

# THE NEXT AMERICAN CITY

Issue six / 2004

## *Technology & Cities*

**HUB CITY**  
CAN CHICAGO CAPTURE THE NEW ECONOMY  
THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY—BY BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE?

**PLAYING WITH URBAN LIFE**  
HOW SIMCITY INFLUENCES PLANNING CULTURE

**PLUS HIP HOP'S YING YANG TWINS**  
ON THEIR CHANGING NEIGHBORHOOD

**AND THE GREAT CREATIVE CLASS**  
**DEBATE CONTINUES**

WITH MAYORS MICHAEL BLOOMBERG AND MARTIN O'MALLEY

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**PEABODY INSTITUTE PANEL (pp. 19-20)**  
Photos by Jay Van Rensselaer/The  
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**THE NEXT AMERICAN CITY HAS MOVED!**  
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#### **CORRECTION**

In Issue 4, the article "Beyond Opinion Polls: Athens Comes to New Haven" failed to mention that The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven provided sponsorship and ongoing support for the Citizens Forums described in the article. TNAC regrets the error.

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the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.*

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Many Chicken Little types argue that if technology means that much work can be done anywhere, communities, especially urban ones, will lose their *raison d'être*.

I think it is more likely that we will see the next phase of evolution that started with early suburbanization in the late 1800s and continues to this day. Horsecars, street-cars, commuter railroads, and finally automobiles made it possible to live within progressively broader circles from one's work. For many telecommuting information economy workers, that radius has become practically infinite, as Nancy Robinson describes in her piece.

But all that means is that communities, at least many middle and upper-class ones, will coalesce around motivating forces besides work. While every worker in Riverside, Illinois a generation ago might have shared as a common experience the commuter train into jobs in Chicago, now everyone there might share wanting to live in an Olmstead-designed community with ample parkland, or even wanting to attend a local school or church.

At least that's the common narrative. But many jobs—the remaining manufacturing sector and many working and middle-class service sector jobs—will remain place-based. And furthermore, as Charles Shaw describes in his article on Chicago's tech sector, many cutting edge jobs even in technology industries depend on particular places.

Still, the overall trend is clear: many communities will have to offer something more than just a quick commute. As Daniel Lobo and Annie Lux hint at in their pieces on SimCity and related trends in urban planning, communities have become increasingly dependent on computer models that guide policy decisions that have little to do with developing such a sense of place. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) holds great promise in areas like environmental planning, but when communities try to use it to make choices about their futures, they often miss the bigger picture. The overuse of technology in urban planning may undermine cities' ability to deal with technological change.

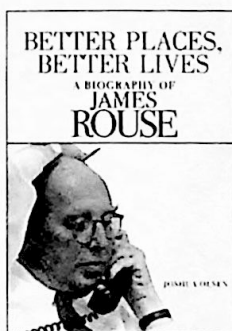
As always, feel free contact me with any comments or suggestions on TNAC. I hope you enjoy this issue!

Warm regards,

Adam Gordon  
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## NEW FROM THE STAFF OF THE NEXT AMERICAN CITY



The Urban Land Institute recently published *BETTER PLACES, BETTER LIVES: A BIOGRAPHY OF JAMES ROUSE* (ISBN 0-87420-919-6), written by this magazine's circulation director, Josh Olsen. In this book, Josh explores Rouse's amazingly extensive role in the shaping of the American landscape over the last half-century.

He explains how Rouse, as a mortgage banker, helped enable Americans to first start buying their no-money-down homes in the suburbs in the 1940s and 1950s. During the same period Rouse also chaired the subcommittee that created the massive federal urban renewal program. Most often, though, Rouse wore the hat of real estate developer, and in that role pioneered the creation of the shopping mall, built a new town for 100,000 people in Maryland, and launched the return-to-the-city movement in the 1970s with festival marketplaces like Faneuil Hall in Boston and Harborplace in Baltimore. Rouse ended his career by

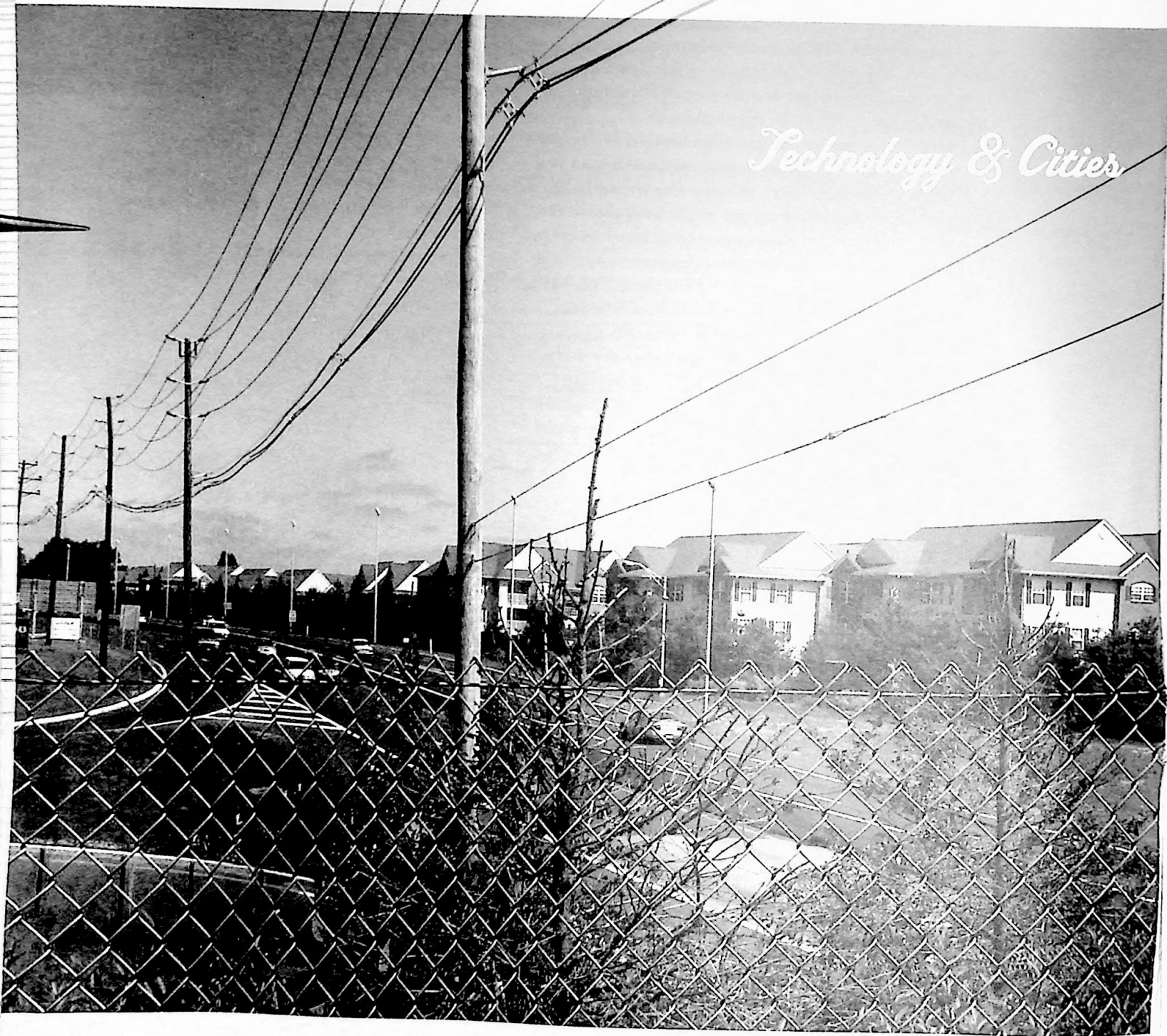
creating the Enterprise Foundation, which remains today one of the nation's most powerful supporters of affordable housing development.

Rouse's life is essentially the story of how and why America has been built the way it has, and in this there are important lessons. As Josh writes in his introduction, "There is much well-deserved concern in this country for the urban landscape. ... Yet if we are so worried about what has been built, perhaps we ought to start taking a closer look at who did the building and why. Jim Rouse is part of this examination, and he is actually a welcome relief from the usual stories of corruption, avarice, and love of power that traditionally accompany the history of development."

In short, Josh argues that Rouse often had profound moral motives for his work. He knew that most his city building endeavors had to make a profit, but he always believed that the straightest path to those profits was by creating places that made life better for everyone. For better or worse, we are living in the result.



*Technology & Cities*





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## TO THE EDITOR



IN HIS ARTICLE, "Gateway Bypass: Can St. Louis Survive in the Post-Industrial Era?" writer Charles Shaw has succumbed to hyperbole to disguise a superficial understanding of what is happening in St. Louis. Unquestionably, St. Louis is an older, "rust belt" city with most of the problems endemic to its type. However, St. Louis deserves better treatment.

Shaw's portrayal of the city, which seems to have come from a few days spent at a conference in October, reflects misunderstandings typical of an interloper. Combine this with a few factual omissions and the article provides too many false impressions.

When he states that "...everyone who could move out did," he seems to be referring to the downtown central business district. The fact (and the problem) is that downtown St. Louis has not had a significant residential population for over 100 years. It is not a matter of people moving out, it is a matter of people never moving in. Likewise, his characterization of downtown as being filled with "block after block, (of homeless) in a manner that you would never see in New York or Chicago" creates the impression that the entire downtown CBD is a repository for homeless people. You do not need to live in St. Louis to know that this is an exaggeration.

In discussing mass transit, Shaw says that "...the best bus system in town is run by Washington University." At the same time he chooses to ignore the impact of the community's light rail system. Metrolink is an enormous success by all measures devised by transportation experts nationwide. How did he miss it?

Why does he state that the city no longer has a public hospital but fails to point out that two of the most highly respected teaching hospitals in the country are in the City of St. Louis? Is his mission just to "trash" St. Louis or does he have a constructive purpose here?

Shaw deals with the "schism" between St. Louis City and St. Louis County in a facile and superficial manner. Yes, the "City" has not been part of the "County" since it chose to secede from St. Louis County in 1876. However one wonders exactly what is the "gridlock of power" to which he alludes?

Many academics and urban planners have concluded that the St. Louis metropolitan area has been forced by necessity to take a regional approach owing to the difficulties presented by City/County separation, two state governments,

and well over 100 municipalities in the metro area. Governing bodies and taxing entities cross city, county, and sometimes state lines in transit, sewers, community colleges, and cultural districts. Few other cities can claim as much success with regional governance as St. Louis. Did he miss this part, as well?

Charles Shaw should be commended for his courage to take on the complex subject of downtown St. Louis in a brief article. He correctly identifies many of the issues facing St. Louis. However, he fails to deal with them on a substantive level. Instead of discussing this matter with a graduate student, perhaps he would have been better served to talk to a professional planner.

HUGH SCOTT  
St. Louis, MO

*Charles Shaw responds:*

*Hugh Scott's response, although full of admirable civic pride and revealing a far deeper knowledge of St. Louis than I possess, largely missed the point of the article.*

*The article focuses on a group of young professionals and civic leaders who have recently moved to St. Louis, explaining why they moved there, what they found once they arrived, and how they choose to get involved. That was also the purpose of the "Urban Convergence" conference that was mentioned. The article was not an in-depth history of why downtown St. Louis failed.*

*Moreover, he characterizes my reporting as "misunderstandings typical of an interloper." An "interloper" is defined as "one that interferes with the affairs of others, often for selfish reasons; a meddler." It would appear that the real interlopers in the article are the young transplants who choose to get involved in the dearth of civic leadership in St. Louis. If he is commenting on their observations, then perhaps that underscores why on the whole young people are moving to Chicago instead of St. Louis. If their efforts to reform a city desperately in need of reform are seen as interloping, what hope do they have to create a better tomorrow for St. Louis, when their generation takes over?*

YOU'VE INVITED feedback about the magazine. In general, I think it's quite good. I don't know if this is THE moment of urban transformation you cite in your mission statement, but it's clearly a time of great ferment. And that ferment is happening with almost no help from the federal government, except to some extent for building transit lines. I don't think that's a good thing but it is a fact and helps account for why the search for tax revenue is so front and center for so many cities. And for better and for worse, new urbanism and smart growth are new or revived intellectual organizing principles ("paradigms" if you want) which have enriched and enlivened American planning.

You've written about a lot of interesting places and issues, but the magazine retains a Northeastern orientation. I counted up the articles and reviews focusing on one or two particular places, as opposed to more general articles. I counted 36 articles focusing on particular American places. 19 of those 36 articles were about the Northeast. There's no doubt that the Northeastern cities are important, but you don't want to let them dominate. Keep up the good work.

NATHAN LANDAU  
Oakland, CA

*Adam Gordon responds:*

*I'm glad that you enjoy the magazine. We are working to cover all parts of the country better. We especially encourage readers from outside the Northeast who have ideas for stories, or would like to write, to get in touch with us. A lot of what is so exciting in urban and suburban America today comes from places like Phoenix, Kansas City, and Raleigh, not just New York and Boston.*

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SEND YOUR LETTERS TO *The Next American City*, P.O. Box 207033, New Haven, CT 06520-7033 or email [info@americancity.org](mailto:info@americancity.org). Please include your full name and address. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.





15 MINUTES WITH...  
EDUCATION  
ENVIRONMENT  
NEIGHBORHOODS  
PLANNING  
SUBURBAN REVITALIZATION  
THE GREAT CREATIVE CLASS DEBATE

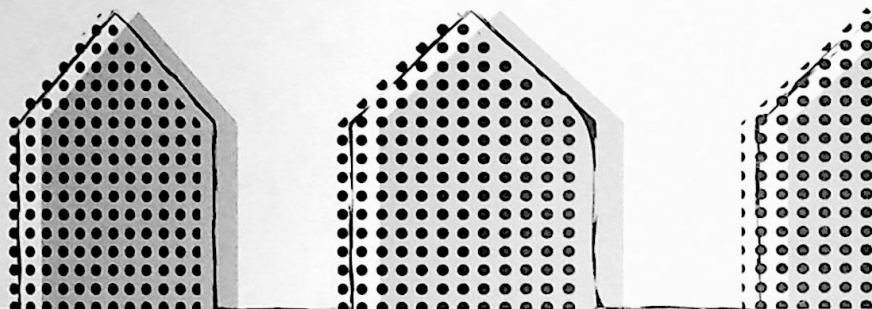
DEPARTMENTS



15 MINUTES WITH...

## RICH RICHMAN

ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S FOREMOST AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPERS SPEAKS



BY SETH A. BROWN

**RICHARD RICHMAN** IS CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER OF The Richman Group, one of the nation's twenty largest residential property owners. The Richman Group has developed or financed thousands of units of affordable and luxury housing in 47 states and also manages thousands of units of housing across the United States.

**THE NEXT AMERICAN CITY:** What brought you to affordable housing development?

**RICHARD RICHMAN:** The idea that you can apply business ideas to social endeavors. This permeates my thoughts about social problems and urban development. Somehow, a lot of people think they're separate things, but they're not. The hard problem you do have, though, with applying business ideas to social endeavors, is that it's easy to measure inputs, but hard to measure outputs. For instance, how do you know if your sanitation department is cleaning up the garbage properly? It's not easy to do. In the private sector, we have a very good gauge of how we're doing for efficiency. It's called competition and profit and loss. When you get to governments, it's not that easy to measure gain and loss. But it is possible.

**TNAC:** The Richman Group operates in 47 states. At the same time, we see population declines in large swaths of the country—upstate New York, New England, the Midwest—and cities like Syracuse, Hartford, and Cleveland. What is the future of these places?

**RR:** I have some unconventional views. You have to let the laws of economics work their ways. There's a saying on Wall Street—"Don't fight the tape." Any effort in the long

term to fight the reasons why places may be depopulating will probably turn out to be both a mistake and failure. There are reasons why things happen in a historical sense. I believe that the government should be involved, but it needs to intervene in ways that are consistent with good economic and business practice.

And what we're seeing is a very dynamic change. Technological and global innovation on a scale human beings have never experienced. I've always believed that there's the sweep of history.

I grew up a resident of New York State, and I've been a resident of Connecticut since the early 1980s. I see reasons why upstate New York is having difficulty, and parts of cities in Connecticut are having difficulty. It has to do with economic forces that one must recognize. I don't know if one can easily make changes to economic forces. In the United States, we can hire a Yale-educated computer programmer for four times what it costs to find a programmer in Bangalore, India. That's going to change the way the world runs. But we can't fight that—we need to live with it.

So what does Connecticut have going for it, for example? It's certainly not going to be a manufacturing center. I think it's going to have trouble even in terms of its service industries because of the high costs of doing business and a high standard of living. At the same time, in the 21st century, having an institution like Yale University in your state is the equivalent of having oil in the ground. It's really the raw material for economic advancement in the 21st century, if you're talking about a technology- and service-based economy. I think there's also a major historical mistake, that all the money has been given to the University of Connecticut without moving major portions of the university to downtown Hartford. [The University of Connecticut



is based in rural Storrs, Connecticut.] That would attract thousands of young people to live in the city, and a university has a ton of spinoffs, acting as a catalyst or incubator. So the question is—how do you build off of what you can do, and not fight the tape?

There's also something else that I think is important. Who's to say that the current size of the city is the right size? Maybe it should get smaller. Who's to say whether Hartford should be 80 thousand, 200 thousand or 1 million people?

**TNAC:** How do you plan to shrink a city?

**RR:** A lot of cities have done that successfully. But people say, "Oh my god, the city is getting smaller, that's bad." But why is that bad? For some cities, getting smaller makes sense. Why is bigger better? It's definitely an American ethos, that we always think bigger is better. But sometimes, quality is better than quantity.

**TNAC:** Is it becoming harder to find sites for affordable housing development?

**RR:** Today, homeownership has become so affordable that it's hard even to find sites for affordable [rental] housing. When you want to build an affordable [rental] housing project, you're competing with people who want to build townhouses, or condos or even single-family homes. And they'll pay more for the land, and land values go up in many markets.

**TNAC:** What can be done to make it easier to build affordable housing?

**RR:** The most important thing is dealing with school taxes. Putting aside the other reasons why communities may not want affordable housing—discrimination, environmental and traffic concerns, and water and sewer problems—and they're not easy to put aside—then you have to deal with compensating a suburban community for the fact that you're adding school children when communities already feel like they're not getting enough support from states for education. If the states compensated communities for the incremental costs of educating these additional children, one barrier to building affordable housing would be removed.

**TNAC:** Has there always been an affordable housing crisis in America, or is there a unique shortage of affordable housing right now?

**RR:** I think there's always been an affordable housing crisis. You have to depend on subsidies to build in high-cost areas (like urban areas), and if you didn't need the subsidies, the market would build the housing. But the cost of building the housing isn't that much lower when you're building affordable housing, especially with all the rules and the building code and the amenities that people expect. So the good news is that you're getting good quality housing built as affordable housing, but the costs aren't much different from market-rate housing, and the rents are very different. A 900-square-foot market-rate apartment in New York City could rent for \$3500, and an affordable apartment would rent for no more than \$600. There's just no way to make those numbers work unless somebody is going to subsidize it. ■

People say, "Oh my  
god, the city is getting  
smaller, that's bad."



But why is that bad?  
For some cities, getting smaller  
makes sense. Why is bigger better?



## EDUCATION

# HOW ONE COMMUNITY CHOSE INTEGRATION

AND A SELECT FEW  
THREATEN TO DENY IT

BY CHINH QUANG LIE PHOTOS BY JULIA MAX

**MISSION STATEMENT**  
Lynn Classical High School is a diverse  
urban community dedicated to encourage  
self-reliance, to fostering  
social responsibility, to appreciating  
diversity, and to developing  
succeed in the world as

ACROSS THE COUNTRY THIS YEAR, AMERICANS WILL celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Yet a silent struggle is taking place over *Brown*'s very meaning—one that is likely to define the case's legacy and shape the way in which we will educate our children into the future. A series of lawsuits, many engineered by conservative organizations, challenge the validity of active measures to promote integration, even when local school boards take those measures voluntarily. One of those lawsuits targets a program in Lynn, Massachusetts—an otherwise unremarkable sleepy working-class hamlet just north of Boston. I am one of the attorneys working to defend Lynn's school system.

### THE LOCAL STORY: HOW LYNN CAME TO BE LYNN

Lynn is home to a small school district educating a racially and ethnically diverse student population of approximately 15,500. In the 2001–02 school year, 58 percent of its overall student body was nonwhite, with sizable populations of Hispanic/Latino (29%), black (15%), Asian (14%), and Native American (less than 1%) children. One-third of its students speak a primary language at home other than English, and almost two-thirds qualify for free or reduced lunch programs.

As in many small American cities, the correlation between race and poverty is high. Nonwhite students in Lynn are almost twice as likely as white students to be enrolled in free or reduced lunch programs. Moreover, most of Lynn's nonwhite families live in segregated residential neighborhoods that are, on the whole, significantly less affluent than their white counterparts. In the absence of a constitutional obligation to maintain desegregated schools, therefore, Lynn's demographic profile is the textbook set-

ting for the kind of racially segregated schools that can be found with increasing frequency throughout the nation.

Yet, just the opposite is true; Lynn bucks the trend in a big way. For almost fifteen years, its democratically elected school board has voluntarily maintained racially integrative student assignment policies despite being under no legal obligation to do so. Although by no means perfectly integrated, Lynn has done an extraordinary job of encouraging integration and capitalizing on the levels of diversity that it manages to achieve in each of its schools. With little opposition or fanfare, these policies have exposed generations of children to diverse educational settings they otherwise would have never experienced.

What is more, during that same fifteen years, the Lynn school system has also managed to provide resources more equitably to all of its facilities regardless of their locations or racial compositions. It has lowered suspension and absenteeism rates for all students, reduced incidents of interracial conflict and violence, raised academic achievement for all students, and stemmed—in fact, reversed—a troubling historical pattern of white flight.

These successes make it hard to believe that in the late 1970s, racial imbalance and unrest plagued Lynn's public schools. Although no court had ever found that the school district maintained segregated schools by law, for many years Lynn practiced the kind of subtle discrimination that was rampant throughout the North and West. As the nonwhite student population in the district grew each year, Lynn found ways to shuttle them to the same racially isolated schools that also happened to be the ones burdened by crowded classrooms and limited resources.

The situation became so severe that in 1977 the Massachusetts Board of Education intervened. In a series of offi-



cial warnings it repeatedly condemned the Lynn Public School System for exacerbating racial isolation by allowing white students to transfer out of schools with high minority populations and by placing all of its (non-white) bilingual programs in schools that were already racially identifiable. To relieve the racial imbalance, the board recommended that Lynn officials encourage and facilitate voluntary, integrative transfers for what was then its most isolated school.

The district initially ignored the board's concerns. While it did vote to adopt a voluntary transfer policy for its most isolated school, the district did just about anything it could to undermine that policy. Over the next several years, it closed seven schools, resulting in reassignments that intensified existing racial patterns. The district also permitted an increase in the class sizes of minority-isolated schools beyond the district-wide average, making those schools less effective for their mostly nonwhite students and also less attractive to the white students who might transfer in. And in spite of its official policies, it continued to allow white students to make segregative transfers. Indeed, in one year, the district approved the transfers of 107 out-of-neighborhood white students to a high school in the white neighborhood, increasing the school's white enrollment to 93 percent; more than half of these newly transferred students resided in an attendance zone that would have fed them into a school located in the minority neighborhood.

By the mid-1980s, almost all of the district's small but slowly expanding minority population could be found concentrated in four schools, while the rest remained virtually all-white. White teachers regularly sought transfers to white schools when opportunities presented themselves, leaving nonwhite schools to suffer from faculty inattention and low attendance rates, achievement scores, and morale. Over the years, racial tension, polarization, and conflict in the system grew. Racial name-calling, fights, and altercations between white and minority students and rampant self-segregation at lunch and recess characterized the atmosphere in both elementary and secondary schools. The system gained a reputation for its bad race relations and poor school conditions, and white families who could afford sending their children elsewhere did so.

#### THE PLAN: ACHIEVING A RACIAL BALANCE AMONG SCHOOLS

A frustrated Massachusetts Board of Education again raised concerns with Lynn, this time encouraging the school district to defeat racial isolation and imbalance by establishing a long-term, comprehensive plan rather than the piecemeal approach taken over the years. In September 1989, after several more failed attempts, the Lynn school board finally devised a student assignment plan that the commonwealth approved. Unlike its less effective predecessors, which had been designed primarily by school officials behind closed doors, the 1989 plan was shaped by community and parental input gathered from a number of public hearings, a special advisory committee, and representatives from minority organizations.

The logic behind Lynn's new plan was rather simple. The district continued to afford all students with the unconditional right to attend their neighborhood schools. In addition, however, it sought to reduce racial isolation and achieve greater racial balance system-wide by encouraging parents and children to make voluntary, integrative transfers to schools throughout the district. The school board gave its assurances that there would be space for such transfers by agreeing to ambitious new school renovations and more equitable resource distribution.

To encourage these transfers, the district adopted a two-step program. First, it made a renewed effort to ensure that all schools in the system started from a baseline of equality in curricula, educational resources, teachers, and facilities. This guaranteed that all students—regardless of where they were enrolled in the district—would have access to the same high-quality education. Second, the district helped each school develop attractive, distinct themes and programs. The purpose here was to provide incentives for students and parents to seek transfers to other schools in the district that might offer programs matching their interests.

In order to ensure that the plan would produce integrative results in the end, the district permitted transfers that would either reduce racial isolation in the sending school or increase racial balance in the receiving school. Neutral transfers—transfers that would neither improve nor adversely impact the level of integration in the schools within a broad range of the

district-wide average—were also permitted. Segregative transfers were denied. The plan also underwent periodic review and revision. A 1999 amendment, for instance, added additional flexibility, granting wider latitude for racial identification to bi- and multi-racial students, instituting an appeals process for denials of transfer, and making allowances for cases of extreme hardship (such as transportation or daycare burdens on parents).

Having established a mechanism to achieve racially diverse settings, Lynn school authorities did not want to squander the newfound opportunity for meaningful, positive interracial interactions among students. Thus they complemented the new assignment plan with significant curricular innovations that would make Lynn's goal of integration more than just an abstraction. With the district's help, schools developed activities to encourage inter-group association and cooperation and to challenge racial stereotypes and prejudice. The district also instituted a system of training for its teachers and administrators to work with diverse student populations, and it sponsored schoolwide activities and assemblies that celebrated rather than suppressed racial and ethnic differences. In short, the new policies in Lynn were a sincere effort to change the course of its educational mission and racially integrate—not just desegregate—its public schools.

The policies worked. Since the implementation of the plan, tens of thousands of students—well over one-third of the total student population in Lynn each year—have used the assignment plan to make voluntary transfers. Of these transfers, about two-thirds are integrative transfers that, altogether, significantly alter the composition of each school within the district.

Surveys conducted in the community and among students convey almost uniformly positive feedback. The overwhelming majority of Lynn residents say that integrated schools are important to them, and high school students across all races report an increased comfort working and interacting in interracial environments. Students say classroom discussions and the general racial atmosphere help them better understand and appreciate points of view different from their own. Lynn students also place a higher value on interracial friendships and demonstrate a greater appreciation for others of different backgrounds. Moreover,



educational experts and social and developmental psychologists, observing elementary school classes in the district, have found that the integrated environments help students challenge stereotypes and develop positive racial attitudes at a young age, when prejudices typically form. In other words, the Lynn public schools have shown that integration does matter.

#### THE BIG PICTURE:

##### LEGAL RETRENCHMENT AND THE THREAT TO COMMUNITIES LIKE LYNN

Despite this year's celebrations of Brown and success stories like Lynn, efforts to voluntarily integrate schools are now threatened. In recent years, emboldened by the recent decisions of conservative judges limiting the scope of desegregation, a handful of disgruntled parents—predominantly white and often bankrolled by strategic, conservative legal foundations—have begun suing school systems. Unlike the plaintiffs in school desegregation cases of the decades before, these new plaintiffs claim not that school authorities have done too little to integrate schools, but rather that they've done too much. The argument is ingeniously simple: Brown, in their view, did not outlaw racially isolated conditions or require schools to provide truly equal, integrated education; rather, it laid out the principle of strict colorblindness—the idea that race must never be taken into account, even to avoid the racial inequality that Brown itself outlawed.

These new legal challenges, if successful, would effectively render Brown void of any real meaning by denying school districts the ability to counter segregative trends in our public schools. And such segregation abounds. A number of researchers have documented the steady unraveling of school desegregation over the past several decades. They show not only that desegregation has slowed to a halt, but that American public schools have been resegregating in recent years. Today three out of every four black and Latino students attend schools in which they constitute a majority. A remarkable 37 percent of them attend intensely segregated schools, where students of color comprise between 90 and 100 percent of the student population. If anything, the number of non-white children educated in these kinds of racially and ethnically isolated conditions has grown over the past decade.

The problem, however, is not simply one

of racial and ethnic isolation: race and poverty remain inextricably linked in America. Nine out of ten intensely segregated minority schools are also schools with a majority of students on free or reduced lunch programs. Compared to their white counterparts, these schools are fourteen times more likely to be schools with concentrated poverty.

Concentrated poverty, in turn, has powerful effects on educational opportunities. Students in high-poverty schools are much less likely to have gone to preschool and more likely to come from households headed by a single parent—often a parent who must work more than one job to make ends meet. These students are more likely to live in segregated neighborhoods plagued by high levels of criminal activity and serious environmental and safety threats. Their communities have little or no access to critical services such as adequate and affordable health care, public transportation, fair housing and economic development opportunities, and sustainable employment beyond mere subsistence.

It is no wonder that predominantly minority, predominantly poor schools lag far behind others in the educational resources available to them and in the performance of students who attend them.

#### RESISTING THE CHALLENGE:

##### LYNN'S LEGAL STRUGGLE

In August 1999, five Lynn parents, represented by a Boston-based conservative litigation nonprofit, Citizens for the Preservation of Constitutional Rights, sued the school district, alleging that its actions violated both the state and federal constitutions. The plaintiffs claimed that the district's integration plan was barred by the federal Equal Protection Clause—the same provision on which the Supreme Court relied a half-century before in Brown to advance its vision of racial integration and harmony.

The litigation in Lynn dragged on for years. Elsewhere, meanwhile, similar groups of parents brought suits against school districts operating similarly designed student assignment policies in Seattle, Washington, in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and in Louisville, Kentucky. Each hoped to build upon judgments against voluntary integration policies in Arlington, Virginia, in Montgomery County, Maryland, and in Boston. The legal developments in Lynn, therefore, are part of a systemic attack by litigators on a quest to redefine Brown. With the era of

court-ordered desegregation in its waning days, opponents of integration have turned their attention to challenging even the most modest, voluntary efforts that school boards might take in seeking to counter the powerful effects of de facto racial segregation.

In June 2003, after a three-week trial held six months earlier, a federal district judge issued a carefully reasoned, 153-page opinion in Lynn's case. The court upheld the assignment plan. "The message it conveys to the students," wrote Judge Nancy Gertner, "is that our society is heterogeneous, that racial harmony matters—a message that cannot be conveyed meaningfully in segregated schools." She went on to acknowledge what the data on the Lynn program had demonstrated—that their student assignment plan "played an important part in creating a thriving, diverse, and integrated urban school system, successful on all fronts and by all measures."

For now, the school board and many community members in Lynn are breathing a sigh of relief. The respite will be brief, however, for the plaintiffs have appealed the decision to the federal appellate court, where the case will be heard later this year. And beyond that, they have their eyes set on the Supreme Court. Supporters of the program, however, find hope in the toughest challenge that faces the plaintiffs' formalistic arguments: whatever opponents might claim, a growing body of social science literature on the real-life examples of places like Lynn documents the numerous benefits of integrated education. Many observers believe that such practical realities influenced the Supreme Court's decision to uphold affirmative action in law school admissions in 2003, recognizing, in the words of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, that "it remains the current reality that minority students encounter markedly inadequate and unequal educational opportunities." Regardless of the outcome of the Lynn case, it will not be the end of the attack on voluntary desegregation plans. Late last year, another challenge was filed. The target this time? The school district in Berkeley, California—the heart of progressive America, and the home of the oldest voluntary integration policy in the country. ■

*The views expressed in this article are the author's only and not that of LDF or of its clients.*



## NEIGHBORHOODS

# IS EAST ATLANTA LOSING ITS SOUL?

BY ANDREA KORBER

"TOO MANY DAMN DOGS," LUCKY CHUCKIE SAYS. "MORE dogs than we ever had."

A lifetime resident of East Atlanta, Chuckie is describing one of the changes he has observed as his neighborhood has become Atlanta's trendiest. "We," in his mind, are the old-timers—mostly African-American homeowners who lived through East Atlanta's startling transformation over the past four decades. "They" are the newcomer dog-owners—yuppies and families who are changing the neighborhood they now share with the old-timers. The "us" and "them" language he uses is a sure and subtle indicator of the state of East Atlanta: the first stages of gentrification.

### DECADES OF CHANGE

East Atlanta wasn't always trendy. Since its optimistic conception as a model for "urban utopian living" at the turn of the century, it has been plagued by many of the same problems other American inner-city neighborhoods have faced: a fierce battle over integration, white flight to outlying suburbs, divisive highway construction (Interstate 20), and a crime wave that devastated the community.

But around the same time the neighborhood formed the East Atlanta Community Association (1981), things started to turn around. Many of the auto and tire shops were converted, crumbling homes were sold and rehabilitated, and local businesses began to thrive. After twenty years of slow improvements, East Atlanta's quirkiness, historical character, proximity to downtown Atlanta, and relatively low property prices have made it attractive once again.

Over the past few years, Atlanta's City Council has actively promoted East Atlanta's desirability and has made substantial efforts to support its growth. It created a new zoning classification for the businesses in the East Atlan-

ta Village commercial area, which established maximum building heights and identified ideal uses for individual development sites. It allocated \$868,000 for a streetscape improvement project, the installation of sidewalks along Glenwood Avenue, and more consistent housing and commercial code enforcement. In addition, the Atlanta Development Authority has set aside \$150,000 for business owners and landlords to use as no-interest loans for façade improvements.

After so much attention and investment, it's no surprise that many people who have never lived in Atlanta's inner city have decided to move in. They come seeking alternatives to the suburban lifestyle of the burgeoning metropolitan area—which includes four of the ten fastest-growing counties in the nation. First they flocked to Little Five Points, a bohemian retail area that lies just a mile closer to downtown along Moreland Avenue. Now, they gravitate to East Atlanta, bringing with them the specter of gentrification.

### THE GENTRIFICATION TASK FORCE AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

When the city noticed the extent to which outsiders were colonizing poor, black inner-city neighborhoods—whites doubled their numbers in Little Five Points between 1990 and 2000 alone—it convened a Gentrification Task Force. Chaired by Larry Keating, a professor of planning at Georgia Tech's College of Architecture, the Task Force met in 2000 and 2001 and issued forty recommendations that it believed would protect existing homeowners and minimize the negative effects of gentrification.

ABOVE: KAINE & D-ROC MAKE UP ONE OF ATLANTA'S HOTTEST HIP-HOP GROUPS, THE YING YANG TWINS. (SEE INTERVIEW ON PAGE 13)

Three years after that report was released, Keating worries now that it was ineffective: "There's more public awareness than before, but all indicators say that gentrification is resurgent." The City Council only adopted five of the Task Force's recommendations, all relating to the shortage of affordable housing. While encouraging developers to build affordable housing can deter displacement effects, Keating argues that a one-pronged approach cannot adequately address the multi-faceted challenges of gentrification.

Missed opportunities abound. For instance, the city failed to secure further tax exemptions for elderly, long-term homeowners despite the recommendations of the Task Force. The Community Housing Resource Center has since stepped in to aid elderly homeowners threatened with eviction for nonpayment of taxes. Gregory Walker, a staff member at the Center, says, "These people are shipped out first [as developers buy their homes] for pennies on a dollar, put in minimal work... and then sell them for five times the price."

Walker's colleague, Scott Ball, points out that city officials have not addressed the recent rise of predatory lending practices: "Seniors who have large equity, particularly elderly women, are approached by contractors to get work done on their homes: easy financing, no money down. The relationships are often abusive." Low-income residents are susceptible to threats of refinancing and foreclosure, and last year's substantial enfeebling of Georgia's Fair Lending Act leaves little effective means for prosecuting predatory lenders.

Even in the area most addressed by the City Council, that of constructing affordable housing, the Council has failed to implement a one-for-one replacement strategy for affordable housing built in the 1970s under long-term contracts with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that are now expiring. If this housing is torn down, under the HUD agreements the land on which it sits is freed for development and sold to the highest bidder. More often than not, the highest bidder is someone from outside the neighborhood.

As Keating laments, "We don't have the resources to deal with the displacement, or to deal with the destruction of sociological fabric that is still happening. On balance, we're losing ground."

## LOSING GROUND?

Lucky Chuckie's East Atlanta certainly doesn't look like it's losing ground. Its main thoroughfares, Flat Shoals and Moreland Avenues, are bustling with more pedestrian life now than any time in recent memory. The Madison, a 1920s movie house, is on its way toward full restoration. And as Chuckie points out, people are walking their dogs and getting to know their neighbors.

In addition, unique small businesses have emerged to meet the needs of the changing population, defying the broader commercial trend in inner cities towards large chain stores. Diane Dreher is opening a restaurant called Pasta Thyme, to be housed in a small purple building she is renovating a block away from East Atlanta's commercial core. She "was drawn to the exciting revitalization, the young couples moving in."

Charles Turner, who owns Chances art gallery, also appreciates the neighborhood's newfound diversity. Turner has lived in East Atlanta for twenty years and is a member of East Atlanta's Culture Committee. He is proud to list the six countries represented by proprietors of Flat Shoals Avenue businesses: Thailand, South Africa, China, Ethiopia, Tunisia, and Australia. "East Atlanta has all ages, lifestyles, and ethnic groups. It is the new beginning of old cultures. We all live together in harmony."

Perhaps Turner's mindset has been influenced by a mural at the eight-month-old Australian Bakery, next door to his gallery. The mural, by Aboriginal artist Pamela Croft, reads as a loop. To the far left is an outline of Australia colored in Aboriginal flag colors, to the far right the Aboriginal symbol of community (two concentric circles). Stretched between them are river lines representing travel from home (native Australia) to a meeting place (America, East Atlanta) and back, without terminus. Lining the to and fro routes are the handprints of East Atlanta residents: passersby, City Council members, and the local kids club.

The artist explains that, "As an Aborigine, land is the mother church, the center of our being." The mural speaks of change and adaptation, colored by the civil rights struggles that both Aborigines in Australia and blacks in America have fought. She has titled the piece, a visual metaphor for East Atlanta, "Bringing nations communities and cultures together."

## TAKING EAST ATLANTA BACK

In their ode to urban transformation, "Calling All Zones," the Ying Tang Twins, a hip-hop duo, have described the demographic shifts in the neighborhood as the time when "white folks took East Atlanta back" (see sidebar). But even Walker, who aids long-time residents negatively affected by gentrification, doesn't blame the people who are moving in: "The neighborhoods are clean and safe. They have good schools, and they are within reach of young families. I can't fault them for wanting to come in."

Kimberly Shoemake-Medlock, a newlywed and new homeowner, is one of those who hope to take advantage of East Atlanta's affordability and convenience. As an architect, she recognizes the problems associated with gentrification, to which she is contributing. Nevertheless, she says, "We just wanted to be somewhere where we could afford a house, and we could walk to bars."

People like Shoemake-Medlock have been warmly welcomed by some of East Atlanta's civic leaders. Natalyn Archibong, the neighborhood's City Council Member, recalls her childhood growing up in the majority-black, economically devastated East Atlanta of the 1960s. She is "proud that East Atlanta has become one of the most diverse communities in Atlanta. I view this change as healthy."

Councilwoman Archibong founded the East Atlanta Business Association before it was popular to do business in East Atlanta. Its astonishing success depends, she says, on the ability of both new and old residents to learn from each other while working toward shared objectives: "I encourage the old neighbors to welcome their new neighbors. Conversely, I encourage the new neighbors to respect and to get to know the long-term neighbors. I have found that when neighbors know one another, the perceived differences are soon replaced with confirmed areas of mutual interest. In other words, we are building a strong community in East Atlanta, neighbor-by-neighbor."

If both new and old can coexist, perhaps East Atlanta is not "the place the white people took back." Perhaps it's a place where neighbors, working together, took their neighborhood back. One can dream. ■



# THE YING YANG TWINS ON THEIR CHANGING NEIGHBORHOOD

INTERVIEW BY BRANDON LOFTON & ANIKA SINGH

SHORTLY AFTER THE RELEASE OF THEIR NEW album, "Me and My Brother," *The Next American City* interviewed the Ying Yang Twins. An Atlanta-based hip-hop duo, the group is known for dance floor hits like "Shake It Like a Salt Shaker," "Naggin'," and "Whistle While You Twurk." Kaine and D-Roc, both 25 years old, chatted with TNAC about their hometown of Atlanta and how "Calling All Zones," a track from "Me and My Brother," grapples with changing demographics and the evolving experience of growing up in East Atlanta. "Zones" refers to geographic areas in Atlanta. According to the Ying Yang Twins, anything lying outside of Zones 1-6 simply is not part of Atlanta. And Zone 6, including East Atlanta, is at risk of becoming a completely different place than the neighborhood they grew up in during the 1980s and '90s. —Brandon Lofton and Anika Singh

TNAC: Tell us a little bit about "Calling All Zones."

Kaine: "Calling All Zones" was a song that not only spoke for plenty years the horror of Atlanta. So to live in Atlanta you have to only understand one county, Fulton County. If you don't live in Fulton County, you are not from Atlanta. Or you don't live in Atlanta. Or if you weren't born at Grady Memorial Hospital, you know what I'm sayin', you ain't no A-town, baby. So what we did, we made the song to s\*\*\* down folk talking about—'I was down in Atlanta, but I was down in Marietta.' See now, you were in Marietta, you weren't in Atlanta. I was down in Smyrna. Uh-huh. I was down in Conyers. Uh-huh. I was down in Riverdale. Uh-huh. I was down in Stone Mountain. Uh-huh. All those is other cities in Georgia. Atlanta is just

Atlanta. It's the capital city. It's the griftiest city of the state.

When D-Roc and myself was, what, eight, nine, and ten... the projects only existed in Atlanta. That was Atlanta. When you go to Stone Mountain, Stone Mountain has never not been good living. College Point has never not been good living. Where we come from was not good living. The projects didn't even look as good as they did just before they started tearing them down.

TNAC: How would you describe what is going on right now in those neighborhoods that you mentioned?

D-Roc: A lot [of the projects], they not even standing. They knocked them down. They making them townhouses.

Kaine: Yeah, so our kids ain't gonna know nothing about this. That's what it was. So that's what really be hurting our feelings.

D-Roc: A lot of things we be talking about in "Calling all Zones" are gone. A lot of kids who are growin' up now who are like ten, eleven, don't even know about half the stuff we are talkin', in Atlanta.

Kaine: See, the reason why we really made [the song] is because there are a lot of people not really from Atlanta, man, they be comin' up here doin' everything, screamin', yellin', from the A-town. Cause I from A-town: eastside, westside, southside. I can get out the car and stop anywhere. In the worst part or all the better parts. I prefer to

stay in the worst parts though because they keep my heart real with me.

We ain't gonna have to do nothing [to combat gentrification] because everything is a full circle. They turned East Lake Meadow, little Vietnam, into the Villas of East Lake. They put a damn Publix grocery store [a Southern chain known for catering to high-end customers] across the street.

D-Roc: And a golf course, in the middle of projects, in the middle of the parking lot.

Kaine: Atlanta is gonna have to happen because people, they have done away with welfare, but they have to have. Certain people just can't; some people still make it out of it while still being within the city limits of Atlanta. So they have to go and start a "Hood" program, and they still a ghetto motherf\*\*\*er in the Villas of East Lake. So, it's gonna come back full circle. They go on tear it down and tear it up again; we just gonna keep on seeing it more than once.

TNAC: Some people are being forced out of their neighborhoods—where is everybody going?

Kaine: Some people can't make it man, so they turn—

D-Roc: They going to the outskirts. Cobb County.

TNAC: So what is the role of music in all this?

Kaine: As far as our city, which is our life, I just want people to know the real end of it. ■

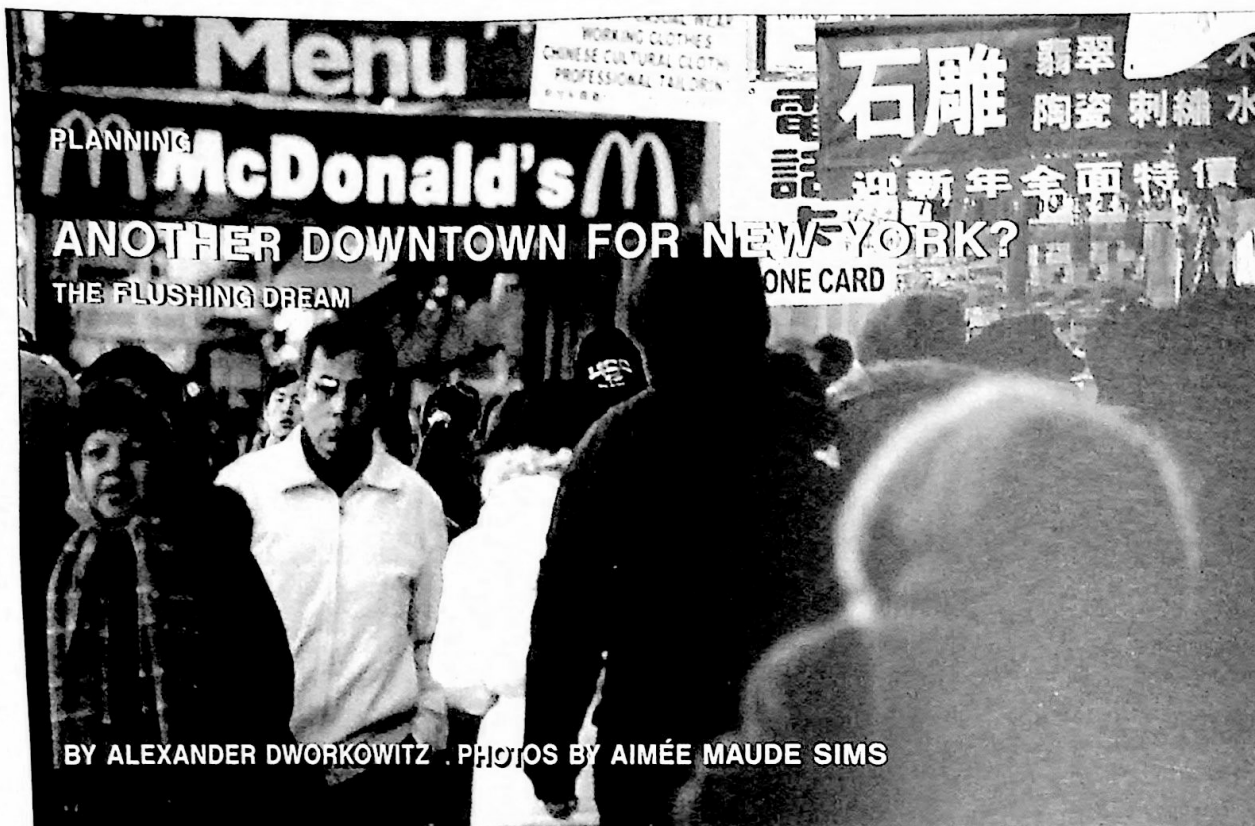
## SELECTED LYRICS

**You got a one-way ticket to hell,  
Smack dab in the middle of the ATL,  
And aww, I dont wanna hustle no more but the  
streets wont let me gao,  
All my n\*\*\*\*s say,  
Zone 1 (right here), Zone 2 (right here), Zone 3  
Zone 4 (right here), Zone 5 and 6, but that's it.**

**For a n\*\*\*\* with a dream,  
Atlanta is the city,  
And they make it so seem,  
But ride through the city,  
And The Streets ain't clean,  
All I see is drug deals, big wheels and fiends,**

**But any way they took East Atlanta back,  
Throw Atlanta Down,  
Turned little Vietnam to a white folks town,**

**...  
When you speaking 'bout Atlanta mention Ying  
Yang Twins,  
There born and raised,  
God done made it hard for us,  
Cause y'all outta towners came here and f\*\*\*\*ed  
s\*\*\*\* up,  
But y'all can't f\*\*\*\* with us, cause as soon as  
s\*\*\*\* start goin on you leave Atlanta and go  
right back home.**



BY ALEXANDER DWORKOWITZ PHOTOS BY AIMÉE MAUDE SIMS

NOT MANY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO STROLL DOWN COLLEGE Point Boulevard in downtown Flushing, Queens. The industrial streetscape ranges from graffiti-covered buildings where immigrant workers stitch clothing to an asphalt plant. The Western Beef food market is a favorite of the homeless, and some even sleep atop its recycling machines. There are scattered homes, including public housing, but most residents choose to walk immediately east to Main Street, a much livelier and friendlier strip. In short, College Point Boulevard looks like a street that has been ignored for a long, long time.

But all of the sudden, College Point Boulevard is hot property. In recent years, large developers have bought up land on the western side of the street. They plan to transform their plots, now home to warehouses, parking lots, and factories, into condominiums, large retail stores, and parks.

The developers are not alone in their thinking. Mayor Michael Bloomberg wants to build up College Point Boulevard and other parts of downtown Flushing; development in Queens and New York City's other outer boroughs is one of his administration's priorities. John Liu, the local City Councilman who has sought out the mayor's interest, says he wants to make Flushing "a destination of choice." Other local leaders have called for a renaissance of the area.

Why is the government of New York City so interested in an area eight miles east of midtown Manhattan? Although remote from the city center, downtown Flushing is well connected to public transportation and has strong commercial prospects of its own. The area is already the busiest section of northeast Queens, a region of more than half a million people. The subway, the Long Island Rail

Road, bus lines, and two highways run through it. Just blocks away is the third largest park in the city, Flushing Meadows Corona Park, which is home to the New York Mets and the U.S. Open. And the neighborhood also has a waterfront, the narrow Flushing River that runs behind College Point Boulevard.

"Downtown Flushing is a transit hub, and it's an intermodal hub," says Ben Wauford, principal in charge of the New York office of Cooper Carry, a consulting firm hired by the city to study Flushing. "It has an untapped resource in the waterfront. It has adjacent recreational amenities that are unparalleled. It's close to LaGuardia Airport. And quite frankly, it's highly successful right now."

Despite the excited talk, the city will have to overcome difficult hurdles in order to continue to develop downtown Flushing. The Flushing River is polluted. A high water table prevents construction deep underground. The Van Wyck Expressway runs between downtown Flushing and the park. And some developers and politicians claim that luring more businesses to Flushing depends on the even thornier redevelopment of Willets Point, an industrial neighborhood to the west. Changing Flushing will be expensive. It remains to be seen whether the city and state, for all of their lofty aspirations, will cough up the millions needed to redevelop an area of New York City that most tourists have never even heard of.

#### FROM 1950s MAIN STREET TO BOOMING MULTIETHNIC VILLAGE

In the 1950s, Flushing's Main Street was dominated by department stores, shoe repair shops, and small businesses serving a working-class, white-ethnic popula-



tion. Nowadays, typical American franchises, such as McDonald's and Old Navy, greet Flushing pedestrians, but so do signs in Chinese, Korean, and Urdu. As America's latest wave of mass immigration continues, America's large cities will likely have more and more neighborhoods like downtown Flushing. Redevelopment of Flushing may serve as a blueprint for changing similar neighborhoods far from conventional downtowns into a new type of urban center.

Flushing was organized as a Dutch township in 1645, but it only began to take on an urban character in the early 20th century when trains connected it and other early suburbs to midtown Manhattan. As those trains were supplanted by commuter rail reaching further out and later highways, many of the neighborhood's old residents left the neighborhood for less congested areas of Queens and Long Island. The neighborhood's close proximity to New York's two major airports enticed waves of immigrants to settle in the area over recent decades.

Some saw the immigrants as a symbol of decline in Flushing. But in the 1980s and '90s, developers and neighborhood leaders began to take a serious look at entering the local market. In 1991, the Sheraton LaGuardia East Hotel was built in the heart of downtown Flushing. Its developer, Heo-Peh Lee, saw the Sheraton's construction as a gamble: could a luxury hotel survive in an immigrant neighborhood? The hotel, however, turned out to be a huge success, catering to foreign visitors, airport travelers, and business conferences.

Since then, the neighborhood has boomed. In 1998, the city opened the \$22 million Flushing Library, a three-story glass structure more than three times the size of its predecessor. The busy library has been praised as one of the most innovative in New York City. The city also redesigned the Main Street subway station. Other hotels have followed in the Sheraton's wake. Perhaps most importantly, the city decided in 1998 to rezone downtown Flushing west of Main Street. The rezoning allows for large-scale projects, stirring further interest in development on the Flushing River. One company, TDC International Development & Construction Corp., has finished three large projects in western Flushing since the rezoning: Sanford Tower, an apartment building, the Prince Center, an office building, and the Flushing Mall.

## REMEMBERING THE OUTER BOROUGHES

In recent years, high land values and lack of space have complicated Manhattan development, leading developers to look for new opportunities in the outer boroughs. While most of the major shopping and retail is located in Manhattan and the suburbs, a substantial percentage of the people living in the metropolitan area actually reside in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx and often prefer to work and shop in their own neighborhoods.

In September 2003, the Center for an Urban Future, a nonpartisan think tank, released "Engine Failure," a report calling for investment in outer borough neighborhoods as part of a plan to strengthen the city's economy.

"We use so little of our geography for economic development," Jonathan Bowles, research director at the Center, says. "I am not trying to make an equity or a fairness argument. I am saying the other boroughs represent an opportunity for economic growth for holding onto businesses, for spurring entrepreneurship."

The city has already started to invest in developing urban centers outside of Manhattan. Over the last decade, the city has pumped millions into downtown Brooklyn and Jamaica, a Queens neighborhood located several miles southeast of downtown Flushing. Downtown Flushing may be next. At the end of 2002, the city Economic Development Corporation (EDC) hired Cooper Carry to study downtown Flushing and Willets Point, located on the opposite side of the Flushing River.

In October, Cooper Carry and other teams of consultants unveiled their recommendations for the area. The planners proposed turning the 1,143-space municipal parking lot at the center of downtown Flushing into several twelve- to sixteen-story buildings comprising housing, offices, and "cultural space" surrounding a public square.

"There's a huge pent-up demand for residential development and even commercial development in downtown Flushing," Wauford says.

Downtown Flushing already suffers from a lack of parking, so the consultants suggested the city build a 2,000-space parking lot underneath the complex to replace the lost spaces and serve new development. But with a high water table underneath, the spots would be expensive—\$30,000 apiece.

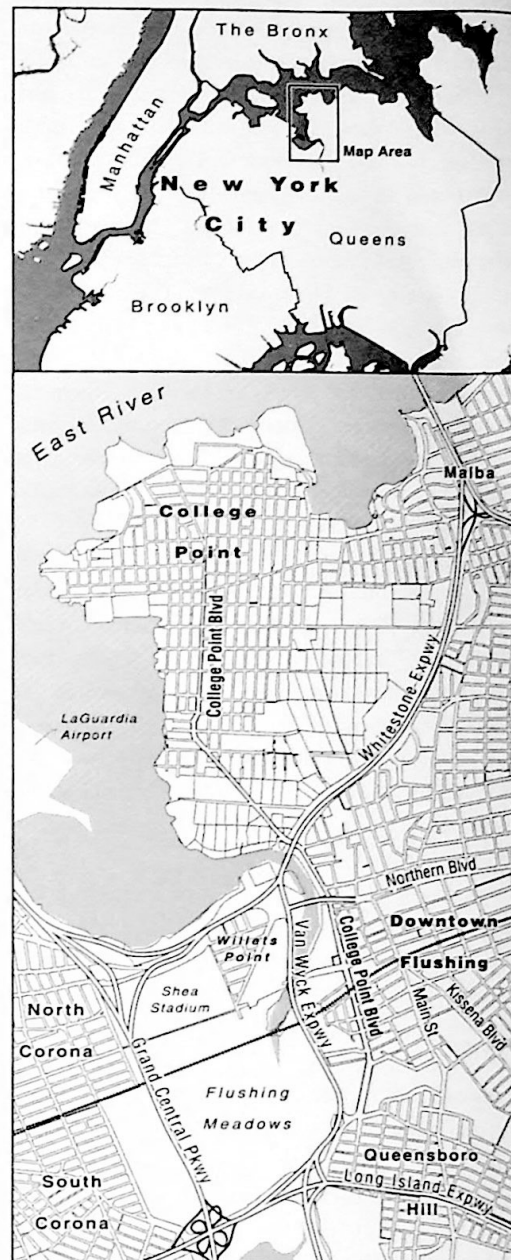


ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN GAMACHE

## WHERE EAST MEETS WEST

Downtown Flushing has been studied before, with similar recommendations. But unlike in previous studies, the city included Willets Point. Known as the Iron Triangle, Willets Point is the closest thing New York City has to the Wild West. It was built atop the Corona ash heaps, made famous by F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*. Shea Stadium was constructed on part of the land, and the remainder of Willets Point was given over to scrap yards, auto repair shops, and factories. Most of the triangle has no storm sewer system, and some potholes seem large enough to swallow a small car. Authorities keep a constant eye on Willets Point. In 2001, Carmine Agnello, the estranged son-in-law of the late mafia boss

Willels Point business, New York Scrap Inc. Many see Willels Point as key to Flushing's development. The developers who invested in land between College Point Boulevard and the eastern side of the Flushing River want to offer potential residents a view of something other than scrap yards across the river. Furthermore, Willels Point sits directly between downtown Flushing and Shea Stadium and the USTA National Tennis Center, the home of the U.S. Open. If this area were more attractive, local leaders reason, sports fans might venture through into downtown Flushing, bringing business to the neighborhood.

Patrick Phillips of Economics Research Associates, one of the consultants hired by Cooper Carry, noted that it would cost \$214.5 million to buy up the land, clean it of pollutants, and install sewers and roads. In order to make good on such an investment, the land would have to generate roughly \$11 million a year for the city, Phillips says. A theme park or a convention center could generate sufficient profit.

Local politicians—perhaps spurred by campaign contributions from these developers—generally echo their support for developing Willels Point, as do many community leaders. Julia Harrison, who represented Flushing in the City Council before John Liu replaced her in 2002, is one of the few who have spoken out against developing Willels Point. There are legitimate businesses in the Iron Triangle, Harrison points out.

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Fresh Kills landfill in 2001, the city allowed a waste transfer station to open in Willels Point. Over the last three years, the plant has increased the amount of waste it processes. The city will be unable to develop Willels Point fully until it resolves its sanitation woes, and no one is betting on that happening anytime soon.

#### AN ENGAGEMENT RING FROM THE CITY

In the meantime, some developments have stalled. The Muss Development Company, which owns the largest piece of property on the east side of the Flushing River, had planned to open Flushing Town Center, a 750,000-square-foot retail center with 1,200 residential units, in 2003. But problems cleaning up pollution on the site have slowed the plan.

TDC, which also owns property on the Flushing River, has not yet begun to develop the waterfront. Wellington Chen, senior vice president at TDC, says his company wants an "engagement ring" from the city—an assurance that the government has a long-term interest in Flushing.

"Every once in a while we get a study in this area, and then we get sidetracked. We need ongoing attention," he says. "Cooper Carry's Flushing Task Force under [New York City Deputy Mayor] Dan Doctoroff is a great start. It's at least focusing the magnifying glass on this area. But the dialogue needs to be maintained."

Despite ambitious plans, Flushing still faces challenges. It is a quick train ride to midtown Manhattan from Flushing, but traveling from Flushing to downtown Jamaica, the center of Queens, is a lot more difficult. While property values are high, major retailers still avoid Flushing's Main Street. One of the neighborhood's largest retail properties has sat empty for five years. The Flushing Library may be packed, but downtown Flushing does not have one English-language bookstore. And the parking dilemma looms large over the entire area.

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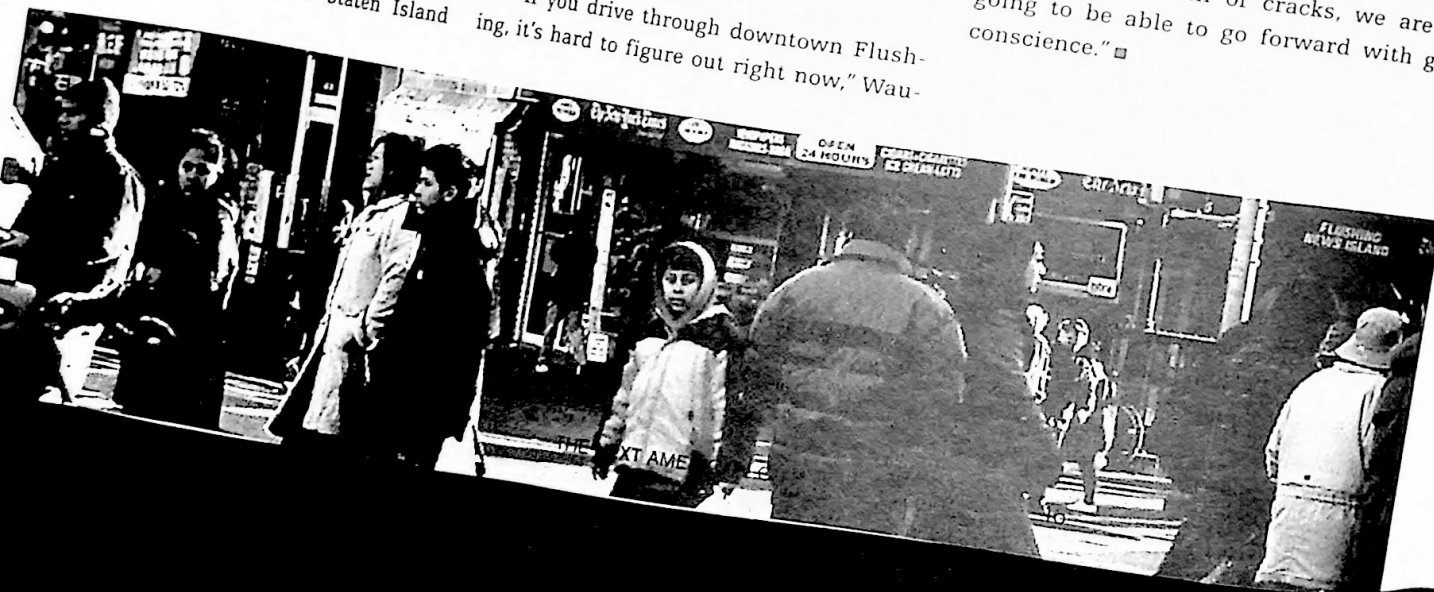
ford says. "For a retailer to look at town Flushing, it's a difficult sell."

In the end, the toughest sell may be to retailers or developers, but to the state, and federal governments. Success as Flushing may connect them more closely with the city centers and so increase business throughout the metropolitan region. But because such investment could potentially have the opposite effect, strengthening one borough at the expense of another, it's a gamble that city officials might not be willing to take. As always, public monies are being invested especially when funds are being invested to reinvigorate lower Manhattan. And while nobody likes to admit it, neighborhoods do compete against each other for funds. Downtown Brooklyn and Long Island City are just a stone's throw from Manhattan's busiest neighborhoods. Jamaica is not close to Manhattan, but trains link the area to the wealthier neighborhoods of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, making it a great place to work for Long Island commuters. In contrast, most of those who work in Flushing live in Queens, not Manhattan or Long Island.

Some worry that investing in places like Flushing will hurt lower Manhattan at a time when the business center needs a boost, while others argue that the development will benefit the city as a whole. Regardless of who is right, when matters come to a vote, most politicians will likely see the question as whether the interests of the people of Queens, a borough dominated by the working class and immigrants, suffice to merit investment from the city as a whole.

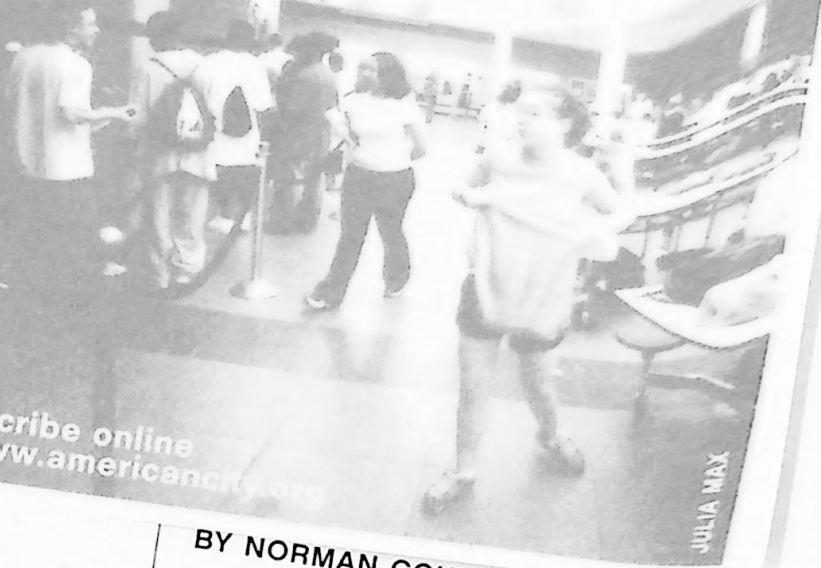
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BY NORMAN COUNCIL

## FAMILIES SS



PHOTO OF NORMAN COUNCIL COURTESY THE AUTHOR

AS A MEMBER OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF LANSDOWNE, Pennsylvania, a town of 11,044 people just outside of Philadelphia, I am on the front lines of the battle between inner ring communities and the sprawling exurbs. I believe that Lansdowne, and towns like it, must build racially diverse social and education systems in order to thrive.

Amerigis, the statistical analysis and mapping business started by former Minnesota State Senator Myron Orfield, recently analyzed America's major metropolitan areas to determine likely future trends for cities and suburban towns. They labeled Lansdowne and the six communities that comprise its regional school district as "At Risk" because of high levels of segregation. The local Regional Planning Commission says that my town and its immediate neighbors stand to lose 25 percent of our population and many of our jobs in the next twenty years.

One of the most significant problems—and the reason Amerigis designated our region as "at risk"—relates to the regional school district. Like Amerigis, I see schools as leading indicators of community health: when the perceived quality of a school declines, it often sets in motion a cycle of middle-class flight and disinvestment, a cycle that has begun in my community.

My school district presents a unique set of problems because it is not directly controlled by any of the municipalities it administers. With a separately incorporated board, separate taxing authority, and a complex set of competing parochial concerns within the board, the regional school district has the capacity to advance or thwart the revitalization efforts of each small municipality within its boundaries.

The town's schools are now fighting the perception that they provide an inadequate education, a belief shared

by many black members of the community and held almost universally by the white residents. Whites perceive an aura of failure around the school, thinking that the racial mix itself, when it has shifted to a black majority, has adversely affected the quality of education. In reality, predominately minority schools in Pennsylvania, as a rule, are underfunded. Consequently, physical plants deteriorate, classroom and administration technology are out of date, and curricula and faculty are poorly supported—all bolstering many whites' perceptions that majority-black schools don't work.

Both to promote the school district's positive features (of which it has many) and to correct real inadequacies in the school, my community has added a new tool to its revitalization effort: the local education fund (LEF). Local education funds have been used in Portland, Oregon, Chattanooga, Tennessee, Buffalo, New York, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Patterson, New Jersey, and Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, among others.

LEFs actively promote involvement in public education by all segments of their communities. They research best practices for public school operation and then facilitate the integration of those practices into local schools. In Massachusetts, the Boston Plan For Excellence In the Public Schools tests out promising approaches and shares findings with the district. Its design for reform, known as Whole-School Improvement, is now the district's core work plan to improve literacy and math instruction.

LEFs can also facilitate public dialogue about educational values and objectives and increase the community's commitment to public education. In Morristown, Tennessee, The Education Foundation developed a public engagement campaign entitled "SCHOOL: The History of American Public Education," which brought together parents, teachers,

John Gotti, pleaded guilty to extortion, racketeering, and arson in connection with his Willets Point business, New York Scrap Inc.

Many see Willets Point as key to Flushing's development. The developers who invested in land between College Point Boulevard and the eastern side of the Flushing River want to offer potential residents a view of something other than scrap yards across the river. Furthermore, Willets Point sits directly between downtown Flushing and Shea Stadium and the USTA National Tennis Center, the home of the U.S. Open. If this area were more attractive, local leaders reason, sports fans might venture through into downtown Flushing, bringing business to the neighborhood.

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## DRAWING YOUNG FAMILIES BACK TO THE 'BURBS THEY GREW UP IN

BY NORMAN COUNCIL



PHOTO OF NORMAN COUNCIL COURTESY THE AUTHOR

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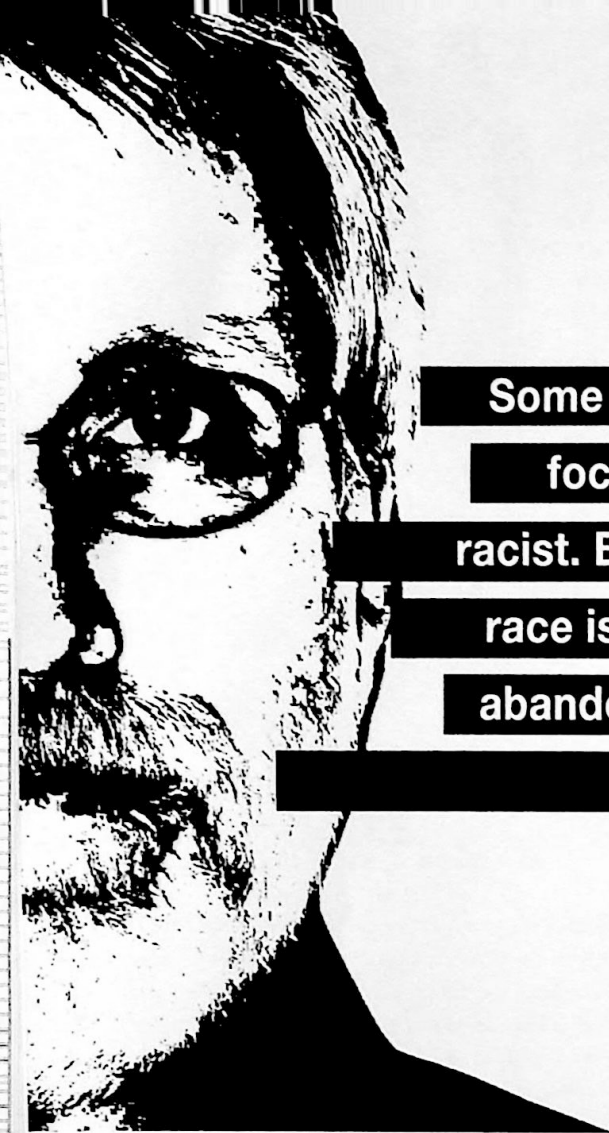
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school administrators, students, civic leaders, policy makers, and members of local organizations to discuss the challenges and opportunities of their public schools.

Finally, and most importantly, LEFs generate resources for public education by pursuing and managing investments from government, businesses, and philanthropic organizations. For instance, in response to funding cutbacks, the Portland LEF organized "The Campaign for Our Schools," which raised \$10.6 million from thousands of community members to bring back over 200 teachers that had been cut from the rolls. In Boston, the LEF has raised more than \$60 million since 1996 to fund reform work.

My regional LEF, called All Students Achieving, is in the early stages of development. Our first task will be to bring stakeholders in the school district together and develop a consensus on the needs of the school district and on what resources or programs must be developed to address those needs. The LEF will then drum up support among the larger populace for these programs.

In the broadest sense, the LEF must develop a strategy for making the regional school district competitive with those in the exurbs to which white (and other) middle- and upper-middle-class families are relocating. The goal is not to force all whites who are leaving back to the area schools, or to return to the days when Lansdowne was 95

percent white—I only wish to reach those who enjoy living in a diverse community. Still, segregated schools hurt our town's economic competitiveness, and segregation cannot be reversed if reform and revitalization efforts only focus on making the community more supportive of the poor or minority population.

Some people may criticize any explicit focus on retaining white families as racist.

But it is silly of us to pretend that race is not the major factor driving the abandonment of urban and many inner ring suburban communities. As a member of government in my town I have had protracted discussions with citizens who were preparing to leave about the importance of staying and helping to fix what is wrong. In the end these discussions fall on deaf ears because the urge to leave before the town becomes even further segregated outweighs any altruistic impulse that I could ignite.

Any effort to preserve my own and other inner ring suburbs must include a process to understand and address the reasons that white families are fleeing. It must also include initiatives to get them to stay and return. There are many possible approaches, but I believe that any successful initiative must include making the schools competitive with those in the exurbs. ■





THE GREAT CREATIVE CLASS DEBATE CONTINUES

## THE PEABODY INSTITUTE FORUM

TRANSCRIBED BY ELIZABETH EVITTS; INTRODUCTION BY ADAM GORDON

ON APRIL 23, TWO HUNDRED LEADERS FROM BALTIMORE'S arts and civic communities gathered in the newly renovated Peabody Institute for a panel discussion of the role of arts in urban development. The focus of the day was twofold. First, participants considered how to create and sustain strong non-profit institutions, following the model of George Peabody, a mid-19th century financier who was America's first great philanthropist. Peabody not only founded the Peabody Institute but also successfully challenged his friends to start the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Johns Hopkins University, and Walters Art Museum. Second, participants discussed how Baltimore could leverage its cultural strengths to build a broader economic development strategy that would enable it to compete successfully in the 21st century. The aim of the event was to start a conversation between a range of different sectors—public, private, non-profit—and institutions on both of these questions that would continue over the coming months and years.

Dr. William Brody, President of Johns Hopkins University, started the day by introducing Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York, a graduate of Johns Hopkins and a primary supporter of the \$26 million Peabody renovations. Then, Adam Gordon, Editor-in-chief of *The Next American City*, introduced and moderated a panel of local and national leaders on arts and economic development. To close, Mayor Martin O'Malley of Baltimore introduced his new "Creative Baltimore" plan, and audience members asked questions of O'Malley and the panel.

The below are selected excerpts of the event; the full transcript is available online at [www.americancity.org](http://www.americancity.org). Thanks to Peabody Director Robert Sirota, Cathy Cohen, Elizabeth Evitts, Joyce Ritchie, and the rest of the staff

at the Peabody Institute for their hard work to make this panel possible.

**MAYOR MICHAEL BLOOMBERG:** We're here to consider the role of arts in urban revitalization. Probably can't have a better example of that than the Peabody campus. It's right in the middle of Baltimore. It's not quite as famous as Camden Yards, but it is getting there.

Arts and arts organizations seriously are a vital component of a city's cultural life, particularly for the diverse communities that live there. They are also magnets for people that come from outside: tourists, of course, but also talented and ambitious dreamers.

Art defines our lives. Art pumps us up and makes us complete and gives us something to put a smile on our faces about, as well as gets the brain cells to keep going. When you talk about the pulse of the city, in many ways you really are talking about the artists that live there and the artists that work there. Art is one of the ways in which ethnic communities express themselves. Not everybody has had the kind of education that lets them write well. There are people who just instinctively have the ability to communicate in other ways. I think that great cities recognize this.

Art is about economics as well. I don't think there's any question why New York City's tourism is the way it is. I was with a very well known clothes designer last night at dinner, and he had a friend coming to town who said, "Can you get me a hotel room?" He said both he and his secretary dialed for an hour before they finally found one room. New York City is full, and the reason the hotels are full, the reason the tourists come there, is because they want to see the museums, the performing arts centers—the tiny museums and not just the big ones. Art brings in millions and

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—Mayor Michael Bloomberg

millions of dollars to any city. It transforms whole neighborhoods.

One of the great challenges we have is to bring artists into communities that are down on their heels and have the artists transform the communities—and that works—but as Mayor O'Malley knows, the great challenge is how do you keep it so the artists are able to live there as these neighborhoods become magnets and more and more people want to move in and drive the starving artists out. There's no easy answer to that. What is clear is that culture changes neighborhoods, and that all of these things take money to do. There's no question the arts have to be supported. They have to be supported by private philanthropy as well as public philanthropy. Public philanthropy is great, but it's private philanthropy that



really lets people be totally creative. If we didn't have private philanthropy we'd be back in the old masters days. We certainly never would have had something as blasphemous as impressionism. Medicine—the same thing is true: you would never try anything new because the public's money can't do that.

I think the stakes are very high. If you falter in your community or in your city and you walk away from the arts, it can be generations before you can turn that around. Once it becomes unfashionable to go someplace it stays unfashionable for a long time. It is also a very competitive world. Mayor O'Malley has got to get people to move here; Mayor Bloomberg's got to get people to move

to New York. People have choices today that they never had before.

**ADAM GORDON:** Thanks to Mayor Bloomberg for that wonderful talk.

I am a recovering Baltimorean. Well, I only lived here for three years, which is about twenty or so years short of what it takes to actually call yourself a Baltimorean. I found living here both exhilarating and frustrating. Exhilarating—because of the wonderful neighborhoods with great local institutions like Pete's Grille and the Cross Street Market, the ability to live in a smaller city but still have access to New York and Washington, and the phenomenal cultural opportunities. Frustrating—because of the racial divisions, neighborhood divisions, and divisions between the business, non-profit, and government communities. My conclusion was that those "Greatest City in America" benches were not a stretch, in terms of Baltimore's potential, but a real stretch in terms of Baltimore's reality.

Bob, you've just put \$26.8 million into Mt. Vernon [Baltimore's main cultural district, just north of downtown] and into the Peabody. What are you going to do to leverage that investment and make it into a prime force in bringing economic development to Baltimore?

**DR. ROBERT SIROTA, President of the Peabody Institute:** I want to read some figures to you because I think we need to understand that capital investment is a beginning, but the kind of economic development that the arts bring to great cities like Baltimore is no longer peripheral. It's absolutely central to the economic growth and health of the city. Capital investment in downtown Baltimore in 2003 was \$2.5 billion with approximately 110 projects in various stag-

es. The largest portion of this, 35 percent, was driven by education and cultural institutions.

Since 1997, some 1,150 new housing units were created downtown—[many] in converted office buildings, like The Standard—and [they] are leasing for higher than anticipated rents to what we might call Creative Class types.

Non-profit employment in Maryland has grown three times faster than for-profit employment in the last ten years. In 2003 alone, non-profits employed more than 80,000 people and paid them some \$3,245,000,000 dollars. This accounts for



over 21 percent of city employment. Last year employment on the whole dropped 2.78 percent in Baltimore. Non-profit employment in Baltimore rose 8.5 percent.

The non-profit sector has grown tremendously and has grown extraordinarily in relation to the entire economy. We are no longer a kind of a frill. We are central to the growth of the economy of this great city. We need to look at ways that we can leverage that. We need to find ways in which non-profits are encouraged to come to this city and move into this city, both big and small, in the same way one would encourage large corporations to come in or banking firms or anything else.

**GORDON:** A lot of people sometimes say that Baltimore is the kind of city where it's hard to get people from different sectors to communicate. How do you get all the sectors together to coordinate a strategy for the economic development of the city?

**JAY BRODIE, President of the Baltimore Development Corporation:** I'm a very down-to-Earth architect/planner person, so I tend to think the answer in part lies in finding mutually interesting and challenging physical developments around which people can work. I'll give you some examples. Seven years ago, I sat down with Bob Sirota, Gary Vikan [of the Walters Art Museum], Dennis Fiori [of the Maryland Historical Society], and Connie Caplan [of The Time Group] and talked about coming out from the fortresses



of the 1960s, which they had each inherited, and trying to see what physical improvements could be made in the Mt. Vernon area that would send a different message to the public.

The work has not only resulted in the kind of individual physical improvements that you see here, but other things that are lessons to the future: streetscapes, sidewalks that you don't trip over and that could be attractive, places where you can sit. So we haven't surrendered as we did for a while in the '60s [when we said] we're not doing bus shelters because homeless people might inhabit them. That's giving up to our worst tendencies rather than playing to our best tendencies. We should be well beyond that.

And then there's one bigger idea. And this is the New Testament that I'm sure you're all familiar with, Richard Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class*. There's an Old Testament, a gentleman who's not read much anymore, but had something wonderful to say along these lines. His name was Lewis Mumford. I'm going to give you a quote to close: "The city is a fact in nature, like a cave, a run of mackerel or an ant heap. But it is also... man's greatest work of art." That's something to which we could aspire.

**GORDON:** Where should Baltimore be looking to for models? Which cities are doing the best job of using the arts as an economic driver?

**ELLEN LOVELL**, *President of Marlboro College and former director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities in the Clinton Administration:* Well first I want to comment that from what I've seen and heard, I think Baltimore is just ahead of the curve.

In 2000, the New England Council—think of that as a regional chamber of commerce—and the New England Foundation for the Arts published the first comprehensive study on the creative sector, conducted by a very independent and skeptical economic development firm. It wasn't just people looking for things they wanted to prove.

The findings: the creative cluster employs 3.5 percent of the workforce in New England... That's more than software, for which New England's very well-known, and more than medical technology. The creative sector is growing faster at 14 percent than the rest of the economy at 8 percent. And the

creative sector brings in outside revenues: \$6.6 billion in cultural tourism alone.

Out of all this came a blueprint for action. It's being pushed now by their Creative Economy Council, which is sponsored by the Boston Branch of the Federal Reserve. That's some clout.

What's most important aside from the action steps that are coming out of it, I think, is this broad definition of the sector. Thinking like a sector has to come before changing policies that then encourage the creative sector, followed by investment to support the sector.

**GORDON:** How do all [large cultural institutions and small neighborhood arts groups] fit together into a coordinated arts strategy for the city?

**RANDI VEGA**, *Director of Cultural Affairs in the Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts:* Nobody could doubt the effect that Baltimore Clayworks is having in their community of Mount Washington and at Mondawmin Mall. Nobody could question the effect that Theatre Project is having on their community and on the city as a whole. Baltimore is made up of these neighborhoods where there are arts organizations that are working everyday with the folks who actually make up the people in Baltimore.

We need to bring together the larger institutions—the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Walters, Peabody, the institutions that are famous, that people know about—with our smaller organizations to find out how they can be helpful to each other. How can the Peabody reach into the community through these smaller organizations? How can the resources that the Peabody has be used in the community by the smaller active organizations on the ground?

The arts are making the communities healthier, better places for people to live. That's what attracts people into Baltimore. Mayor Bloomberg mentioned gentrification, which is something that people in the neighborhoods are concerned about. If all these rich people move back into Baltimore, where am I going to go? Tom Wilcox said this morning that we should be so lucky to have that problem. But there's an answer to that. If we work together we can find that answer so that our artists can live side by side with neighborhood people and new people coming into the communities.

**SIROTA:** I think the vibrancy of this city and the vibrancy of any city is absolutely dependent upon the role that the independent artists and the neighborhood organizations play. Peabody has for many years been susceptible to charges of elitism, but that was not George Peabody's original charge. It was to create an institution where all of the people of Baltimore were served, and all were welcome, and they [all] were participants in this idea of civitas, this idea of a great city.

The original picture of George Peabody inaugurating in 1866 the first building at Peabody includes a mob of 10,000 school children. They emptied the schools to experience this. We lost our way as institutions years ago, and we need your help in finding it back. We don't want to be considered something else; we want to be part of that process. We want to participate in the political and social fabric of the city.

**GORDON:** The competition for people and businesses on the East Coast is fierce. Is it possible for Baltimore to compete in this environment and attract the businesses and people it needs to break the cycle of poverty and violence?



RANDI VEGA  
& TOM WILCOX

**TOM WILCOX**, *President of the Baltimore Community Foundation:* The answer to me is very clear. That's already started. Of late, scores are up, graduation rates are up, dropout rates are down. People are staying in schools, and innovation is occurring in schools. We have more and more people coming to Baltimore through the Collegetown Network because it's got so much to offer. The opportunity for the young, the opportunity for the many that Baltimore represents has begun.

We are rapidly becoming a region of choice and a region of opportunity. We have to take that to scale. I would posit that the tipping point is occurring this week, it's occurring this year. I was born in and grew up in the Big Apple, I lived in Boston and San Francisco and Florence and Switzerland, and I have not found a more vital place than Baltimore. The only people who don't believe it are Baltimoreans as far as I can see.

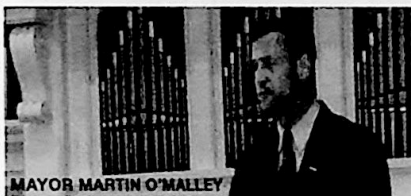
**GORDON:** Mayor Martin O'Malley of course needs no introduction to this audience, but perhaps you'll forgive me, Bob, for being the second speaker today to mention an Irish rock band [O'Malley's March, a Celtic rock band headed by the Mayor] in this great hall of classical music.

**SIROTA:** We are not elitist here!

**GORDON:** I think the enthusiasm that I've seen the Mayor demonstrate on guitar at various concerts is very much a reflection of his greater enthusiasm for the city of Baltimore.

**MAYOR O'MALLEY:** Thank you very much. C'mon admit it. You all wanted to be warm in your applause just so I wouldn't feel like you love me less than you love Bloomberg.

We suffer from I think a pathological modesty. Only in Baltimore would you be leading the nation in the rate of reduction of violent crime four years in a row. Your test scores are going up every year in your public schools with your first and second graders going above the national average in reading and in math for the first time in 30 years. Average sales price of your homes has gone from \$63,000 to \$123,000. You are sitting in one of the most beautiful squares that any city could possibly have, across from the largest bequest of private art that was ever given to any people in any city in America. And we're all asking ourselves, "What's wrong with Baltimore?"



We are simmering with creativity. Our medical research institutions are world-renowned. In your very city could come the cure for diseases that threaten right now to wipe out an entire continent. That, too, is art. That, too, is creativity. We make our city welcoming not with stadiums or by subsidizing corporate relocations; in fact we are making a pretty conscious move away from that.

What we are trying to do is to invest in those amenities of place that attract creative people. Those amenities of place that are unique to Baltimore, that create the climate that will allow the Peabody to attract the sort of students you want.

Over the years we've been doing a number of things [to support the arts]. We raised

over \$1.3 million and put music programs back into 54 of our schools. No accident that the grades are going up when the music and the arts are returning to class.

We've committed to increasing the grants to small community arts organizations; not by as much as we want, but we are increasing it. We're recognizing that stable arts organizations can be anchors to communities. I've always believed that. I'm a frustrated artist myself. You talk about being a recovering lawyer, but at heart, I'm a mediocre folk singer in a rock band.

There is still an enormous amount of potential that has to be tapped. Creative Baltimore is an effort that we're spearheading to try to reach out and to try to categorize, catalog, better convene, better connect, and better leverage all of the various arts institutions... Here are some of the ideas that we're pushing forward.

1. We want to create an outdoor Baltimore, if you will. Not only improving and expanding green spaces, but linking them across neighborhoods, promoting them. How many of you have even been to the Gwynns Falls Trail? How many of you went to the trout release this weekend in Leakin Park? I did that one.

2. Creating an up-to-date Baltimore as a post-industrial city. There are a lot of things that we can do with regard to planning, zoning, and other classifications to bring them closer to current needs and trends.

3. We need to create a post-collegiate Baltimore, if you will. We need to do a better job of lending ourselves to attracting and retaining more of our college students and letting them know what's here. There are a lot of kids who come here to college for four years, and yet they never truly experience Baltimore.

Entrepreneurial Baltimore is also a creative Baltimore. *Entrepreneur Magazine* moved our city in one year's time from 30th to 12th because of the new jobs being created by these small firms. Not just being created, but surviving beyond five years and actually growing. That's the engine, I believe, that we are fast becoming as a city. Two-thirds of all new jobs in America are created by small business. We can become that destination.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I frequently go past the juvenile detention center between places in town, and it distresses me enormously to see the size of that building. How do we get

[incarcerated youths] to feel the joy of music and the arts to replace the pain that they are suffering through their whole lives?



**SIROTA:** The big challenge in this city is that a lot of the social service safety net available to people has been replaced by the penal system. I think I can speak for a lot of the major cultural institutions here that we stand ready to do our part in reforming the educational system not just for those students who are mainstream. Some of our students do go into the jails and work in the jails already, but we need a structure around a lot of these small acts of personal dedication.

**VEGA:** I just wanted to make the point that the arts cannot cure all social ills. But I think we all recognize that the arts can make a difference and in many cases can make a big difference. That's where we need to concentrate our efforts.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** The city's 60 percent African-American, and this room is virtually all white. I've watched for decades the collapse of African-American cultural organization after cultural organization—being starved for resources while resources pour into Mount Vernon and into white institutions. I would just like to know how the panel thinks we can shift the lion's share of wealth and control into the African-American community so we never have an almost all-white room like this again.

**WILCOX:** Baltimore does need, it's quite clear to me, some long and hard discussions on race. Who better to initiate that conversation than people from the creative class right here? ■



# TECHNOLOGY & CITIES

For the past century, most major technological changes affecting cities have directly and predictably impacted the way that we use space—from alternating current power that allowed houses to be flung out further across the landscape to widespread availability of cars and development of highways facilitating edge cities. The modern technology frontier—new forms of network communication, computing, and biotechnology—does not have such clearly discernable spatial effects. But a series of authors argue here that these technologies will indeed change the very fabric of urban and suburban life and space, in surprising ways.

HUB (n.) 1. The center part of a wheel, fan, propeller, or engine.  
2. A center of activity or interest; a focal point.

# HUB CITY

*Can Chicago capture the new economy  
the old-fashioned way?*

Recently, the City of Chicago undertook a year-long "branding study" of Chicago's role in the world marketplace. Study participants, more than eighty corporate and media executives, were asked who Chicago would be if it were a person. The two most popular answers were Tom Hanks and Joe Montana, which, when crunched through a sophistic equation, correlated to a "famous" person who was "mainstream but slightly bland... broad shouldered, but would need some time in the gym."

The study didn't tell Chicagoans anything they didn't already know. Chicago belongs to the pantheon of hardcore capitalist business and transit centers that drive the world economy: Hong Kong, Singapore, Frankfurt, Osaka, Milan. Each of these cities rose to prominence on equal parts geographic location and direct relationship to larger cosmopolitan centers such as New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, and Rome. While the second-tier global cities labor in the shadows of their larger siblings, they provide the infrastructure and raw materials that make the larger cities work.

For Chicago, its advantages were initially natural, as the main water and, later, rail hub for goods

coming to and from the western frontier—though, as historian William Cronon points out in his epic *Nature's Metropolis*, Toledo or St. Louis could have filled that bill just as well if not for the city's far-sighted move to raise the capital to open the Illinois-Michigan Canal in 1848. When highways replaced railroads as the primary mode of ground travel, the U.S. interstates all converged just west of the city. As commercial aviation grew into a global enterprise, Chicago laid claim to the world's busiest airport. When the information age came to the fore, Chicago's leaders took deliberate steps to make sure that Chicago would retain its hub function. In an industry in which location, supposedly, does not matter, Chicago's leaders found ways to make geography work for them—and began, long before the boom of the late '90s, to stake its claim for a particular niche in the tech industry.

"The Internet means nothing without the communications networks to support it," says Dan Lyne, Director of Tech Development for World Business Chicago. "Pound for pound, Chicago boasts the most advanced wired or unwired digital infrastructure of any single metro in the United States ... if not the world." Nobody talks about Chicago as a tech city.

by Charles Shaw

photos by  
Zachary J. Paradis



But the advanced networking systems being developed there—though less sexy than the new hardware, software, and web applications being developed in Silicon Valley and Silicon Alley—are helping drive a revolution in Chicago's economy. With a rate of change from manufacturing to service jobs that outpaces even New York, Chicago is playing a critical, if unheralded, role in the new economy—a role paying dividends like a 38 percent annual growth rate in downtown living and a projected increase of 1.6 million square feet of office space within the downtown Loop for each of the next twenty years.

#### THE WORK OF CHICAGO'S INNOVATORS

Joe Mambretti sits in the ground floor conference room of a recently constructed, low-rise office building in downtown Evanston, Illinois, just north of Chicago. He is staring

out the window at building cranes creaking and swinging across the partially poured concrete apartment towers that have begun to litter the west side of this once teetotaling college town. Mambretti is the Director of the International Center for Advanced Internet Research, based at Northwestern University, and he looks like he doesn't often leave his office. His salt and cinnamon hair is mussed, and he twirls a pen in his hand, smiling in an uninterrupted manner that says, my boy, you have no idea what is waiting for you right around the corner.

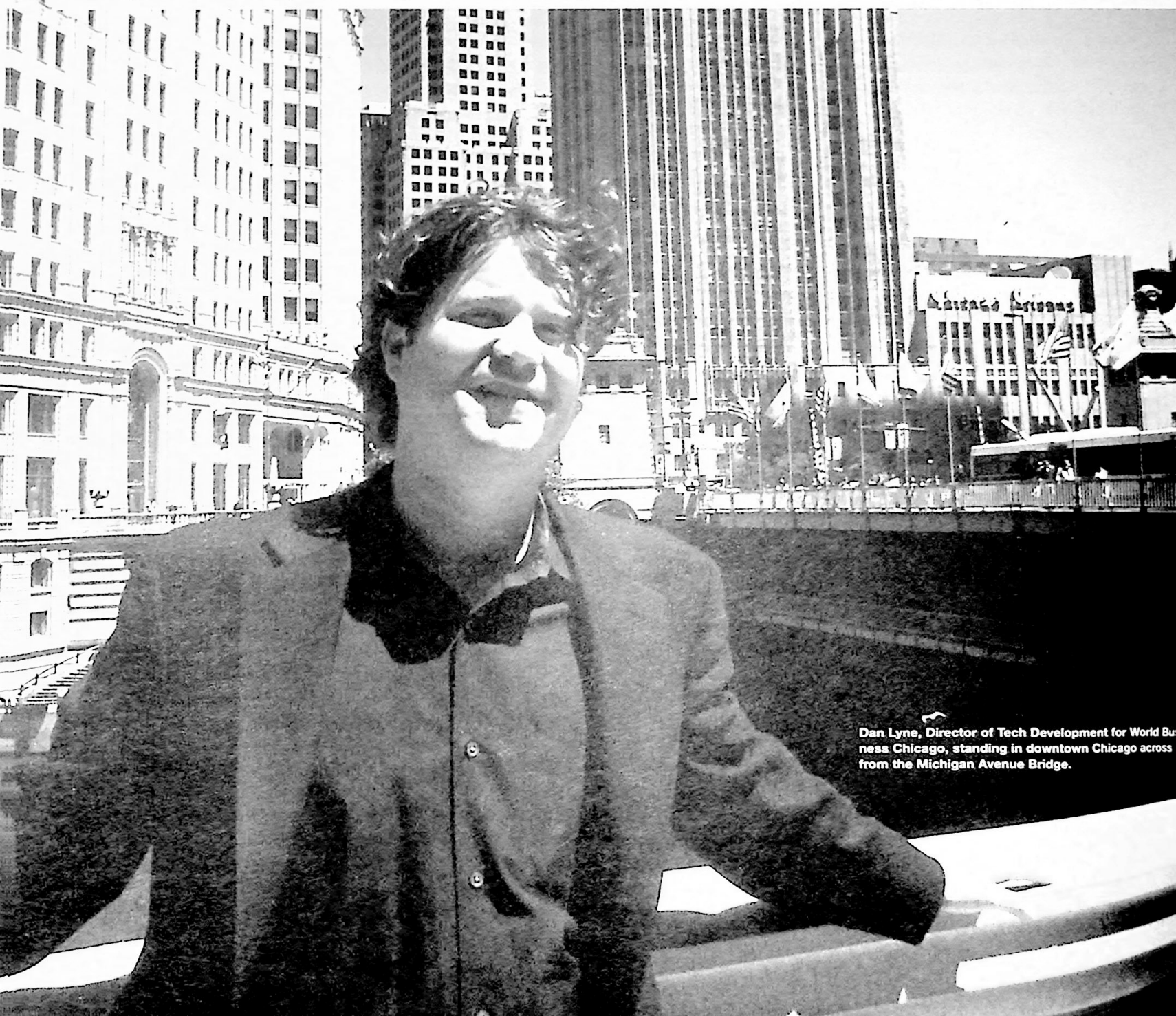
"Dan Lyne sent you here to talk about why Chicago is the center of the advanced networking universe, and why no one but the three of us knows about it," he says—begrudgingly accepting the current state of affairs but delighted that I have shown

interest. "What do you know about large-scale network infrastructures?"

"Absolutely nothing," I reply.

He nods, with no discernible decrease in delight. Apparently, this is not an uncommon answer. "It helps to know, so take a look at this."

On the conference table sits a roughly 4'x2' super-HDTV set channeling the future of the Internet. It's only a prototype, but it's jaw-dropping. The screen has substantially higher resolution and overall quality than those available today. The frame within the screen resembles a webpage but with multiple video streams and data fields. In one corner CNN is rebroadcasting footage of the Howard Dean meltdown in Iowa. To the bottom, a smaller video window shows an Indian cricket match. Uttering the word "search" reveals a small window, which, when "fish"



Dan Lyne, Director of Tech Development for World Business Chicago, standing in downtown Chicago across from the Michigan Avenue Bridge.



is entered, displays a page of thumbnail images. Each represents a video clip from somewhere in the world that mentions the word "fish."

As Mambretti surfs the world's cable networks in a manner that today can be done only by satellite, he explains to me that worldwide Internet traffic is doubling every year. Massive global applications like 3-D design imaging and Computer Assisted Design networks consume a much larger chunk of bandwidth than DSL, digital cable, or even business and government networks. These applications, employed by auto manufacturers and architects, engineers and geneticists, and bio and nanotechnologists, require a medium that can transport terabytes of data. Mambretti and his colleagues' solution is to use light.

Distilling astrophysics and broadcast engineering into one workable concept, Mambretti and his partners are developing "lightpaths," known as photonic networks, which will travel across optical fiber lines bundled in thousands of strands. To that end, Mambretti and a select coalition of Illinois' technical and research communities, including the International Center for Advanced Internet Research, Northwestern, the University of Illinois-Chicago, Fermi Labs, Argonne National Laboratory, the National Center for Superconducting Applications, and the University of Chicago, have already begun to construct the world's largest, fastest, and most advanced information networks—and hardly anyone knows about it.

For the next half-hour I am led on a

mind-bending multimedia presentation of the various National Science Foundation-funded global super-networks Mambretti has helped build, starting with the Startup network hub (<http://www.startup.net>), created in 1997, and continuing with StarLight, the next generation network developed in 2002.

Most recently, the Global Ring Network for Advanced Application Development (GLORIAD) provides a cutting-edge tool for researchers around the world to address vital scientific issues like joint responses to natural and manmade disasters, safeguards for nuclear materials, better understanding of the human genome, joint exploration of space, monitoring of seismic events, and environmental studies and simulations. GLORIAD begins in Chicago at the StarLight facility, managed by the University of Illinois at Chicago and Northwestern University. The network's lines cross the Atlantic Ocean to the NetherLight facility in Amsterdam, continue to Moscow, then to the Russian science city of Novosibirsk, and across Siberia to the Chinese border at Zabajkal'sk. After crossing the border to Manzhouli, the network continues to Beijing, then Hong Kong, then crosses the Pacific Ocean to complete the ring in Chicago. From the StarLight hub, other networks in Chicago soon will be able to connect to GLORIAD.

On a daily basis, Mambretti and his colleagues deal with concepts that are, pardon the pun, light years ahead of public comprehension. Yet he predicts that the capacity for data transfer embodied in GLORIAD, the video search capacities on a HDTV screen, and other technologies will be com-

monplace in the home in the near future. Five years from now, Googling will mean accessing every piece of media in the world, digitized and cross-referenced to be available through one portal with a single command. Say you are working intently on dinner in your kitchen, thinking about having fish, sea bass in particular, and you want a unique recipe. You ask your screen to search for "sea bass," "dinner recipes," and "2009," and it retrieves a list of cooking programs aired anywhere in the world during 2009 that featured sea bass. You can then narrow your search to English-speaking programs or even find the exact second at which a specific word is uttered, say, "cilantro." And you can bet that, somewhere in the mix, the information you receive will come through Chicago.

#### THE PLANETARY HUB OF THE FUTURE

"I love the Hub metaphor for Chicago, but most of our historical hub distinctions were designated by geography," Mambretti says. "This is the one that was not. These types of people and institutions do not happen passively. Our research community had to work very hard to create them. We have put in the investment and built the infrastructure while other cities are still asking themselves how they can attract the tech community. What we have done here in Chicago, the infrastructure we have built, will be the basis of the digital economy of the future. It was, of many examples, one of the primary reasons Boeing chose to relocate here."

Still, geography had quite a bit to do with it, as did Chicago's historical role as Hub City. As Dan Lyne mentioned, Chicago





# HOME OFFICE SPACE

*Freed from their cubicles,*

*where will commuters go instead?*

*by Nancy Robinson photos by Daniel Willner*



Sometimes it does take a rocket scientist to get things done. Former rocket scientist Jack Nilles, President of JALA International, Inc. and author of *Managing Telework*, is internationally known as the father of telecommuting. He recalls the moment the potential of remote work dawned on him: "Part of my job was trying to apply some of this nifty technology to the real world, and I happened to be in Santa Barbara ... talking to one of the regional planners there. He looked up at me and said, 'If you guys can put a man on the moon, why can't you do something about traffic?' I thought, why not?"

Nilles discovered that the primary source of roadway congestion was from people traveling between work and home. He then examined what people actually did upon arriving at work and discovered that the labor force spent much of its day on the telephone. To Nilles, this seemed a waste of time. Why not cut out the middleman and connect workers directly to their work without the commute? Of that revela-

tion, the terms "telecommuting" and "telework" were born.

Telecommuting had already existed in some form since 1877, when a Boston bank president required a work-at-home arrangement to care for his bedridden wife and had a direct telephone line to his office installed. With the aid of in-home personal computers, Internet connections, cellular telephones, and fax machines, telecommuting has expanded far beyond what was possible with just telephones and mail service. According to a March 2002 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics survey, one in seven American workers worked at home once per week during 2001. Access Markets International Partners, a New York based telecom and internet research group, predicts that more than half of the U.S. workforce (approximately 67 million people) will telework in some form by 2006, bringing this alternative work option into the mainstream.

It turns out telecommuting has a modest effect on traffic, but it may have far more profound effects on American cities and

suburbs. By disassociating housing choices from work locations, telecommuting could fundamentally change the structure of communities. But different telework experts see telecommuting's effects differently—some as a driver of sprawl, some as a shaper of a new kind of balanced, urban lifestyle.

## THE MARKET FOR TELECOMMUTING

The traffic problem that Nilles first identified continues to worsen. The Texas Transportation Institute estimates that commuters spend an average of 27 hours stuck in traffic each year, a number that continues to increase. But for some, telecommuting has actually, as Nilles envisioned, reduced commuting time. It has reduced driving-related stress, given workers more flexibility in balancing life and work, and even enabled businesses to keep going during otherwise disruptive weather events like snowstorms. It has also produced substantial non-transportation-related benefits in enticing workers, enhancing productivity, and improving morale. A 1999 Telework America survey dis-



covered that companies in which employees telework can save up to \$10,000 per year in reduced absenteeism and retention costs.

Still, according to Professor Patricia L. Mokhtarian, who directs the Telecommunications and Travel Behavior Research Program at the University of California, Davis's Institute of Transportation Studies, telecommuting is not for everyone. "Many people just don't have the drive to telecommute," she says. "The natural level of telecommuting in the workforce is relatively modest. The real barrier is usually something institutional or social or psychological."

Some teleworkers miss the "water cooler"—the personal connection with co-workers—as well as a certain level of comfort from face-time with their managers. Managerial attitudes toward telework are slow to change because they fear the unmanageability of unseen workers. Moreover, there are multitudes of jobs that simply cannot be done remotely.

"Opportunity for people to work in different locations has not grown to where we hoped," says John Niles, President of Global Telematics in Seattle. Niles points out that although technology now allows us to work in many more places, telework has not dispersed central offices. "We have people that work together in new ways, but a lot of the old ways have remained resilient. It has created diversity in organizational form."

Mokhtarian suggests that many people with some willingness to telecommute would take the plunge if there were "dramatic increases in the cost of traveling."

Still, Mokhtarian maintains that commuting itself will never become obsolete, and that telework plays only a minor role in solving transportation problems. "I

think [telework] is making quality of life better for the people who can do it, and want to do it... so I think it makes sense to promote it,"

Mokhtarian says. "I just think we should be pretty clearheaded about its role in solving transportation problems. That role is pretty modest and probably only detectable side-by-side with packages of other solutions."

#### **SPRAWL DRIVER OR URBAN OPPORTUNITY?**

Some believe that telecommuting, by liberating telecommuters from having to think about traffic when buying a house, encourages suburban and rural sprawl that is environmentally destructive and harmful to older cities. They point to the 2000 Census, which showed a six percent growth in rural areas, partly due to telecommuters and to companies who relocate in order to save money. Of course, not everyone thinks that such sprawl is entirely bad; many argue that it provides lower-cost alternatives to crime-ridden, over-populated, and poorly serviced urban centers.

Mokhtarian does not believe telework is affecting sprawl one way or another. "Are they telecommuting [to avoid] that already long commute ... or do they start to telecommute and then get that bright idea of moving far away to get the high-amenity location? Studies seem to pretty firmly suggest that it's the former—that they're already moving for other reasons." In that case, telecommuting is an after-effect of sprawl, as Mokhtarian puts it, "a facilitator, not the driver."

Some older cities and planned communities are even trying to use telecommuting to stem the tide of out-migration and attract new residents.

Ed Risse, a Virginia-based urban planner, has found success promoting strategies to reshape communities through telecommuting. "In the Washington-Baltimore New Urban Region there are over 50,000 citizens who live and work in places we planned, designed, implemented, and managed. In each one we tried to find ways to improve the design and function by moving work to people rather than people to work."

Walter Siembab, a developer and entrepreneur looking for ways to reduce soci-

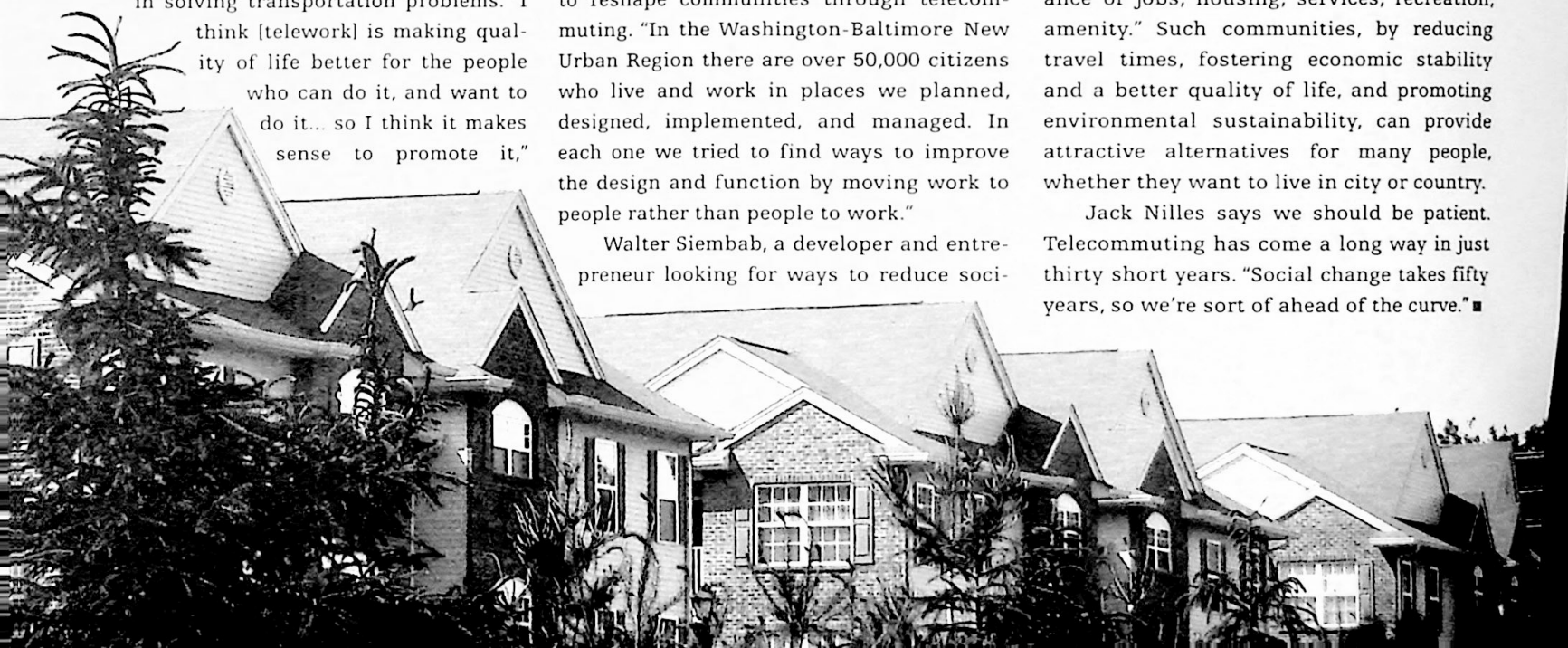
ety's dependence on oil, among them telecommuting, has participated in several innovative community projects to use telecommuting-friendliness as a community amenity. These projects are often developed in conjunction with transit systems in order to further reduce need for automobiles and provide an attractive urban living option.

In Compton, California, Siembab's firm, along with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the City of Compton, and the Drew Economic Development Corporation, built the Blue Line Televillage, at a cost of only \$659,000, to bolster economic opportunity in an otherwise depressed area. Adjacent to a 26-mile light rail system, the televillage attempts to reduce community reliance on automobiles by providing virtual services, like ATM access, through interactive kiosks. The televillage also incorporates community meeting room, a state-of-the-art computer center, video conferencing facilities, education programs, and telecommuting workstations. The modest participation fee, no more than \$10 per family per year, and the walking distance to most local residences ensures community-wide accessibility.

By marrying technology and old-fashioned community planning, Compton proves encouraging for future projects. Riverdale, located just outside Chicago, is a 110-year-old Frederick Law Olmstead-designed village in need of economic redevelopment. By this fall, Siembab says, the village will begin its transformation with a network station and e-Village.

Telecommuting may play a significant role in creating more communities with what Risse describes as "a relative balance of jobs, housing, services, recreation, amenity." Such communities, by reducing travel times, fostering economic stability and a better quality of life, and promoting environmental sustainability, can provide attractive alternatives for many people, whether they want to live in city or country.

Jack Nilles says we should be patient. Telecommuting has come a long way in just thirty short years. "Social change takes fifty years, so we're sort of ahead of the curve." ■



**R**ecent developments in the global system of cities present a curious paradox. Globalization is supposed to render location virtual, and has done so for much of the economy. But instead of scattering, some key portions of the economy, most notably large corporate headquarters and leading financial service firms, are concentrating in particular cities.

As the cost of communications declines almost to zero alongside falling transport costs, there is now little reason for most kinds of production to be undertaken in any particular location. And elements of production chains no longer need to be located close to one another. This is the new, borderless, frictionless global economy we keep hearing about. This fact has had dramatic consequences for the organization of manufacturing industry. Simple production chains involving the import of raw materials, usually from developing countries, for processing in a specialized center, have been replaced by far more complex structures. The production of a pair of shoes might involve physical and design inputs from

a dozen different countries, and they'll be sold in a dozen more.

Even within countries, specialization has declined greatly. "Detroit" is still short-hand for the U.S.-owned section of the motor vehicle industry, but Michigan now accounts for only a quarter of U.S. production and, because of imports, an even smaller share of U.S. consumption. The remorseless decline of the great manufacturing cities of the developed world shows that the historical aggregation of large numbers of skilled workers and large infrastructure investments does not determine where world-class cities grow.

Yet, in the economy's top echelon, the dominance of a small number of "global cities" has never been greater. A recent study by Arthur S. Alderson and Jason Beckfield of Indiana University examines power relations between three and a half thousand cities by plotting headquarters and branch locations of the world's 500 largest corporations. They find, not surprisingly, that the core of the global city system is the bloc made up of London, New York, Paris, and Tokyo. These four cities are the most powerful, with the greatest number of connections

to other cities. This new system of dominant global cities is based on the concentration of corporate headquarters and financial markets in a small number of places.

But of all parts of the economy, corporate headquarters and financial market functions should have been most transformed by the reductions in communications costs. Nearly all the work of financial markets can be performed electronically and remotely. It is now possible for corporations and their workers to be dispersed, settling wherever they want to live. There is just no technological reason for corporations and markets to be as geographically concentrated as they are.

There is little evidence to support the view that putting corporate headquarters in global cities is an economical choice. A mid-1990s study examined investors' perceptions of the advantages and costs of headquarters relocations. The stock market reacts positively when relocation decisions are attributed to cost savings, while decisions prompted by managerial self-interest and desire for luxurious offices elicit an adverse reaction. According to investors, at least, efficiency should be pushing corpo-

by John Quiggin

# CITIES and CRONYISM



rate headquarters away from, not towards, high-amenity, high-cost urban centers.

The other standard rationale for geographical concentration, that it provides access to a pool of skilled workers, is equally suspect. For this to be economically relevant, workers with the relevant skills would have to offer their services more cheaply in the global cities than anywhere else. This would be true if the workers thought that connections available in a global city outweighed the higher cost of living. There doesn't appear to be systematic evidence on this, but the anecdotal evidence is that lots of people make a temporary move to global cities, attracted by the opportunity to earn big money, before returning home to less-connected places.

In these circumstances, the most plausible explanation of "global cities" is that they facilitate cronyism of various kinds (this pejorative phrase could gently be replaced by "relationship capitalism" or rendered even more bluntly as "corruption").

As regards financial markets in particular, most of the tasks they supposedly perform do not rely on personal contacts—in some situations, personal contact is illegal. And some researchers have found that where that where finance is allocated on the basis of personal relationships ("relationship capitalism"), it becomes a tool for creating and protecting monopoly.

Virginia Postrel, a vigorous and eloquent defender of modernization and technology, uses these ideas to attack the idealized, and largely mythical, small-town bankers of the past in favor of today's more impersonal system. It's certainly true for retail borrowers that relationships with bankers are no longer important. But Postrel misses the irony that personal relationships remain important—while distancing themselves from most of their customers, members of the financial sector have gathered together ever more closely with their colleagues in centers like New York and London.

Similarly, a recent Buttonwood column from the Economist deplores the fact that house prices in London are being bid up by City types who, the pseudonymous pundit suggests, have enriched themselves at the expense of their customers. He's referring to the mutual funds scandals, but these are just the latest of many moments of cronyism. He doesn't, however, ask the obvious question: why do these City types crowd together in London (and New York)? After all, the same City types are busy telling us about a globalized world, linked instantaneously by the Internet. As Warren Buffett has shown, they are right. You can get all the information you need to formulate market-

beating investment strategies while sitting in Omaha, Nebraska. But most of today's global capitalists prefer to live in London, not Omaha. Ask them why, and they'll cite restaurants, and theater, and those lovely houses that worry Buttonwood.

Long before electronic markets and just-in-time freight, Adam Smith recognized the connection that Buttonwood misses: "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices." The quality of life that the financiers will tell you brings them to London and Paris is not separate from the "relationship capitalism" that allows them to afford it.

The antiparticle equivalent of Warren Buffett is Jack Grubman, the telecommunications analyst for Salomon Smith Barney who provided favorable coverage for AT&T as a favor for Sanford Weill of Citigroup. In return, Grubman got the leverage he needed to place his children in a desirable New York preschool. This is kind of transaction where location is all-important.

The work that financial institutions are supposed to perform, trading assets and allocating risk in transparent markets, can be done anywhere on the planet. The other work—the stuff that must be done without any inconvenient records and that requires the kind of trust that's needed for conspiracy—requires a central location where social bonds can be cemented by eating, drinking, and sleeping together. ■

*In the economy's top echelon, the dominance of a small number of "global cities" has never been greater.*

by Brian J. McCabe

The trip on Route 91 between Southern California's Riverside and Orange Counties is an archetypal American commute. Orange County is one of the region's employment capitals, and Riverside is its bedroom community. On an average day, 250,000 cars navigate the five-lane stretch of highway between the two. Experts predict that by 2015 the daily traffic flow will increase to 400,000.

Traffic plagues Route 91, which doesn't particularly set it apart from hundreds of highways across the country. But commuters on Route 91, unlike most drivers across America, have an alternative. For a fee—up to \$5.50 at peak times—they can cruise at 65 miles per hour along the 91 Express Lanes running down the median of the freeway. These high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes ensure commuters a ten-minute trip down a stretch that may take up to 45 minutes for their fellow commuters in the old-fashioned free lanes. The idea is relatively simple: HOT lanes offer commuters a congestion-free alternative, charging a variable price depending on the time of day and level of congestion. Tolls are highest during the afternoon rush hour on Thursdays and Friday, and they drop off as low as one dollar during off-peak periods.

Following California's lead, lawmakers in Houston have already set up HOT lanes on the Katy Freeway, and local governments in congested regions around Washington, D.C., and Atlanta are considering following suit.

But innovation in the sacrosanct realm of the American road inevitably breeds controversy. While HOT lanes have proliferated across the country, their popularity has been challenged by a growing cadre of vocal

critics who argue HOT lanes are environmentally unsustainable and socially unjust, forcing policymakers to take a second look.

Variable pricing schemes are nothing new to American consumers. Mobile phone companies are the most popular example, using variable pricing to regulate usage during peak and off-peak hours. As prices rise, demand for peak calls lowers, which helps phone companies regulate the quantity of users during these periods. Airlines and trains use similar pricing tactics to prevent unmanageable spikes in demand on busy travel days. "Every other form of transportation," suggests Robert Poole of the free-market Reason Policy Institute, "offers several levels of service and quality at different prices. This includes government-run railways and privately run airlines. Why should only highways be restricted to offering one-size-fits-all?"

The 91 Express Lanes offer a wide range of prices, set at the level necessary to keep demand low enough for a quick trip at any time of day. When they opened in 1995, prices ranged from \$0.20 to \$2.50 for the privilege of commuting congestion-free. As demand rose over the years, so did the price. By the end of 2003, noontime commuters along the 91 Express Lanes paid tolls of \$1.70. During the morning rush hour, tolls peaked at \$3.60. For the evening rush, the toll had risen to \$5.50. As a purely market-driven phenomenon, the only ceiling to continued toll increases is public demand. Based on both extensive fieldwork and travel surveys with former and current commuters, a recent study completed by California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) suggests that commuters would be willing to

pay up to \$16 to save an hour of commuting time. The 91 Express Lanes, according to the Cal Poly study, saved the average commuter about 30 minutes over the non-toll roadway—suggesting that the prices could inch upward further towards the \$8 mark without making the lanes significantly less successful. These tolls generate new revenue sources for the construction and maintenance of roadways.

Critics, however, have dubbed the lanes "Lexus Lanes," claiming that they allow the wealthiest commuters to bypass stalled traffic. This argument has been adopted by national organizations, like the American Automobile Association, as well as local community groups protesting the lanes' development. An editorial in *The Capital*, a daily newspaper from Annapolis, Maryland, opposed its state's HOT lanes proposal: "It's different—and unpalatable—to set up a system of first-class traffic lanes for the affluent, while the rest poke along in bumper-to-bumper traffic in second class. It's one thing for private businesses to vary services depending on how much is paid. But a state that is charging everyone the same taxes should ... be working on cutting congestion for all."

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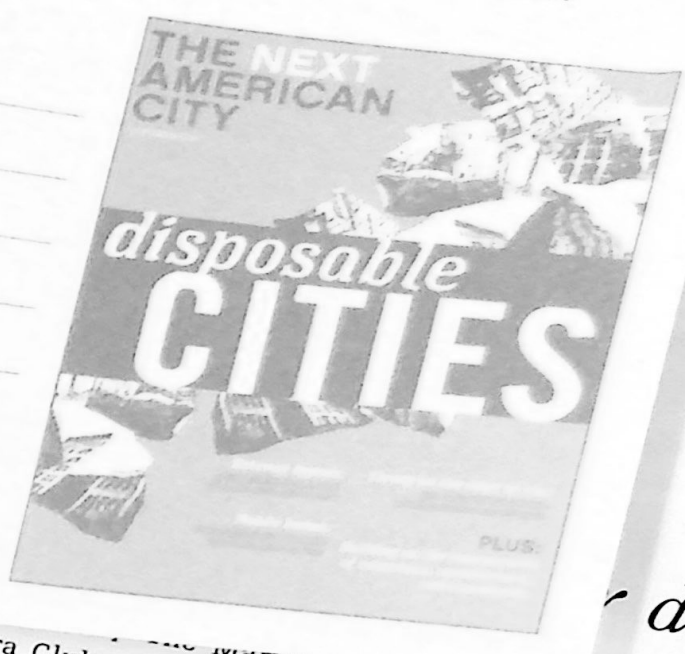
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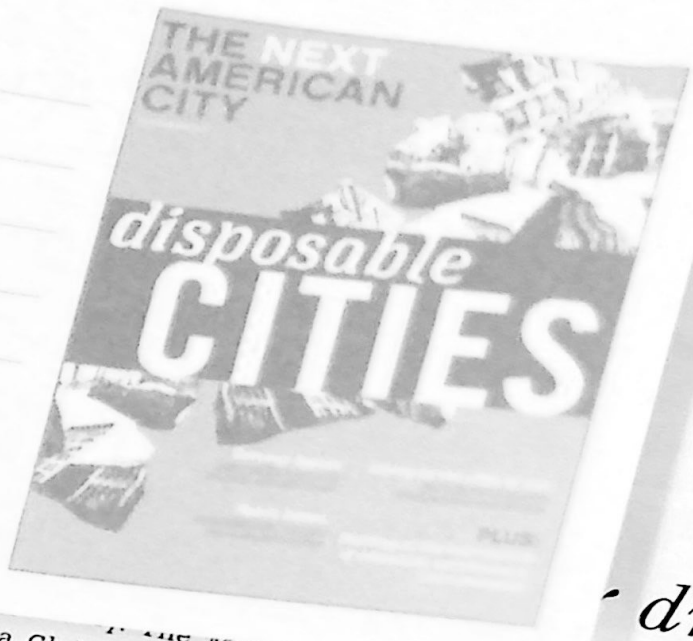
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# HOT

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# OR NOT

## *Are new toll lanes a fair price to pay for driving?*

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# PLAYING WITH URBAN LIFE



## *How SimCity influences planning culture*

by Daniel G. Lobo

with reporting by Larry Schooler

*Is it time—to be Mayor?*

**D**o you have the empire-building skills to develop a metropolis of soaring skyscrapers or the aesthetic sensibilities to create a city that delights the eye? Do you enjoy tinkering with an entire world—widening a riverbed there, increasing a tax rate here—to see the effects on the inhabitants under your sway? Or do you want to get down and dirty with *The Sims* in your streets, taking on missions that have you hurtling down highways in a tank?

These are the welcome lines to *SimCity 4 Deluxe*, the latest release of the most influential strategy game in the history of urban planning. While designing the game *Raid on Bungeling Bay* in 1984, Will Wright, a Macintosh programmer, discovered that flying an attack helicopter over a swath of islands wasn't half as fun as designing the

islands themselves. Out of a developing interest in city planning and computer modeling theory, he conceived of a game that would let players build cities and watch them operate. Wright and Jeff Braun founded the software company Maxis, and in 1989 they published *SimCity*. The game—and its spinoffs from the popular *The Sims* to the recently released *SimCity 4*—has paralleled and even influenced the now-omnipresent, if not always well-conceived, use of computer simulation in contemporary urban planning.

### EARLY INFLUENCES

Wright and Braun founded Maxis out of a lifetime interest in systems dynamics, which analyzes how complex systems change over time. The “founding father” of the field and an outsider to city planning, MIT Professor of Management Jay Forrester laid the foundation for modern computer simulation in

his 1969 book, *Urban Dynamics*. He tried to disprove popular conceptions about why cities deteriorate, demonstrating through a computer model of the relations between industry, housing, and population that low-cost housing policies in Boston at the time were actually worsening unemployment. Instead of simple intuitions about urban policy that treated symptoms instead of causes of urban decay, his book advocated a balanced, multivariate assessment of existing conditions and how they might fluctuate with changes in job training, new enterprise, and low-income housing. If his proposal was not entirely successful, it was because not all behaviors could be modeled and because of the large scale of the assumptions—even the smallest systems are hard to predict.

Forrester's model applied statistical data to the city as a whole rather than treating their more localized effects. For exam-

ple, the model, if applied to policing, would look at the ratio of total crime to the number of police employed citywide instead of focusing on differences in police coverage and crime trends in particular neighborhoods. Early versions of SimCity used citywide measures as well, but SimCity 4 remedies this problem. SimCity 4 producer Kevin Hogan said "we wanted location to matter, so that where you placed your schools made a difference."

At any level from a neighborhood to the entire world (Forrester also wrote *World Dynamics* to model the entire planet, like the later Maxis game *SimEarth*), Forrester's work reflects similar beliefs—people can understand evolving systems by studying any relevant variable through the lens of free-market philosophy, figuring out how changing supply and demand of any desired good could illustrate different outcomes.

Berkeley architect and mathematician Christopher Alexander provided the second key influence for SimCity. His architectural work and theories in the 1960s and '70s advocated an idealistic departure from then-popular top-down modernist models towards what he called a universal way of design and development, based in the logic of human-city interrelations. In his essay "A City Is Not a Tree," he denounced cities that fit a "tree" pattern—cities that were compartmentalized so that sections functioned independently of each other—and he celebrated cities that fit a "semi-lattice"—where sections bleed into one another by virtue of overlapping functional systems. In his books *A Timeless Way of Building* and *A Pattern Language*, Alexander applied his planning theories to the basic elements of architecture, suggesting that universal principles could be found that are applicable from the organization of everywhere from the entire countryside down to the construction of a home. The more abstract and timeless the set of principles, the more ways they could be reconfigured to create various and beautiful cities. His work, though ostensibly universal, claims particular American qualities—the very notion of throwing off the fixed ideas of the Old World and searching for broader truths has been embedded in New World planning since the beginning of colonization.

Witold Rybczynski, Professor of Urbanism at the University of Philadelphia, discusses other early colonial assumptions about cities that, consciously or not, SimCity

has adopted. In his 1995 book *City Life*, Rybczynski argues that the American city is different from the European city because early planners were met with the sense of abundant open space and planned accordingly. They often allowed *laissez faire* consumption of undeveloped land. The principles of freedom, equality, and respect, the theory went, would arise naturally in a world with the social and physical space for individuals to vote with their actions and real estate purchases. Early planners also often envisioned continued growth, and as such, to the extent planning happened, it was done in a way that provided the possibility of expansion, often through a grid that could grow proportionately with the population. In addition, gridded lots were easier to build on, divide up, and sell.

#### SIMCITY'S BLACK BOX

The work of Forrester, Alexander, and Rybczynski serve as SimCity's foundational ingredients. First, the game rates players' performance based on whether all goods, from industrial land to public schools, are being supplied at levels that equal a computer-calculated model of demand. Second, the game allows numerous configurations of a limited number of categories of building design and zoning, which imposes a universal aesthetic on the cityscape. This aesthetic favors segregated zoning over mixed use—which Hogan says allows the player to more easily visually analyze their creation—and stresses homogenous, class-segregated neighborhoods. Third is an inherited colonial view of land as in infinite supply. The game begins by allowing the player to settle an area of land devoid of other cities or inhabitants, favoring urban grid structures over organic development.

But the black box hides several other assumptions, among them the emphasis on the power of the mayor. The only way that SimCity will eject a mayor from office is if the city budget goes in the red beyond 100,000 Simoleons. Other than that, you will not have to face questioning by the local council, campaign for re-election, nor undergo the pressure of any other democratic process. And what does SimCity tell you once you have lost the game? "Try an easier job. Run for senator."

As mayor, the player operates in "God Mode," with absolute power to build, demolish, tax, and spend. Unwieldy growth and megalomaniacal, destructive behavior are

*the two poles of city operation and the player's most likely courses of action. Thus the heart of the game is much less a universal vision of city design than it is a reflection of the most extreme tendencies of contemporary America, found in the few areas in which one person has total control over a large parcel of land—whether a powerful mayor pursuing an urban renewal project, or a developer creating a massive planned community in the middle of desert or farmland. But the many parts of urban planning and development that do not reflect this model of total control over virgin territory get short shrift. SimCity's narrow lens only tells half of the story of urban development. But aspiring and practicing urban planners have been looking through this lens for fifteen years, with influential results.*

#### NOT JUST A GAME

The utopian beginning of SimCity stressed a desire to influence policy, education in particular, through reflections on the nature of "ideal cities." No other game had been used so widely in many levels of schooling to help illuminate the different elements of local government. For example, David Lublin, professor at the Department of Governance at American University, has used SimCity to teach 20th Century local government. After creating a SimCity of their own, his students had to write a paper analyzing the game's underlying principles. "A fundamental aspect of the paper was to stress how SimCity reflected real world conditions, and what aspects were ignored or sent to a second plane," he said. Because of the widespread use of SimCity in schools and homes, it is easy to make a case, as Paul Starr of *The American Prospect* has, that SimCity provides a more influential introduction to city planning than any book on the subject.

Though SimCity is now looking to the crossroads of simulation and action games, as in its new "Rush Hour" expansion pack, the game's developers still consider the educational market one of its key audiences. Lucy Bradshaw, Maxis General Manager, says that the future success of the game depends upon special events outside the gaming industry like university partnerships, teacher's guides for the game, and primary and secondary school licenses.

Although still significant, the differences between SimCity and a real city seem to be narrowing. The game has evolved to consider more sophisticated real-life issues—



Maxis producer Hogan notes that based on feedback from users, the game designers added such features as development on hilly terrain, regional planning, and bedroom communities to resemble features of real-life urbanism. But more importantly, real world planning increasingly resembles SimCity because of the growing use of technology, often in support of a SimCity-like top-down model of local government.

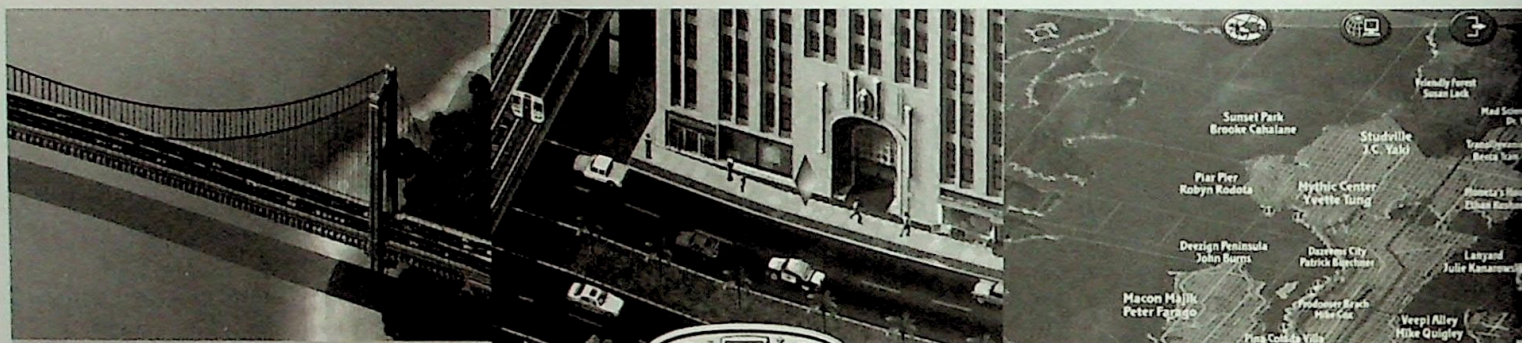
Around 1990, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) replaced paper maps as the main medium of geographic analysis in government agencies across the nation. GIS integrates different sets of geographic data on computer screens by, in effect, allowing a user to overlay transparencies of different data sets. This system can then show, for example, which homes are within a five-minute drive of a fire station. While its roots were in evaluating how environmental conditions limited potential developable land,

many planning departments now use GIS to evaluate social elements of city life. For instance, many departments overlay Census data to make zoning decisions relative to income, class, education levels, and development desirability. SimCity has the same basic analytic mechanisms as GIS; consequently, when schools use SimCity to teach urban planning and politics, they teach the framework of analyzing environmental and social relations via GIS.

Yet planners sometimes get overwhelmed with the technology and forget that GIS by itself cannot make subjective choices on issues like gentrification, race inequality, or immigration. GIS can tell planners what a policy's likely effects will be (for example, how many existing residents might be displaced as a result of a new redevelopment project) but cannot ultimately say whether those effects are desirable.

Edward Soja, Professor of Urban Plan-

ning at the University of California, Los Angeles, calls it a "reconstitution of our realities" when cities are reshaped according to analyses that tell only part of the story with little public scrutiny. Soja notes the painful example of Orange County, California. In the early 1990s, facing strict limits on property tax increases, county tax collector Robert Citron modeled, and then implemented, a plan for investing the county's tax revenue in the financial markets. For a short time, it seemed an extraordinary success. He was highly praised, and under virtually no scrutiny—until the systems crashed. His gamble, to invest on short-term interest rates betting they remain low relative to medium-term interest rates, failed after interest rates rose in 1994. Citron's intriguing idea, divorced from the reality of possible decline in financial markets and bereft of oversight from people who could say no to playing the market with taxpayer money,



## TAKE THE TRAIN OR DRIVE:

by Annie Lux

Each morning, Theodore McGinty wakes up in his tiny bungalow, makes a cup of coffee, and grumbles that he lives in the shadow of the water tower at the edge of town. He walks half a block to the bus station and hops on a bus to work at Honest Carrie's Used Cars. Meanwhile, downtown, Bella Goth leaves her exquisitely decorated 22nd floor penthouse in the Quigley Apartment Building, rides the elevator to her heated underground parking spot, drives her luxury car three blocks, parks, and greets her first customer of the day at her high-end boutique. At the end of the day, Bella leaves work and picks up groceries on the way home; later in the evening she walks to a restaurant and then to a movie. Theodore and Bella are Sims living in SimCity 4 Deluxe, which models transportation and job choices on a person-by-person basis, closely mimicking software used by traffic engineers, such as CORSIM and Synchro/SimTraffic.

Previous versions of SimCity used images of individual cars, trains, and pedestrians to show traffic congestion and transit usage, but these icons were really just a crude reflection of aggregate transportation usage. Traffic levels were calculated based on the balance between commercial/industrial and residential land use. In real life, each type of residential, commercial, or industrial development generates a different traffic pattern (based on time of day and number of people visiting), so the previous model glossed over the nuances that create traffic problems in real cities. The new game updates the transportation component to

include such details. It also actually models the "lives" of individual city-dwellers. A player can now "move" a Sim into a residence in his or her city, see whether that Sim can find a job, whether it stays in its residence, and hear its general perceptions of the city. If a player fails to build enough industrially zoned areas, for instance, an engineer like Gustav Knifefork might complain that he has to commute to the adjacent city to find a job.

The new game engine transforms each city's transportation grid into an invisible network of paths in which each mode of transportation occupies a different sub-network. With automobiles, for instance, streets are assigned bidirectional paths, one-way streets are assigned unidirectional paths, and medians and other barriers truncate and redirect these paths. Train, subway, and bus stations link the sub-networks, providing connections among possible foot, automobile, and train paths. Once created, the network generates multiple layers of traffic simulation: commutes from home to work, freight movement from industrial areas to SimNation, and other trips to commercial areas and tourist attractions.

To calculate the number of trips that the transportation network must handle, the traffic model relies on a concept called trip generation, which, though not perfectly accurate, is generally accepted as the best currently available means of transportation planning in the real world. Each building generates a certain number of trips. For example, an office building with 100 workers generates 200 trips per



left Orange County \$1.64 billion in debt. And, as Soja points out, Citron's game could not be rebooted and played again.

SimCity-like data analysis may also blind city leaders to problems that lie outside of its geographic or political scope. For example, Washington, D.C. Mayor Tony Williams has placed much faith in advanced GIS and data systems, which have supported his conclusion that, to solve its budget woes, the District must attract 100,000 new, wealthy workers who would provide high taxes. Other solutions may be viable, such as restructuring local taxes in a city in which 66 percent of the local income is not taxed and the Federal Government owns 42 percent of the real property. But such options remain unconsidered if the city model takes these fiscal factors for granted. These options may even be left out for sound political reasons—they require serious fights with the federal government and

surrounding suburbs—but those politics should be subject to open debate, not hidden in the black box of model assumptions.

#### POWER-TRIP PLANNING

The family of Sim games always had subtle ironic undertones that compounded experience with a witty sense of humor. As Hogan notes, "it is a game... we tend to pick and choose the stuff that makes for good gameplay." But new versions of the game add power-trip possibilities that would give a city planner a God complex—fine for a fun simulation, troubling for a game used as a training tool in the real world. In a return to Wright's original helicopter attack game, not only can players now demolish buildings from a tank, but they can also run "vehicle missions." Do you want to run a mission to drive a toxic waste truck through the city safely? Or even help a group of robbers escape the police? Criminal actions by

the mayor may hurt popularity ratings, but if the mission is successful the money goes to the city treasury, offering greater possibilities to boost ratings. The mayor can drive to an area of low mayoral popularity which threatens to strike or revolt. Hold the space bar, et voila, the mayor is throwing bills from the limo that your Sims pick up on the fly. The mayor's rating is restored. In some cities, of course, that scenario reflects reality. But shouldn't a game with so much influence on future planners not just teach power accumulation, but at least attempt to instill a sense of what government can and should do—some sense of values transcending simple supply and demand that underlie planning? ■



## HOW A SIM DECIDES

day (100 arrivals and 100 departures). When a player zooms into an area with a high concentration of office buildings, she will see a steady stream of traffic heading towards the zone in the morning and away from the zone in the afternoon. A road that handles midday traffic with ease may become gridlocked at rush hour.

Two factors dictate the mode of transportation that each trip uses: the travel time from origin to destination and random preferences based on income level. The game uses an algorithm which assumes that lower-class Sims like Theodore McGinty are more likely to take the bus while middle-class Sims like Gustav Knife-fork prefer trains and subways, and upper-class Sims like Bella Goth are most likely to drive their cars. Upper-class Sims will take the bus only if the bus decreases travel time enough to outweigh their propensity to drive their cars.

As in real life, when traffic congestion reaches critical levels, the Sims will demand solutions. Built into the game are a series of characters that act as the city's advisors. The transportation advisor, Jamil Herd, makes general suggestions about improving road capacity and providing options for mass transportation. Herd's solutions are akin to basic solutions used in real cities. When traffic congestion and residential density increase to a certain level, Jamil suggests building bus stations, and as the city's size increases further, Jamil suggests adding trains and monorails. When commutes get too long, Jamil may suggest moving jobs closer to residential areas.

Real traffic simulation software is complex enough to require specific training and powerful computers. Many details in the real-world models are appropriately left out in the game to avoid overwhelming complexity—users do not have to worry about signal timing or right-turn lanes, for example.

But the game should do a better job at including cutting-edge solutions like High Occupancy Toll lanes, specific truck routes, and long-distance bike trails. If SimCity really has an educational mission—and one cannot help but think that some players who regularly sit in stop-and-go traffic on their way to work might consider how the game's suggestions apply to their towns—it could play a critical role in disseminating information to the public. Passionate civic advocates are usually the driving force behind getting transportation improvements built, but their knowledge of new possibilities often lags years, even decades, behind that of transportation professionals. Perhaps SimCity 5 could incorporate these innovative strategies and help build a cadre of smarter transportation advocates in communities across the nation. ■

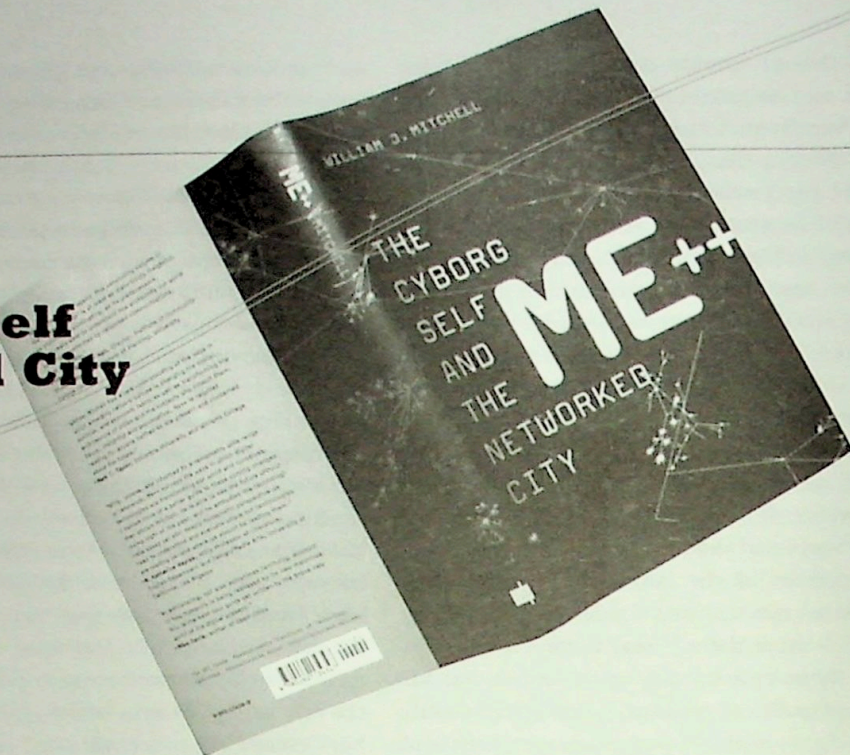


# REVIEWS

## Me++: The Cyborg Self and The Networked City

BY WILLIAM J. MITCHELL  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.: THE MIT PRESS

REVIEWED BY CALVIN JOHNSON



IN THE EARLY 1970S, THE CYBERNETICS pioneer Gregory Bateson described a blind man with a walking stick to illustrate his concept of "ecology of mind." The blind man's cognitive being does not terminate at his brain stem, nor at his fingertips, nor even at the tip of his cane. Rather, the walking stick is part of the man, a mental extension just like the city street upon which he walks.

William J. Mitchell, author, professor, and Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning at MIT, is also well-versed in networked structures—both mental, like that conceived by Bateson, and electronic, as found in the digital devices of the future-cum-present. In his most recent writings, Mitchell picks up Bateson's stick, essentially adds a few circuits, and plugs it into a worldwide, computerized communications network, creating a silicon-enhanced ecology of mind. The three books—an "informal trilogy of real-time scholarship"—that Mitchell has written since 1995 expertly explore this cybernetic mind at the intersection of two radical network sciences: information technology and city planning.

Mitchell wrote the first book, *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn*, at a time when Dell sold computers over a hotline and Yahoo was still hosted on a Stanford server. It outlined the initial impact of the information superhighway on urban design and social relationships. The follow-up, *e-topia: Urban Life, Jim—But Not as We Know It*, examined the links between

software and city planning, offering millennial advice on how to incorporate smart telecommunications into 24/7, mixed-use communities. Now *Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City* explores the role of the self within an electronically-gear architecture, updating Mitchell's vision to account for ubiquitous cell phones and wireless Internet.

Mitchell's decade-long project posits that the digital revolution that has just begun will alter patterns of human settlement and land use to the same degree as the industrial and agricultural revolutions. What Mitchell proposes for the future of cities is this: we will not have to choose between the actual and the virtual (as certain dystopian science fiction movie franchises would have us believe), but rather, we will interact with cities that are fluid mixtures of the real and the electronic. Mitchell thus addresses current fears about the viability of the city, insisting that just because telecommunications allows information to be accessed from anywhere, the city itself does not cease to matter but rather remains vital in its electronically augmented form. This interweaving of bits and matter will fundamentally change the way that we use space, distribute resources, and interact with our communities.

Mitchell's book covers much of the same ground as other prescient pieces of tech writing, such as Howard Rheingold's giddily enthusiastic *Smart Mobs*, or even the weekly "Circuits" section of the *New York Times*. But

while other texts in the information technology genre concentrate on sociology or are content merely to talk about souped-up cell phones, *Me++* delves into architectural theories and the urban condition. Where other authors are straightforward and use descriptive language, Mitchell's tone is academic and loaded with bad puns and postmodern phrasings, such as "sensorium (augmented)," "Caveat surfer," or even "Digital Dublin," the title of a chapter that reimagines James Joyce's *Ulysses* as a cybernetic adventure. And to an extent unseen in most tech writing, his work investigates the electronic gizmos that have grown out of the Internet and mobile communications revolution, devices ranging from Wi-Fi, SMS, and PDAs, to GPS, GIS, GSM, and 3G, and as far as NEMS, EmNets, RFID, FM, and GEO.\* (Don't worry, Mitchell throws in some easy ones, too, like www, MP3, SARS, WTC, and MIT.) *Me++* untangles the acronyms in a way that neither intimidates the uninitiated nor bores the digirati. In doing so, Mitchell goes beyond mere prediction to advocate passionately for the use of shrinking technologies, accelerating processing speeds, and hyperconnectivity to foster the creation of "smart" communities that emphasize diverse social relationships and empower the citizen.

Crucial to Mitchell's argument is how overlaying a digital network upon an actual landscape increases the multifunctional nature of spaces. Stationary buildings and plazas will be designed to provide versatile



uses for their mobile visitors, occupants, and operators. While 20th century city planning segregated different functions into separate zones, so that polluted industrial areas, for example, would not adjoin bucolic residential tracts, Mitchell anticipates that 21st century planning guidelines, while maintaining distance where appropriate, will accommodate several activities at any given location. Previous attempts at spatial multifunctionality—which, like sofa beds or mobile partitions, were often cumbersome—will go by the wayside as an adaptive, intelligent architecture permits, or even provides, the different software that users need for their PDAs or laptops in order to accomplish a range of tasks in a single space. The rudiments of such a sophisticated “smart-chitecture” currently can be found in high-tech student lounges, multimedia conference centers, and Bill Gates’ dining room. Windows and walls serve as display screens, circuitry is integrated into drywall, and the metaphoric “Computer” of Star Trek is there for you whenever you wish.

Furthermore, because networked systems are “fluid and amorphous,” many of the activities happening at a particular place within the city will be unanticipated. Mitchell calls for the easing of much of city planning’s traditional rigidity in order to accommodate the ad hoc behavior of a plugged-in tribe. At Bryant Park in midtown Manhattan, for example, wireless access to the Internet lets users of Wi-Fi-equipped laptops check stock prices, purchase clothing, and renew driver’s licenses. None of these are conventional “park activities,” but this well-designed park is equipped to handle them, and even encourage them. Mitchell anticipates more diverse-use spaces in the future, such that office buildings, sidewalks, and automobiles will have second roles as spaces that provide access to electronic information.

Delocalizing access to information will not diminish the distinctiveness of place, as Luddites might claim. Indeed, the specificity of place will only increase in importance. Of particular interest to Mitchell in the merging of the virtual and the actual is spatial metadata, data that both assigns real-space coordinates to electronic content and stores physical attributes such as size and shape in digital format. It is now possible to ascertain many precise characteristics of a place or an item, and its context, simply by looking it up with a computer. MapQuest, for example, uses “geocoding” software to link

a street corner to a virtual address. Mitchell predicts that spatial metadata, together with the GPS networks and RFID microchips that locate mobile objects and “tag” their properties, will help contextualize a person’s experience of one place by making information about numerous other places immediately accessible.

Mitchell proposes two examples, in traffic management and grocery shopping, of how contextually-aware devices can be applied to future planning. Your car will be able to flash you a stop sign upon the windshield when you come to a trafficked intersection during rush hour and display nothing when you approach the same crossing at 3 a.m. Or, your shopping cart will remind you to buy milk when you pass it in the aisle, because your refrigerator tells it your milk at home is past the expiration date. A more nefarious, present-day use of spatial data is the gerrymandering of political districts by bureaucrats who employ new mapping software and voting history databases to cut through what was previously an impenetrable density of urban electoral behaviors.

One of the functions of a city is to make the location and accumulation of resources more efficient and to foster interactions among searchers and gatherers. Traditionally, cities facilitated the swapping of ideas and commodities through density, reliable transportation, and legible signage. But the function of urban space has already begun to change. The Internet speeds up search and transport times, as evidenced by the preeminence of Google and the buying and selling of obscure commodities on eBay. In *City of Bits*, Mitchell accurately predicted that much window shopping would be conducted via retail web pages and that showrooms and stockrooms would shrink. Virtual inventories may eventually supplant retail storage: a customer’s clothing will be saved electronically as detailed measurements, for instance, to be created materially only once ordered.

Miniaturization and digitization, too, have rendered weightless many of the objects at one time exchanged by hand. As an example, Mitchell cites the entire ancient Library of Alexandria, which now fits on a microchip. With each additional tablet or parchment that is downloaded, no actual weight or bulk is added to the desktop. Likewise, the zeroes and ones that represent your bank account are much lighter than the quarters you carry in your pocket and,

despite their lack of physical mass, are perfectly legitimate, and sometimes preferred, forms of legal tender. Converting information-based commodities, like text documents, images, and audio recordings, to digital form eases the burden of transporting them and, in some cases, already is the prevalent method of distribution. Particularized object metadata—data that track and coordinate digitized goods—will ensure that the 18-wheelers on the Interstate of today are assisted by the 18-gigabytes on the Internet of tomorrow.

Finally, having shown how the virtual encoding of spaces and goods can improve the experience of actual spaces, Mitchell looks at how the so-called cyborg, the virtual representation of self, will affect civic life. Whereas Aristotle estimated the size of the ideal community to be 5,000 democratically active citizens, Mitchell scales it up to the entire global village of the web. Drawing on the formulations of Fustel de Coulanges, a scholar on the ancient city, Mitchell identifies *civitas*, the abstract sense of tribal community, as having been rooted in physical place only because ancient people had to settle collectively in cities. Now, cyberspace offers a home suitable to the abstract nature of *civitas*, and urban space need no longer be the sole civic territory. The key to successful cyber-civics is the Golden Rule: reciprocity. Citizens of the metropolis have always relied upon mutual trust to ensure their own survival. But now, within the Internet, all connected individuals have the ability to interfere with each other’s lives to a degree never before imagined—whether through viruses or the mischievous Bulgarian teenager who wants to reprogram your alarm clock from abroad. Mitchell urges us to treat each other decently, lest we have done unto us what we just don’t want done. He also worries that, to accommodate a lack of trust, overprotective policies and copyright controls may be instituted that limit common property and stymie cultural creativity.

Certain implications of Mitchell’s vision for a digitized, e-topian society are disconcerting. As the title of *Me++* indicates, the emphasis of the networked city is egoistic. As individuals gain access to greater amounts of information, they are increasingly likely to seek out only what interests them, specifying themselves into niche markets and ignoring the wider world. Public life might then suffer at the expense of the



flourishing private life, and worse, we might start to identify ourselves as customers and consumers to the exclusion of any sense of ourselves as citizens. Mitchell also awkwardly avoids considerations of inequity. He presupposes the nonexistence of the so-called "digital divide," offering no options for overcoming it.

Mitchell set out to play the role of a "critically engaged designer whose business it is to reflect, imagine, invent." He manages to be neither a strict utopian looking forward at what's to come nor a nostalgic pessimist looking back at what has changed. Rather, his creativity, rationality, and reverence for his subject matter inform us of the next steps in urban life, preparing us for

when our already diverse and dynamic cities become more tightly networked, acquire more finely arranged digital overlays, and achieve global connectedness to an even greater degree. ■

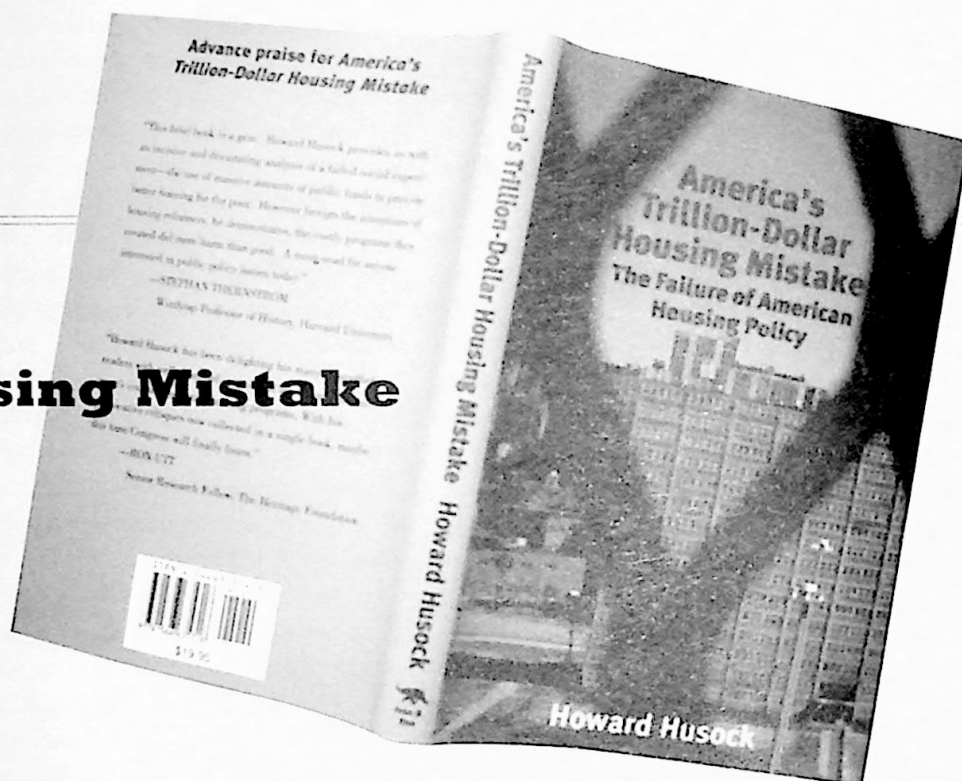
*\*In order: Wi-Fi: the IEEE [Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers] 802.11b protocol standard for wireless Ethernet. SMS: Short Message Service, commonly referred to as cell phone "texting." PDAs: Personal Digital Assistants (like Palm Pilots and Blackberrys). GPS: Global Positioning System (gives coordinates to "you are here"). GIS: Geographic Information Systems (database meets map). GSM: the Global System for Mobile Communications, a digital tele-*

*phony standard. 3G, or "third generation": the spectrum reserved for enhanced mobile electronics usage. NEMS: nanoelectromechanical systems, or machines with really really small parts. EmNets: networked systems of embedded computers. RDID: Radio Frequency Identification (think smart bar codes). FM: Facilities Management Systems (database meets floorplan). GEO: Geostationary Orbit Satellites.*

## America's Trillion-dollar Housing Mistake

BY HOWARD HUSOCK  
IVAN R. DEE, INC., 2003

REVIEWED BY ADAM GORDON



IN A COLLECTION OF SEVEN ESSAYS PREVIOUSLY published in *City Journal*, Howard Husock, contributing editor of that publication and a faculty member at Harvard's Kennedy School, breathes fresh life into the often stale debate over affordable housing in urban America. Husock reminds the reader of the potential of private developers to supply housing for the poor—and the peril of ignoring the market in designing affordable housing programs. Though these points may seem obvious, they are often tragically, even fatally, overlooked by housing advocates and policymakers.

Unfortunately, Husock's essays exemplify the too-narrow view of cities taken

by the Manhattan Institute's suite of urban thinkers. He presents an odd combination of the dogmatic, yet primitive, promotion of market economics often found on the right and the strange focus on central cities in isolation from their surrounding suburbs often found on the left. Husock's collection, like *City Journal* itself, falls into a rare category: writing that veers off the mark with alarming frequency, yet remains absolutely essential reading.

Husock's central argument, and one that bears listening, is that our affordable housing production system has become focused on a network of government subsidies instead of asking more fundamental

questions about why private developers do not build such housing. Husock portrays a triad of institutions—non-profit community development corporations (CDCs) which build housing, the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) which finances affordable rental housing, and the Section 8 program that provides the poor with rental vouchers—that “add up to a cleverly decentralized HUD, almost entirely financed through federal funding and provisions of the federal tax code, not through the assets and initiative of neighborhood residents.” This system often produces little housing, argues Husock, and hardly engages the local community, serving instead as a jobs

program for a lucky few. Husock thoughtfully notes that "onerous regulations" also impede "privately supplied, very modest housing for the poor."

In many cases, Husock is correct that the current production infrastructure yields only modest results. Furthermore, he does the industry a great service by bringing the regulatory issues to the fore—issues that the CDC-LIHTC-Section 8 crowd doesn't focus on because, at least in some cities, removing such regulations would force them to compete with private developers and undermine their business model. For example, Husock discusses the construction of 2,700 bare-bones, single-room occupancy, shared-bathroom units in San Diego, made possible only after regulations were removed that prohibited this type of housing, which in the past was a common first step on the housing rung. Is such housing ideal over a long period of time? No. But in a city in which houses in rundown neighborhoods start at \$250,000 and recent immigrants struggle to find anyplace to live, it is a practical, even essential, contribution.

But Husock's sweeping accusations prove too much. By refusing to acknowledge the successful entrepreneurial community development non-profits, from Patterson Park CDC in Baltimore to BRIDGE Housing in San Francisco, Husock reveals himself, like most *City Journal* writers, as a shill for a set of ideological beliefs, unable to cast an objective eye on how those beliefs play out in real life.

For example, Husock goes to talk with a woman who moves out of a public housing project and into a Habitat for Humanity home in Chicago; he finds a proud new homeowner. Husock likes Habitat for Humanity, and I do too for similar reasons: they have a sense of moral values in their work, they require prospective homebuyers to earn a real stake in the house through significant labor and financial contributions, they find ways to build houses cheaply, and they muster significant participation from community members. I'm not sure, however, that their leadership would fully recognize the portrait of Habitat that plays out in the book. Quoting Habitat founder Millard Fuller's statement that "We don't believe in trying to go where we're not wanted," Husock crows, "it is not Habitat's goal to force the rich to live with the poor." Yet Habitat has many chapters in affluent

suburbs because it recognizes that low-income families who work in those communities need modest housing.

In contrast, another woman who had a house financed by one of Husock's enemies, and whom he does not appear to have interviewed, is cast as a hopeless deadbeat whose "husband was in prison" and "had previous credit problems." Though the particular credit arrangement in the case is indeed suspect, one gets the sense that Husock believes people with spouses in prison and previous credit problems should not be on the path to homeownership. I guess that Husock's tried-and-true social conservative "encouragement to marry the fathers of their children" didn't work for this woman—as it does not in the many cases where those fathers are either imprisoned or cannot find decent paying work, situations that are well described in a recent article for the *New Yorker* by MacArthur and New America Foundation fellow Katherine Boo.

Husock's ideological blinders are most evident in his critiques of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), the landmark 1977 federal legislation that requires banks to increase lending in poor neighborhoods in which they have a branch. He argues, with some credible examples, that the CRA has forced banks to make overly risky loans. What he does not mention is that banks, being sophisticated businesses, are working extremely hard to find lower-risk ways to fulfill CRA requirements—and succeeding. Established investment firms like Goldman Sachs and startups like Urban America are finding solid business opportunities in CRA neighborhoods, packaging them, and selling them to banks. These opportunities produce market or near-market return at market or near-market risk. Husock's free-market ideology, of course, would argue that if such opportunities existed, businesses would have taken advantage of them without CRA. But before 1977, when Congress passed CRA, Goldman Sachs and others had plenty of opportunities to start these funds, and they didn't. Government regulation in this case has pushed a wide range of people to think harder about how to deliver market projects successfully in poor neighborhoods. That's a good thing.

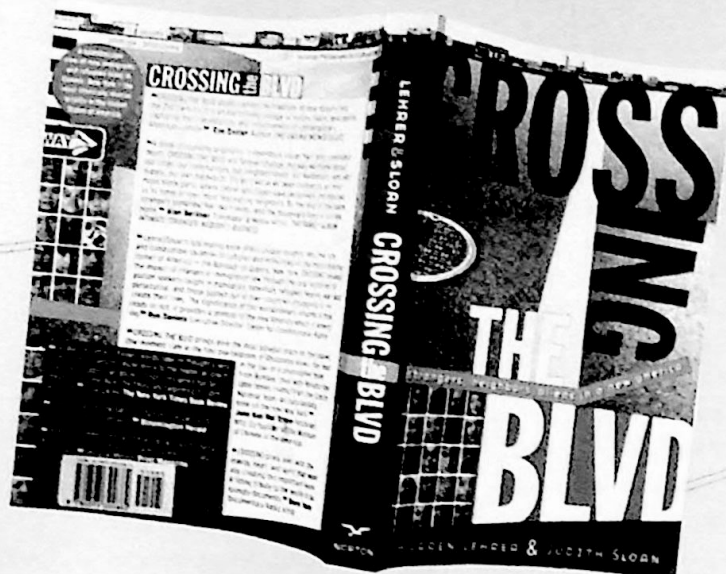
Husock also fears that the CRA will "flash-freeze certain neighborhoods and set them aside for the poor"—though if he really believes that the rich shouldn't live with

the poor, you'd think he would leap at the idea. Indeed, his book thoroughly ignores the government actions taken by wealthy neighborhoods in both cities and suburbs to stop affordable housing from being built, like requiring all houses to be built on lots of an acre or more. These omnipresent regulations distort the housing market much more than the modest government subsidies that Husock attacks and are far more influential than the urban building codes and rules that Husock does such a good job of bringing to the reader's attention. In short, these regulations are exactly the sort you would expect a true libertarian to attack.

Husock seems almost oblivious to the existence of a world outside of big cities. Of course, most Americans live in the suburbs, and with each Census more jobs move further and further out of the city—that includes jobs for secretaries, janitors, and public school teachers. Any solution to the affordable housing problem must recognize this reality. It's usually the left that focuses intently on inner city neighborhoods in the guise of helping poor communities, even while fighting to keep "them" out of their communities—hence the term "limousine liberal." It would be apt to characterize the myopic focus of Husock, and *City Journal* in general, on the inner city as limousine libertarianism.

Read *America's Trillion-Dollar Housing Mistake*, and read *City Journal*, for the important critiques of bedrock principles that the left, and indeed pretty much everyone, takes for granted. But do so with about a pound of salt. Whether it's coming from the left or the right, the only thing sure to fail in the complex world of affordable housing is a purely ideological approach. ■





# Crossing the Boulevard

CONCEIVED, WRITTEN AND COMPILED BY WAR-

REN LEHRER AND JUDITH SLOAN  
W. W. NORTON & COMPANY, 2003

REVIEWED BY ANIKA SINGH

THE BEST WAY TO GET TO THE SECOND floor of the Queens Museum of Art is to take the ascending ramp around the Panorama, a scale model of New York City designed by Robert Moses and Raymond Lester for presentation at the 1964-65 World's Fair. Moses and Lester intended the model to be used later for city planning purposes. But perhaps the most profound transformation of New York City over the past four decades has come from changes that no model of the city's buildings could reflect.

Shortly after the Panorama was unveiled at the World's Fair, Congress passed the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, repealing the decades-old discriminatory immigration policy which had imposed severe quotas on immigration from the non-Western world. By the late 1960s, new immigrants to the United States increasingly made their way from Asia and South America. Queens, a largely residential borough of New York City and home to two major airports that function as modern-day Ellis Islands, became a natural destination for thousands of new immigrants. Today, two million people, representing over one hundred nationalities, live in Queens. Ethnicity or nationality define many neighborhoods, as they did a century ago when clusters of Irish, Italian, Polish, or Greek-American residents marked the borders of individual neighborhoods. But because today's immigrants represent many more different groups than those of a century ago, ethnic neighborhoods flow into one another. Increasingly, families of different nationalities and races live on the same block and share the same public spaces.

On the Queens Museum's second floor earlier this year, Warren Lehrer and

Judith Sloan, a husband-wife team living in Queens, showed how they had "traveled the world by trekking the streets of their home borough." Their exhibit, *Crossing the BLVD*, told the stories of recent immigrants through writing, photographs, music, and recordings, now available in a book and CD of the same name.

The BLVD in the title refers to Queens Boulevard, a multilane highway where, according to a front page story in the New York Daily News three years ago, one pedestrian is killed every six weeks. The not-so-subtle metaphor for the difficulty of crossing from one place to the next defines Lehrer and Sloan's project.

In their extraordinary attempt to document "signs of migratory life, normally hidden within the mundane, sometimes hideous urban landscape of Queens," Lehrer and Sloan conducted interviews with post-1965 immigrants and their children between the 1999 and 2002. They undertook the impossible task of telling the story of modern-day Queens while providing a window into the geopolitical and cultural history of the postcolonial world.

Undeterred, Lehrer and Sloan succeed because they focus on seventy-nine powerful individual stories that deserve telling. These narratives' details vividly capture the impossibility of defining a single recent American immigration experience. Columnists and pundits have noted that the culture wars are more tenacious than ever: between the Christian right and the Hollywood left, between "red" and "blue" states. When political candidates consider the "minority vote," they focus on narrowly conceived categories such as African-Americans in suburbia or Latino swing voters in Florida and New Mexico. Reality, and real

people, tends to be more complicated. Harjinder Singh Duggal's story starts with a personal introduction: "I'm Indian first. Sikh second. Politician third. No, I'm American first. I must be grateful to this flag. Actually, I'm human being first. American second. Indian third. I mean, Sikh third. Indian fourth. Irish, maybe fifth or sixth." Try explaining that to the United States Census Bureau or a pollster.

Lehrer and Sloan divide the book into five sections. The first includes interviews with very recent immigrants, including six practitioners of Falun Gong and an Austrian science teacher; the second tells the stories of refugees, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, and Bhutan among other places; the third features families; the fourth focuses on individual Queens neighborhoods; the last explores places where individuals from a vast array of backgrounds meet: a ping-pong club, a high school, a political organization, and a rock band. It's telling that the book concludes with these ad hoc town squares. Lehrer and Sloan recognize borders and the difficulty of crossing or transcending them and, at the same time, want to prove their artificiality. Although often set far apart, the stories conspicuously echo one another.

In "Run for Your Life," the section on refugees, Lehrer and Sloan interview refugees from countries that many Americans could not locate on a map. In a one-bedroom apartment in Woodside live six Lhotshampas. Members of a Nepali-speaking Hindu minority group in Bhutan, they fled to India to escape persecution on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, and political activities. One describes herself as "Lhotshampa only by association." Born to a Buddhist family but married to a Lhotshampa, Yeshey Pel-

zom explains that her family disowned her when she refused to stop associating with Hindu classmates at college.

Meanwhile, in Far Rockaway, a Nigerian preacher wears a different tribe's ethnic dress to church each week so that none of her parishioners thinks that she favors one tribe over another. In Ozone Park, a young Indian immigrant meets his neighbor only when he buys a set of Butthole Surfer records from him on eBay. A Haitian immigrant puts a For Sale sign on his front yard in Laurelton. He soon realizes that a murderous former dictator, Toto Constant, lives in the neighborhood when Constant, now a local real estate broker, knocks on the door asking if he can show the house to a potential buyer.

*Crossing the BLVD* looks like a fourth-grade social studies textbook. Photographs of individual interviewees are stark against white backdrops, juxtaposed with first-person narratives, maps, photographs of immigration documents, and sidebars providing historical and cultural background information in red italics. Despite the book's textbook appearance, *Crossing the BLVD* is not overly didactic. Lehrer and Sloan shy from tying together the threads of the seventy-nine individual stories to

prove some overarching point about immigration policy.

The accompanying museum exhibit and CD expand the project into a multimedia classroom experience. The CD contains traditional music from the native countries of interviewees as well as compositions by composer Scott Johnson built around "audio collages": words and phrases picked out of audio recordings of interviews. Included in the museum exhibit is a booth where recent immigrants and their children can participate in the Crossing the BLVD project by telling their own stories and posing for a digital camera. The project's website ([www.crossingtheboulevard.org](http://www.crossingtheboulevard.org)) also has a place for people to post their experiences of immigration.

Not all of the multimedia bells and whistles help us to understand the Crossing the BLVD stories. In Johnson's previous work, the words sampled are virtually meaningless, and the music supplies the missing depth. The music on the Crossing the BLVD CD, however, fails to provide its poignant words with any context, instead exoticizing the project participants by sampling their voices into electronic music. Words are disconnected from their speakers, which undermines Lehrer and Sloan's

attempt to recall a tradition of oral history and, perhaps worse, bores listeners with a tired "East Meets West" formula. The website, on the other hand, brilliantly furthers the project by providing an ongoing mechanism for storytelling while making many of the stories and photographs published in the book and exhibited at the Queens Museum widely available.

Lehrer and Sloan may not have created a beautifully designed book nor a holistic multimedia experience, but they succeed nonetheless in telling a story that few people know—that of contemporary American immigration—by focusing on the individuals most affected by that process. The stories selected counter a prevailing trend toward oversimplification of American demographics and cultural history. For those interested in a good yarn—or seventy-nine of them—or for those interested in the raw material for sculpting policy, *Crossing the BLVD* is an important project with the admirable goal of encouraging people to listen attentively to rarely heard stories. ■

## Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of An American Dream

BY M. JEFFREY HARDWICK  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS, 2004

REVIEWED BY JOSH OLSEN

THAT MOST AMERICAN OF MODERN buildings—the shopping mall—is nothing if not a paradox. Stark and ugly on the outside, it is vibrant and pleasant inside. It creates remarkably human-scaled pedestrian environments while wrapping itself in a wasteland of parking lots. It is a privately owned public space. Perhaps most interestingly, it was originally built to encourage community, but for many years has been derided as its destroyer.

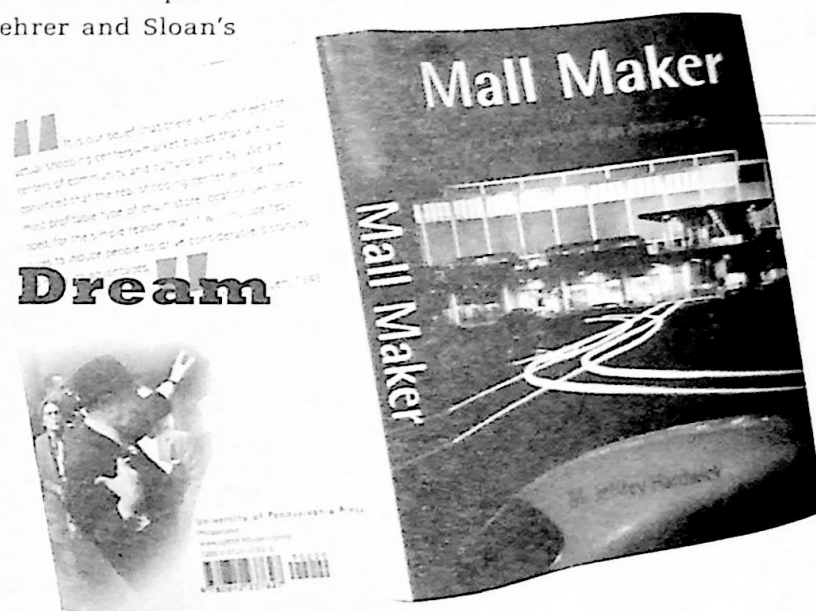
Fittingly, the designer of the original

mall, architect Victor Gruen, was himself a paradox. In *Mall Maker*, the first major biography of Gruen, author Jeffrey Hardwick recounts the career of this key player in the postwar initiatives to recreate the city and create anew the vast suburbs. *Mall Maker* is a cultural history with keen insights into how America melds socially progressive ideas with profit-seeking, one of the many difficult positions in Gruen's life and work.

Gruen, known for his first 38 years as

Gruenbaum, began and ended his life in Vienna, but he spent his most productive years (1938-1968) in the United States, pining for the cafés and urbanity of his hometown, dreaming of reconstituting them on this side of the Atlantic.

Gruen started by designing avant-garde storefronts for Fifth Avenue. But by the 1940s, sensing the direction that retail was headed, he began to work on stores for rapidly proliferating suburban strips. Gruen took it upon himself to negotiate a compro-





mise between urban and suburban environments. The only way to make the suburbs livable, he proclaimed, was to create carefully arranged shopping centers.

His first bricks-and-mortar realization of the urban-suburban compromise was a project called Northland, built for Hudson's department store outside of Detroit. The company, which had a huge downtown emporium, wanted to establish a suburban store to capture the business of customers who were migrating out of the city. Hudson's wanted a suburban presence in its own right—not just an isolated branch store. To that end, Gruen drew a large complex: Hudson's was at the center and other shops and public spaces pinwheeled around it. "Depending on their size," Hardwick relates, "he gave the open spaces different names: courts, terraces, malls, or lanes, explaining how he had borrowed the idea from Europe's centuries-old cities."

Then in 1952, another department store hired Gruen to create the Southdale shopping center in Edina, Minnesota. Gruen put ancillary stores on two levels facing each other across a courtyard, with a larger "anchor" outlet at either end. The court between served as a grand public square for suburbanites, to be used for art shows or concerts—there was even a sidewalk café. Most importantly, Gruen put a roof over the entire ensemble. The shopping mall was born, and as Americans decided that it was easier to visit the "perpetual spring" of the mall than trek downtown, the retail landscape was forever changed.

Remarkably, at the same time that Gruen was designing the institution that would put the nail in the coffin of down-

town shopping, he was also drawing bold plans for saving the central city. These coalesced in the mid-1950s with "A Greater Fort Worth Tomorrow"—one of those planning documents that, although never executed, has been cited in every history of planning written since. Some of the components also found their way, in a less sweeping fashion, into many struggling cities. Gruen suggested that Fort Worth build a series of parking garages in its downtown, with a new highway circling around them and a truck tunnel for deliveries. He wanted to convert many of the remaining streets outside the garages into pedestrian-only plazas. As Hardwick writes, "Implementation would foster a 'gradual upgrading' of downtown and the roads. It would also bring much-needed pedestrian space back to the city. The final result would be a 'stimulation of the social, cultural and civic aspects of downtown.'"

Gruen promoted both urban plans, like his one for Fort Worth, and suburban malls, like Southdale, into the mid-1960s, without seeing any contradiction between the two. His proposals were covered by publications ranging from *Glamour* to *Architectural Record*. Luminaries such as Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Philip Johnson took note of his innovative work. Indeed, Gruen was a man of his times, but he never became comfortable with his place. This designer of malls did not really enjoy consumerism, and this resident of Los Angeles hated driving.

In 1968 Gruen moved back to Vienna, and stayed there until his death twelve years later. He spent his later years giving speeches and writing articles criticiz-

ing America's malls, while at the same time helping design a few outside European cities. Gruen was upset that most malls never became hubs of high-density development and that shoppers remained dependent on their cars and the acres of asphalt necessary to park them. He also thought that the hundreds of enclosed shopping centers that followed Southdale only paid lip service to the need for well-designed public gathering spaces. The power of the creation was more than even its maker could control. If at some point the paradox of his life and legacy hit him while driving out from the Ringstrasse to a suburban ring road, Gruen never admitted it.

The story of Victor Gruen is part of urban history, but we should not regard the topics that Hardwick broaches in his book as relevant only to times past. As the 50th anniversary of the opening of Gruen's first mall approaches, many planners and architects are wondering how America's shopping centers can be re-invented. Some malls are losing their roofs and admitting cars along their once-enclosed streets. Others, including many built in cities, are doing an about-face and opening outward. Gruen's life provides a cautionary tale for today's designers. Without thinking carefully about how malls interact with the cities and suburbs around them, even the best conceived shopping center will not make our communities better places to live and work. ■

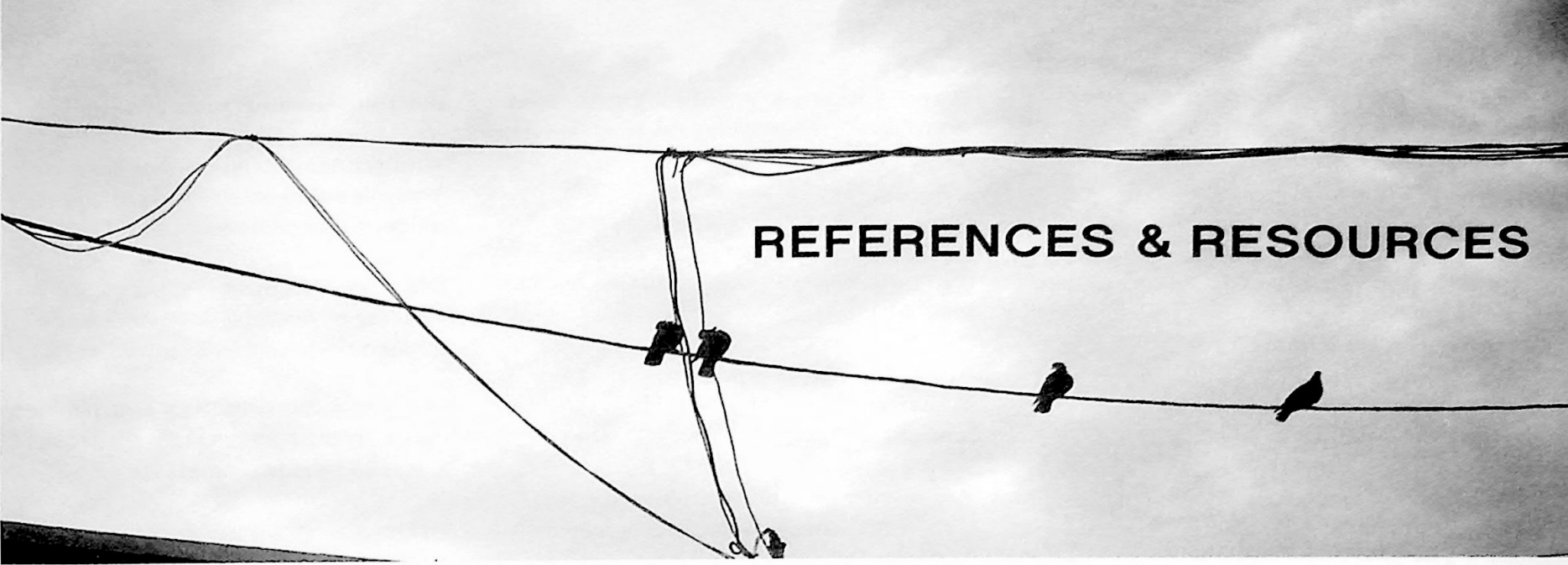


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PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER STARK



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## LAST EXIT

# BOSTON THROUGH THE EYES OF ITS MOPED GANG

BY JEFFERSON GRAU

It has been said that there are as many cities as there are people in a city.

The Boston that reveals itself first, easily, to day trippers and passers-through, is a collection of separate places where one burrows down into subway holes set in quiet streets and where, after a few dark and sleepy minutes of rocking through tunnels (though you don't seem to be moving at all), one pops back up again to surface blinking at the feet of inscrutable structures that disappear far above into clouds.

It is a collection of self-contained places strung along a web of red and green and orange, the coded network of trains and buses that abstracts the city into lines and connections, that abstracts the city beyond distance and transition and proportion, that is almost imaginary. Many people who live here have only known this Boston.

There is also a Boston found along the streets and expressways, threading with difficulty through stoplights and pressing hard against the open wounds of construction. There is the city you discover on your own two feet, a slow and intimate place, formed by the glacial running together of many neighborhoods, any of which can command devotion, and from which it is thus difficult to stray. And these two cities are forced into uneasy cohabitation, laid atop one another and winding tensely through one another.

And there is a Boston that only two strokes, 49 cubic centimeters, and a gallon of gasoline will make apparent.

Dave and I grew up in Pennsylvania, and when we were about seven, he would go on and on about mopeds. I never knew exactly what he was talking about—something about a motor and pedals. But he knew something that I didn't, and when, thirteen years later, a friend let me ride his bright orange moped—that was that, I understood.

Within a month or so after moving to Boston last July, I found a 1984 Garelli for less than \$400 through some guy north of the city. He brought it down in the back of a pickup with his son, who was just entering college and had apparently exhausted his moped phase by age fifteen, as most mopedophiles do. After nearly bursting a lung the next morning trying to get it going (it needed gas), I found the Boston I hadn't been looking for slipping lazily by as the two stroke engine pulled me steadily along, my heart pumping like the piston.

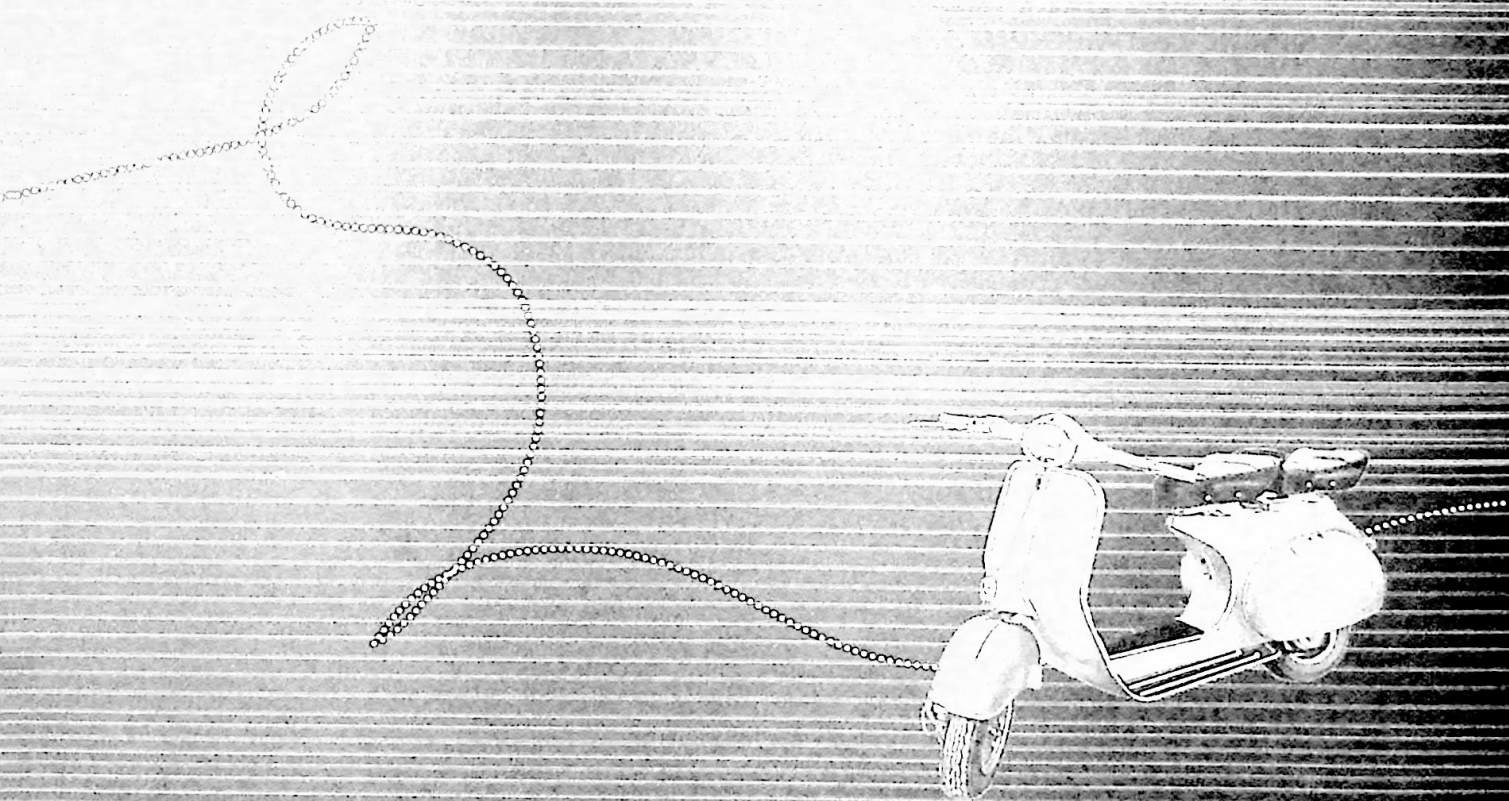
A week later I was accosted at a garage sale by Mike, who had been attempting to get together a Boston moped scene for some time. He has about five, in various states of disrepair—the majority of moped enthusiasts seem to possess at least three mopeds and spend the majority of their time transferring parts from one to the other in an occult effort to conjure life from tired metal. Since I met Mike, the ranks of the Boston moped gang, the kHz, have been growing. We got Dave a chrome Puch toptank, which he loved so much he was willing

to completely disregard his own life, and most of ours, every time he got it started. It has since come under the new ownership of a nameless thief who was no doubt forced to abandon it after finding that the engine seized, unloved, in desperate need of a tenderly mixed ratio of fuel and oil. Our hearts were broken. But there will be another.

The city is new to us, always. We weave ourselves into the city, not only into its arteries but into its capillary side streets—not easily. I have come to know neighborhoods and access routes that would have been completely alien, were I not liberated by my little engine, taking me on errands and to work and simply to be about on blinding Sunday joyrides and late wet nights. None of us are from the area originally, but with our 'peds, the whole place has become our city more than we could have dreamed. We find our feet, our wheels, caught between cement and taxicabs; we find ourselves becoming closer to the streets of Boston than we'd like sometimes, but they are streets that few others will know. We find ourselves at the business end of dirty looks and sophomoric jokes and aggressive automobile grills; it is out of confusion, we'll say, and misunderstanding, and (we like to think) a bit of envy.

But we are also stopped by groups of seven-year-old kids on kick-scooters whose eyes grow wide, and by people who had all but forgotten but now remember in grins their days at fifteen in the late '70s. We are few and far between, in general, and when we find others our eyes grow wide too and we already know one another. When we ride together, the city, all of the cities in Boston, seems to be ours, though our brakes are worn on the bottom of our shoes and we cannibalize ourselves by the side of the street and we sound like a swarm of emphysemic weedwhackers and just getting our engines running is a feat of endurance and majesty.

Maybe it is an exaggeration, what was said about cities, and how each person sees their own. We have found Boston, maybe one Boston, that we love. And atop our well-loved, aging little machines, we are still finding it. ■





## COMING UP IN ISSUE 7

### Undesirables

Why suburbs don't want kids

### Kids sputter out on asthma

Harlem 5th graders on their neighborhood's health challenges

### Teens & public space

How cities regulate hanging out

### The privatization of play space

#### PLUS

Environment: could alternative energy change development patterns?

Community: the next generation of civic organizations

And the great creative class debate continues in Ann Arbor, Cincinnati, Peekskill and Tacoma

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# KIDS & CITIES

