outings to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

9. Donations of Home Exercise Equipment and Active Video Game Systems

Recreation also takes place in individual homes and is made possible in part through the use of home exercise equipment and, increasingly, active video game systems. Nearly one in four Florence-Firestone adults exercises at home two or more times a week. Although typically small in size, many front yards in residential areas across the community are used for play by children and exercise by adults. DPR could seek donations from manufacturers and/or retailers of home exercise equipments and active video game systems to benefit some Florence-Firestone households. In exchange, residents would agree to participate in academic studies to monitor health effects of using the equipment or game system.

Conclusion

Recognizing the political and budgetary constraints that public agencies face in trying to meet the need for a range of recreational opportunities in underserved communities, approaches that depart from the historic “more parks” strategy are being developed. A number of possibilities that would work well in Florence-Firestone are described in this article. Given the link between physical and mental health and accessible and appropriate recreational options, it is critical that public agencies responsible for parks and recreation look for creative solutions.

P²

Bike Lanes and Gentrification

New York City's Shades of Green

By Samuel Stein

GENTRIFICATION is a critical part of New York City's landscape. Does the new wave of bike lanes in the city feed the pressures displacing working-class communities of color, as many bike lane opponents charge, or is this a diversion from the more serious problems of transportation injustice? What should bicycle advocates and the city's transportation agency do in this highly charged situation?

This debate reveals a basic misunderstanding of how gentrification works, and also a problem with the City's implementation of its bicycle network: bicycle planning in New York City currently reflects and amplifies citywide transportation injustices. A retooling of the program around the needs of working-class cyclists, however, could produce dramatically different results.

How Gentrification Happens

Gentrification is often defined using “production” and “consumption” explanations for neighborhood change. Production theories look at the creation of

“rent gaps,” “value gaps” or “functional gaps” in urban housing markets. These “gap theories” argue that gentrification occurs when landlords see a significant difference between the income they earn from their properties when occupied by low-income tenants or small businesses and the income they could be generating if they rented to richer tenants, sold the building to real estate speculators or converted their spaces to more lucrative uses. These changes are sometimes encouraged by local government through zoning and land use changes, relaxation of laws protecting tenants and capital investments targeted at people wealthier than the current neighborhood residents.

Consumption theories look at what attracts middle- and high-income people to working-class neighborhoods over their upscale urban and suburban alternatives. Generally, these theories speak of the unique appeals of inner city spaces, including attractive architecture and lively streetscapes, shorter commutes, cosmopolitan politics and the availability of arts, entertainment and specialized retail. For some, the presence of bicycle infrastructure and safe streets is one such motivation for choosing to live in a gentrifying neighborhood.

Today, cities like New York are competing with other global cities around the world to attract international capital and investment. One of the explicit goals of Mayor Michael Bloomberg's long-term sustainability plan, PlaNYC 2030, is to compete with global cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, London and Shanghai on the basis of livability. Common capital attraction strategies around livability include rezoning to enable high-end construction, developing entertainment districts, encouraging high-end consumption markets



Samuel Stein is a master's candidate in the urban planning program at Hunter College/City University of New York. This piece is based on a 2010-2011 bicycle planning studio. The ideas contained here were developed in close consultation with Jennifer Harris Hernandez and Sunghoon Yoo, the other members of the studio (Max Applebaum, Andrew Camp, Conor Clarke, Joseph Delia, Sungbae Park, Brian Paul, Scott Richmond and Matt Wallach) and studio instructors Tom Angotti and Eva Tessza Udvarhelyi. All conclusions and any errors, however, can be attributed solely to the author.

(artisanal food and alcohol and specialty retail) and creating recreational open spaces. Another key strategy for creating capital-friendly urban environments is reducing traffic congestion and promoting forward-looking environmental consciousness by encouraging alternative modes of transportation. In this sense, the Department of Transportation's (DOT) work, while much broader in scope and intention, fits into a larger, citywide competitive strategy to attract and retain global capital.

A Perfect Storm of Class Conflict

In public forums and press accounts, opposition to DOT's bicycle program has grown. While streetscape changes remain popular citywide, some people see the installation of new bike lanes as a sign that they are losing control over their neighborhoods. This conflict is a perfect storm of class relations. As the city is gentrifying and long-time New Yorkers fear for the stability of their neighborhoods, many perceive cyclists to belong to one of two "threatening" classes: people who are richer than them (white yuppies in spandex, white-collar workers on folding bikes) or people who are poorer than them (working cyclists, immigrants, people of color, punks).

The self-identified middle class is furious with the City for seeming to help everyone around them, while supposedly ignoring car- and transit-oriented needs outside of downtown Manhattan. While these residents fear losing their neighborhoods to gentrification, their anger also reflects resentment towards people of color and social outsiders, whom they imagine the city prioritizes before the white middle class.

Many middle-class car owners in New York City see the automobile as a symbol of their rise out of the working class and may resent DOT's efforts to slow traffic and reduce free on-street parking. Among people living outside of Manhattan, there is also a long-simmering resentment over the way public transit serves the central business district but not their own needs for local or cross-borough trips. Recent cuts to bus service have been particularly hard on

those residents who live further from subway lines. These bus riders are witnessing simultaneous cuts to the bus network on which they rely, and an expansion of a cycling network that feels alien to their needs.

But this vision of cycling by middle-class car owners ignores many inconvenient truths:

- bike ridership is representative of all strata of New York City society;
- street infrastructure improvements often improve safety and public spaces for all New Yorkers, not just those who cycle;
- bicycling has been an important part of New Yorkers' commuting patterns since the nineteenth century;
- the cost of instituting bike lanes pales in comparison to the cost of running a transit system or maintaining car-oriented infrastructure; and
- the City is most definitely *not* prioritizing the needs of low-income people of color over the white middle class.



Map of current NYC bicycle network (Jennifer Harris-Hernandez), and conditions for cyclists in underserved areas (Scott Richmond).



It is unclear how large a segment of New York's population actually believes that bike lanes are a threat to their class status, but those who do appear to be highly mobilized in the current political moment.

Bike Lanes and Real Estate

DOT does not create bicycle infrastructure in order to raise property values. Building owners and developers, however, have learned that the city's streetscape improvements can create more attractive spaces, and the presence of bicycle infrastructure near a development can be a selling point for affluent young newcomers. New luxury towers in such neighborhoods as the Lower East Side, Williamsburg and downtown Brooklyn tout bicycle-friendly buildings and the presence of nearby cycling infrastructure in advertisements geared towards "hipsters." Meanwhile, Times Square experienced the largest retail rent hikes in the city—over 71 percent—coinciding with DOT's installation of a pedestrian plaza in Times Square. The Hudson River Park Trust has observed that the presence of the extended bike lane along the river has increased neighboring property values by approximately 20 percent. Richard Florida, an advocate for the so-called "creative class," has publicly commended DOT's bicycle infrastructure improvements as a tool to attract young, highly paid professionals into the city.

These examples show that bicycle infrastructure can serve elite interests and correspond with the gentrification of neighborhoods. By no means, however, should this correlation be interpreted as sole causation, or as inevitable. Streets like Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn have received a great deal of attention from DOT's bicycle program, and yet these infrastructure improvements have not brought on the immediate gentrification of south Brooklyn neighborhoods. The class implications of bicycle infrastructure are therefore highly contingent on its siting and design, as well as the process through which it is planned and implemented.

Urban Design for Whom?

DOT is tasked with designing infrastructure that benefits all New Yorkers. At the same time, the agency

recognizes that its bicycle and street redesign programs play a large part in the City's strategy to attract global capital. At a recent forum on cycling and real estate strategies, DOT Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan reminded her audience that "capital can locate anywhere, so it's extremely important that we create safe, attractive spaces where people want to be."

The siting and design of street changes often implies the type of user the city expects to benefit from a project. DOT's bicycle infrastructure, while present around the city, is densest around the city's most gentrified areas: downtown Manhattan and northwestern Brooklyn. There are a number of good reasons for this: these areas are two of the biggest employment centers in the city; they are home to cycling-friendly community districts; and they are the site of many transit interconnections. New York's young professionals and artists—generally able-bodied people with liberal attitudes towards the environment and without both ample savings to spend on cars and gasoline and long-term attachments to New York City's street form—helped spur the rise of cycling in the city, and are the group most publicly associated with the city's gentrification. Focusing on these neighborhoods, however, reinforces the impression that gentrification follows bike planning, and vice versa. More importantly, it results in a failure to provide much needed safe routes in high-cycling, low-infrastructure working-class neighborhoods like Flushing, Queens and Pelham Bay, Bronx.

DOT's siting choices have created enduring impediments towards extending the network and building broader community support. Long-term residents are alienated by capital investments that appear to arrive only after their neighborhood has been gentrified. This can be especially true in neighborhoods where residents have long biked but have not seen street improvements targeting their needs until now. Gentrification can also displace low-income workers and recent immigrants, who often rely on cycling as a free mode of transit or as a part of their jobs (i.e., working cyclists). Key potential beneficiaries of DOT's streetscape improvements are therefore missing from the neighborhoods where much of the building is taking place. As a result, there is a contradiction between where DOT is choosing to build bike infrastructure and where the need is highest.

Cycling infrastructure built for working-class and immigrant riders might take various forms.

These could include, but are not limited to:

- connecting working-class residential neighborhoods to local job centers, rather than the downtown central business district;
- making travel to the subway safer and faster, especially in areas suffering from bus service cutbacks;
- creating connections between nearby neighborhoods that are not adequately served by mass transit (such as connecting north Queens to the south Bronx);
- providing bike share opportunities in neighborhoods where owning a bicycle is impractical or unaffordable; and
- creating lanes that mirror the routes taken by commercial cyclists in the outer boroughs.

These modest steps would demonstrate a commitment on the part of the DOT to addressing the city's transportation injustices.



Advertising bike lanes as a luxury amenity (Domino Condominiums)

Infrastructure for the Underserved

In recent years, gentrification and class displacement have changed New York for the richer and the whiter. Like all citywide policies, DOT's bicycle program is occurring in this polarizing political context. This inescapable fact colors both DOT's program and the public's mixed reaction to it. By focusing construction on the most intense flashpoints of gentrification, the bicycle network reflects and reproduces the city's transportation injustices in terms of class, race and geographic isolation. This does not prove that bike lanes cause gentrification; instead, it points to the importance of needs-based infrastructure construction. High-need areas, where working-class people bicycle every day under increasingly dangerous conditions, have not received the same level of attention as richer parts of the city.

DOT and other city agencies need to reframe their priorities in order to serve those most vulnerable to gentrification, rather than those who profit from it. **P2**

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