
Planning, Urban Revitalization, and the Inner City: An Exploration of Structural Racism

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The almost inextricable weaving together of the issues of race and inner-city revitalization presents a complex and seemingly intractable problem for urban and regional planners, scholars, policymakers, activists, and citizens. This article presents an overview of the dilemma from a city and regional planning perspective. It begins with a brief summary of basic planning theory, followed by a more detailed description of specific theories of revitalization, as well as a discussion of four of the most important forces of structural racism that confront inner cities. The article closes with a discussion of those approaches that have shown some promise and with suggestions for potential new approaches that will promote successful inner-city revitalization and reduce the isolation and deprivation of racial minorities inhabiting America's cities.

Race is a ubiquitous reality that must be acknowledged if planners do not want to simply be the facilitators of social exclusion and economic isolation.

—Robert Mier (1994, p. 236)

The issues of race and inner-city revitalization are woven together almost inextricably, presenting a complex and seemingly intractable problem for urban and regional planners, scholars, policymakers, activists, and citizens. In this article we present an overview of the dilemma from a city and regional planning perspec-

tive. We review facts and theoretical perspectives as a frame of reference from which to formulate new strategies for ensuring the success of inner-city revitalization efforts as well as reducing the further isolation and deprivation of racial minorities inhabiting America's cities.

We begin with a brief summary of basic planning theory, followed by a more detailed description of specific revitalization theories. Next, we develop a description of the relevant planning climate. We then discuss four of the most important forces of structural racism that confront inner cities.¹ We close with a discussion of those approaches that have shown some promise and with suggestions for potential new approaches for inner-city revitalization.

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THEORIES OF PLANNING

To orient readers in this discussion of planning theory as applied to the problems of social and economic decline in the central city, we first review the theory of planning in general before considering the specific problem of inner-city revitalization and the state of ethnic minorities in urban areas. The four dominant theoretical approaches to decision making and the planning process that we review here are rational planning, incrementalist planning, advocacy planning, and equity planning. Each theory presents a different interpretation of the planner as an agent of change, some advocating an idealized formula and others seeking to describe and defend a pragmatic model that more accurately reflects common practice.

Specific planning approaches to the problem of inner-city revitalization may emphasize either the government or the community as the vehicle for change and focus on either the economy of the inner city or the social and service needs of its residents. There is much disagreement over these strategies; many observers and scholars espouse one approach exclusively, whereas others believe that all of these tactics must be employed in tandem to successfully accomplish urban revitalization.

General Planning Theories

Rational planning constitutes the original roots of planning theory. Often called *comprehensive planning*, this approach to problem solving and plan preparation seeks to carefully and methodically consider every alternative action and potential outcome. Following identification of specific goals and objectives, alternative avenues to accomplishment of those goals are thoroughly assessed. Selection among alternatives is based primarily on each option's effectiveness for achieving the desired objective, and the plan is constantly updated and evaluated. In this way, comprehensive planning is an ongoing activity.

Many argue, however, that rational planning is oversimplified and unrealistic. Lindblom (1959) contends that such a thorough process can be undertaken only for the simplest problems; fiscal, legal, and political constraints make applying the comprehensive approach to realistic planning issues all but impossible. Instead, most planners must follow a more restrictive approach. This approach has been labeled *incrementalism* and is characterized by "successive limited comparisons" rather than simultaneous consideration of the full range of alternatives.

Full consideration of every alternative is unnecessary, argues Lindblom (1959), because only a few alternatives are realistically possible. He points out that policy does not move in leaps and bounds but in incremental adjustments to current policy. Therefore,

only alternatives that differ slightly from the status quo need to be evaluated. Furthermore, only the differences between the relevant alternatives are considered important issues to evaluate. Analysis of all potential consequences is misguided because of the impossibility of planning and policy serving as all things to all people. Because the outcome is bound to fail on some front, only the most relevant and important outcomes need be considered as decision-making criteria.

Similarly, incrementalists suggest that theory provides a less useful criterion for decision making than do experience and recent history. A theoretical perspective in a given area is often not complete enough to fully inform the planning process, whereas direct experience provides a practical, contextually accurate set of information and standards. City, society, and economy are in a state of continual evolution, which the incrementalist approach recognizes and readily accommodates. Gradual changes in planning and policy provide the most flexible response to goals and objectives that are always in a state of flux. Clearly, incrementalist theory describes a pragmatic, realistic approach to planning and decision making. In doing so, however, its focus has been primarily on the process of planning and its approach has been primarily *positivistic*.

Advocacy and equity planning have developed out of the critique that traditional planning in the form of comprehensive/rational or incrementalist planning has largely been exclusionary. Traditional planning's focus on using technical rationality to structure optimum public-private solutions minimizes or obfuscates racial minorities' roles in the process (Mier 1994).

Advocacy planning is explicitly prescriptive; it argues that planning professionals should foster democratization of the planning process by actively working on behalf of community groups or agencies that have traditionally been underrepresented (Davidoff 1965). Truly democratic planning is not limited to allowing every citizen a voice, Davidoff argues. Citizens must also have the available resources to interpret technical information and respond in kind. Advocacy planning makes those resources available to citizen groups through assistance from, and representation by, professional planners. This ideal contrasts directly with the traditional expectation that planners remain objective; that is, that they serve primarily as technicians to a central planning agency.

Implicit in the theory of advocacy planning is the idea of *pluralism*: that the planning process should be guided by multiple viewpoints and entities, rather than by the technical staff of a central planning agency. Pluralism occurs when organizations within the community prepare their own plans or participate in the preparation of a comprehensive plan by the planning commission. Davidoff asserts that this process ensures

consideration of a wider, more representative range of alternatives than does a singular process. In addition, both the public planning agency and its critics are encouraged to produce more thoughtful and effective plans so that they can compete with each other for public approval and political support. This process yields higher quality plans than a more centralized process might.

Most recently, planning theory has evolved to the concept of *equity planning*, “a conscious attempt . . . to devise and implement redistributive policies that move resources, political power, and participation toward low-income groups” (Krumholz 1997). Equity planning shares with advocacy planning a rejection of the notion of the planner as objective technician, but it takes the planners’ role beyond that of advocacy in making sure underrepresented voices are heard to that of giving planners the specific social responsibility of promoting redistribution where there is an imbalance of power and resources. “Racial justice is an important priority for equity planners since deprivation and discrimination disproportionately affect low-income communities of color” (Krumholz 1997). Not only does this focus help ensure that every citizen has an equal opportunity to meet his or her basic needs; it also recognizes the fact that minority involvement in politics is increasing and anticipates service to a shifting set of political priorities.

Planning’s original theoretical perspective, then, was the rational/comprehensive approach, essentially a top-down and centralized approach in which the comprehensive focus was largely limited to technical considerations rather than social ones. Soon, however, planners became humbled by the inability to perform truly comprehensive planning. Incrementalist planning resulted and was more realistic in acknowledging how change occurs or may be brought about. Again, however, it did little to incorporate the voices of those for whom change was most needed and who were left behind in the process of spatial and economic restructuring. Advocacy and equity planning have evolved in reaction to the unintended and negative consequences that planning’s previous approaches have had for those who were excluded from the planning process. Both require that the voices of those most underrepresented in, and least benefiting from, the current development process be explicitly incorporated into planning. Equity planning goes even further: it argues that having a voice is not enough. Instead, specific efforts must be made to redress the imbalances of resources, opportunities, and power that contribute to the material and social inequities experienced by racial minorities.

Revitalization Theories

The inner city and its revitalization are complex issues that have been approached from many different

directions. Goldsmith (1979), for example, organizes prevailing thought on the inner city into three broad categories: approaches that view the inner city entirely negatively and focus solely on the employment and suburbanization of black residents; approaches that focus on capitalism and the promotion of white or black business in the inner city within the confines of existing political and market institutions; and approaches that focus on building a concentration of black political and economic power within the inner city, separated from the white mainstream society.

At the heart of every theory of revitalization, however, lie the issues of the change vehicle and the change strategy. Most consider the appropriate vehicle for change to be either the government or the community, and strategies for change can be grouped according to their economic or social focus.

As might be expected, opinions are sharply divided on the role of government in neighborhood revitalization. Porter (1997) writes that governmental support is important but should be limited to the creation of an acceptable business environment. Direct regulation and subsidy have caused more harm than good, he argues. Government subsidies, training, tax incentives, and affirmative action programs should be strictly limited to those based on a strategy of competitive advantage. Local governments can also participate in marketing the area to prospective companies, again focusing on the role of the neighborhood in the competitive market system. Harrison and Glasmeier (1997) disagree with Porter; they note that the public sector can also play an important role in “brokering, financing, and otherwise facilitating . . . cluster developments and networking.” In addition, local governments have successfully created public-private partnerships that integrate minority firms into the mainstream market.

Others agree that governmental intervention is necessary for revitalization of the inner city. Henry (1997) states that “long-term contracts between qualified inner-city entrepreneurs and the government are deemed necessary to generate significant and stable inflows. Such contracts are fundamental to diffusion of labor market opportunities to inner cities to foster socioeconomic development” (p. 145). He asserts that racial discrimination makes it necessary for government to provide contracts to inner-city businesses to stimulate that resource inflow. Although some complain that subsidies to the inner city are an inequitably extravagant expenditure of public monies, Henry points out that ultimately, a very small percentage of “government subsidies accrue to the inner-city populace.”

Fainstein and Gray (1997) contend that economic development in the inner city without government intervention all but guarantees continued poverty. Businesses drawn to the inner city by economic devel-

opment efforts will draw labor from outside the area and pay wages too low to support families, thereby introducing new business to the economy but failing in any redistributive role. Fainstein and Gray maintain that government must be involved and must ensure adequate housing, schools, and day care so that residents can fully benefit from economic development activities.

With or without government action, the community itself is considered by many to be the most important force for change. Krumholz (1996) points out that community action is a way of ensuring that programs have widespread support. In addition, he states, community-based organizations can foster spirit, discipline, and self-help within the neighborhood and rally to effect improvements in infrastructure and government services.

Porter (1997) asserts that community-based organizations are an integral component of any plan for inner-city economic revitalization, but only if they collaborate with private industry rather than working at cross purposes with, or duplicating the role of, the private sector. Community-based organizations can build on their existing business networks to coordinate advice and financial support for local businesses, connect local citizens with jobs, implement programs that address the needs of local businesses, and assist with the identification and improvement of suitable sites for business and industry.

Harrison and Glasmeier (1997) respond that these roles, although important, are too narrow. They argue that community-based organizations can also attract new business to the inner city and encourage minority entrepreneurship. In addition, community-based organizations have appropriately and successfully produced affordable housing, developed business space, and created full-time employment.

Neighborhood organizations often take the form of community development corporations, or CDCs. CDCs are groups formally organized and controlled by stakeholders in the community, usually as non-profit corporations, with the purpose of revitalizing faltering neighborhoods. Most are involved in the provision of affordable housing, but other common activities include human services provision, advocacy, real estate development, and business development. Financial support is provided to CDCs by federal, state, and local governments (Vidal 1996).

Neighborhood-based planning can also be less formalized; it can consist merely of the active inclusion of neighborhood groups in the development and review of plans or service provision. Such groups are limited to an advisory capacity; local elected bodies retain ultimate authority. Neighborhood participation of this kind can help officials gauge local concerns and plan in

a more evenhanded fashion. On the other hand, it can also lead to parochialism and be skewed by underrepresentation of minorities and the underprivileged (Fainstein and Hirst 1996).

Many observers favor a combination of government support and neighborhood action. Krumholz (1996), for example, states that "a key first element in a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy is a neighborhood advocacy organization or community development corporation." He goes on to add that such organizations should be partially funded by the city.

In fact, he asserts that community-based organizations alone are insufficient for successful revitalization efforts. "A more comprehensive, long-term strategy is needed . . . that involves regional, state, and federal responsibilities as well" (Krumholz 1996, 216).

The strategies appropriate for revitalization efforts are also a hotly contested issue. Some observers advocate a focus on the inner-city economy, whereas others target social and service issues. Another sizable contingent, of course, believes that both strategies must be employed simultaneously.

Porter (1997) falls firmly into the first camp, contending that "employment opportunities are a linchpin for the success of virtually all other programs designed to improve human capabilities, values, and attitudes in distressed communities." The inner city should capitalize on its competitive economic advantages: its location near business centers and transportation hubs, its proximity to regional business clusters, the unmet demand of the local consumer market, and the large potential workforce. Such a strategy must focus on

private, for-profit initiatives, and investments based on economic self-interest and genuine competitive advantage instead of artificial inducements, government mandates, or charity. A sound economic strategy must focus on the position of inner cities as part of regional economies, rather than treating inner cities as separate, independent economies; otherwise, economic activity there will not be sustainable. (Porter 1997, P. 12)

The advantages cited by Porter, however, are offset by many obvious disadvantages, which must be addressed if an economic strategy for revitalization is to be used. Henry (1997) considers the primary disadvantages of an inner-city business location to be a lack of access to land, capital, and an adequate workforce; high crime; an inadequate transportation infrastructure; and an antibusiness attitude among many inner-city residents.

Robinson-Barnes (1997) argues that the social needs of the inner city's residents must take precedence over purely economic considerations when undertaking revitalization efforts. She states that "the ability of the residents of a community to cultivate skills that enable

them to be productive and to secure incomes that allow them to support themselves and their families is fundamentally an economic development issue." To meet the needs of area residents and increase their productivity, several different issues, including high school drop-out rates, job training, and school/business partnerships, must be addressed.

Blakely and Small (1997) state that an effective paradigm must include attention to both people and places: "Connecting the economy with people and opportunity to create wealth and net new jobs must be the goal of any form of ghetto economic development" (p. 174). They consider the primary issues to be development of employment, creation of a locational advantage, formation of social capital, reduction of welfare dependency, and the creation of local economic institutions.

Debates about the effectiveness of the previously discussed strategies for inner-city revitalization are moot without *explicit* consideration of the influence of racism. As Mier (1994) stated,

Race is a powerful aspect of most planning situations in urban areas, yet it too often is the *last* way a problem, or especially an opportunity, is framed. . . . The fundamental lesson I learned from my years as director of development in Chicago under Mayor Harold Washington is that race should be the first way to frame a local planning or development problem. (Pp. 235-6)

Were he alive today, Mier's experience in economic development planning for the city of Chicago and his resulting viewpoint on the significance of the racial lens would likely lead him to regard Porter's solutions as naive. That inner cities are not treated as part of regional economies and, instead, are treated as separate, independent economies—that is, ghettoized—can largely be attributed to racism. Unless we address this racism explicitly and systematically, inner cities will never be an integral part of the metropolitan or regional economy.

Later in this article we will highlight four major issues of inner-city revitalization that are inextricably linked with the forces of structural racism: regulation of land use, brownfields, crime, and transportation. First, however, we review the macro planning and policy environment that has evolved for inner-city revitalization efforts.

MACRO PLANNING AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Perhaps the most obvious component of the inner-city planning environment is federal policy for urban areas. Keating and Smith (1996) categorize federal policy according to decades. They start with the New Deal and then move on to describe the 1950s, when programs centered on urban redevelopment and urban renewal. These programs aimed to transform urban blight into

productive areas that could house more attractive, usually private, economic uses. Although the programs often did slow the physical deterioration of the neighborhoods in question, they also hastened social decay of the community.

The 1960s saw a shift in focus from physical planning to social issues with particular attention to the poverty that seemed to be pandemic in the inner city. This decade was marked by Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, which spawned many programs designed to empower inner-city residents, such as Head Start and Legal Services. In 1965, the government created the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which was intended to coordinate urban policies and programs for increased effectiveness. The Model Cities program was HUD's first major undertaking.

During the 1970s, cities saw a decrease in the amount of large-scale federal bureaucracy aimed at urban policies and programs. Nixon's "new federalism" consolidated several grant programs into a single Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which dedicated federal monies to assist low-income residents. These grants were to be administered at the local level by urban municipalities, however, rather than by the federal government. Nixon also began to pursue a more conservative market philosophy by transferring housing assistance from supply subsidies to demand subsidies as a means of providing financial support directly to low-income residents. During his term, President Carter implemented two programs aimed at providing direct neighborhood benefits (Neighborhood Self-Help Development Program and Urban Development Action Grants) and effected two laws directed at neighborhood reinvestment (the *Home Mortgage Disclosure Act* [2 U.S.C.A.-2801, 1975] and the *Community Reinvestment Act of 1977* [8 Pac. L.J. 1021, *1139]).

During the 1980s, devolution of responsibilities from the federal to the state and local level often drastically reduced the level of federal intervention in housing and community development. The Neighborhood Development Demonstration program "provided matching grants to community groups to expand their development activities by facilitating public/private partnerships" (Keating and Smith 1996). Another major program from that era was the Low-Income Tax Credit, by which tax credits were granted for corporate investment in low-income housing.

The 1990s brought competition for cities to win substantial grant awards under the Empowerment Zone (EZ) Program. The first awards, made in 1994, were for more than \$3 billion and went to six cities: New York; Philadelphia-Camden; Baltimore; Chicago; Detroit, MI; and Atlanta, GA. The EZ Program focuses on the most distressed neighborhoods. It works through existing channels to involve the citizens of these areas in their

community's revitalization; that is, the residents decide how the monies and tax incentives from the grant are to be spent. This focus on "empowering" the residents of distressed areas is a hallmark of the EZ approach and signals a change in federal policy toward community-based initiatives.

Predating the EZ Program is one of the best-known community-based initiatives: the Atlanta Project in Atlanta, Georgia. The Atlanta Project, founded by former President Jimmy Carter in 1991, emphasized urban revitalization and the eradication of poverty for a geographic area surrounding Atlanta that included 500,000 people. The many corporations, academic institutions, and service providers within the area were expected to work together on needs identified by the residents of the area (Keating et al. 1996; Smith 1997).

Neither the EZ Program nor the other major federally instigated community development move of the 1990s, the *Affordable Housing Act of 1990* (U.S. Public Law 101-625, 504), have proven widely or sufficiently successful at fulfilling their goals. Keating and Smith (1996) draw from their historical review of urban policy the following lessons:

On the one hand, redistributive programs, such as those offered in the War on Poverty, are more likely to assist those in need directly than distributive programs such as CDBG. On the other hand, there is a greater likelihood that the latter approach will gain political approval, especially in fiscally conservative periods. There also is ample evidence of the relationship between the degree of federal control over the use of funds and the ability to target those people with the greatest need. Although federal block grants shift the decisionmaking process to the local level, where it is presumed to be more efficient, it also opens up the possibility that funding will be diffused in the community if the intended goal of policy is broadly defined. (P. 57)

STRUCTURAL FORCES OF RACISM

Planning's Misappropriated Tool—Zoning

Zoning policy has played a major role in creating the plight of today's inner city; in its various forms, it has affected the pattern of residential segregation that makes revitalization such a difficult undertaking. As jobs move from the inner city to the suburbs, affordable housing within a reasonable distance of those jobs becomes more and more difficult for low- and middle-income families to obtain. Because these families cannot afford expensive homes in the suburbs, they are confined to the inner city. In this way, racial or exclusionary zoning has mapped the metropolitan cities into clear, segregated areas.

Originally, city planners used zoning to protect residential areas from industrial expansion. As early as

1908, state governments allowed cities to regulate the physical details of any buildings within city limits. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld that zoning power in its rulings on *Hadacheck v. Sebastian* (1915, 239 U.S. 394) and *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Corporation* (1926, 272 U.S. 365). But during this time, municipalities also blatantly used racial zoning as a tool to exclude undesirable groups from entering their communities and to prevent the spread of slums into upscale neighborhoods. In 1917, however, the Supreme Court declared racial zoning unconstitutional in its ruling in the case of *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917, 245 U.S. 60). Therefore, municipalities became creative, developing more subtle ways to legally exclude undesired groups from their neighborhoods (Silver 1997).

Although racial zoning is illegal today, special interest groups have gradually developed zoning ordinances that make moving into the upscale suburbs all but impossible for low- to middle-income residents, who are disproportionately racial minorities. These types of zoning ordinances have been labeled *exclusionary*, and they serve as de facto racial zoning. Between the 1960s and 1970s, exclusionary zoning practices were challenged in the Supreme Court. Three important concepts or definitional issues emerged to shape the Supreme Court's decisions:

(1) who is a family member and concurrently who has the right to live with each other, (2) who has the right to bring a lawsuit against a community that is pursuing a discriminatory land use policy, and (3) how is it possible to prove that the intent of a municipal planning or zoning policy is racially discriminatory, if the only evidence you have is the discriminatory impact of the policy. (Ritzdorf 1997, P. 47)

In the 1960s, the definition of *family* became a primary issue because of an increase in nontraditional living arrangements. Some of these nontraditional families include alternate families (cohabitation of unmarried members of the opposite sex) and extended families (which applied mostly to African American families). Communities that wished to protect themselves from the nontraditional family often enacted zoning ordinances allowing only the more traditional nuclear family. Ultimately, the Supreme Court upheld the right of extended families to live together, thus removing an implicit source of discrimination against African American families, but rejected the right for alternate families to exist in certain neighborhoods.

When considering potentially discriminatory zoning ordinances, the U.S. Supreme Court must also decide the question of who has the right to bring a lawsuit against a specific community pursuing a questionable land use policy. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the 1975 case of *Warth v. Seldin* (422 U.S. 490)

because it determined that the plaintiffs did not have standing or “a sufficiently personal stake in the outcome of a case to warrant its consideration by the Court” (Ritzdorf 1997). The plaintiffs in the *Warth* case were a minority group who wished to sue the town of Penfield, New York, because its zoning ordinances prevented the construction of multifamily housing, thereby restricting low-income residents from moving into its community. Even though the evidence supporting the *Warth* case was overwhelmingly strong, the U.S. Supreme Court denied standing to the litigants. The U.S. Supreme Court concluded that even though the minority group shared the same attitudes common to persons who may have been excluded from residence in Penfield, they did not have standing because they had not been personally injured by these ordinances. This decision, and the one described next, illustrate the insidious pattern that structural racism can take.

In the case of *Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation v. Village of Arlington Heights* (1977, 558 U.S. 1283), the distinction between the harmful effect of zoning ordinances and the intent to discriminate was made by the U.S. Supreme Court. In this case, an all-white community refused to rezone to allow low- and moderate-income housing. The result was continued segregation in the community. Because no evidence showed that discrimination was the motive behind Arlington Heights’s refusal to rezone, the community had acted legitimately. However, the U.S. Supreme Court did find that under Title VIII, racially exclusionary zoning could be proven on the basis of disparate impact.

Although state court cases have abolished certain aspects of exclusionary zoning, U.S. Supreme Court decisions like the ones described here reveal the essence of zoning practice nationwide. The rulings on these three court cases have had the effect of greatly limiting the ability of minority groups to challenge exclusionary zoning on the basis of human rights issues. Therefore, asserts Ritzdorf (1997), “Although segregation in employment, public accommodations, education, and other aspects of American life have lessened somewhat, residential separation in the 1990s has remained essentially at the same levels as in the 1960s” (pp. 46-47).

Contemporary exclusionary zoning measures take many different forms. Communities desiring to keep their neighborhoods “pure” employ different zoning ordinances that are not easily recognized as exclusionary. Expulsive zoning is an exclusionary mechanism that uses black neighborhoods as a dumping site for landfills or unwanted residential uses such as drug rehabilitation units or prisons. Some zoning ordinances explicitly prohibit lower-income homework such as beauticians and barbers but allow middle- to upper-

income homework such as accounting or insurance practices. Other zoning ordinances that restrict the provision of child care or elder care and prohibit inappropriate uses of property are easily validated through nuisance and noise laws. The range of these exclusionary measures makes the survival of low-income families in a community very difficult (Ritzdorf 1997).

The advent in the 1980s of growth management policies, which rely largely on stricter building codes and zoning laws, has been a major response to the attendant problems of urban sprawl. But policies to restrict growth have serious, negative consequences for blacks, according to Downs (1994). Such policies are another exclusionary force. “Communities practicing growth management have become isolated from the cities around which they cluster, and they have become exclusionary. More important, these policies have not solved these problems; they have merely dumped them on others” (p. vii). Downs goes on to observe, “the most dangerous result of growth management policies is that they help perpetuate the concentration of very poor households in depressed neighborhoods in big cities and older suburbs” (p. 4.).

Municipalities and states have begun to include the provision for low-income housing in their statutes. Approximately twenty states require an affordable housing component in comprehensive plans. Typically, the basis for inclusion of low-income housing is made through the requirement to provide land use opportunities development such as multifamily housing or small-lot zoning. These opportunities represent a “fair share” problem in which determination of a fair share is defined by the local jurisdiction or state. For example, both California and Oregon have statutes requiring a low-income housing component. California requires that local jurisdictions provide for a low-income housing component in their master plans to meet what has been determined to be their share of the regional housing need for affordable housing (Mandelker 1993).

Some might argue that fair-share policies can correct the poverty-concentrating impacts of growth management policies. However, because antiblack behavior by whites within housing markets (as well as education systems and employment markets) is a significant contributing factor to blacks’ lower economic status, Downs (1994) argues that we need explicit race-oriented policies that have direct compensatory and integrative mechanisms.

The Brownfield Dilemma

Burby and Strong (1997) note that

Colin (1992) and others have amply demonstrated that zoning decisions and discriminatory real estate lending

and sales practices have long been used to maintain racially segregated housing patterns. Thus, the disproportionate exposure of minority communities to industrial pollution, even if not the result of discrimination by industry or the federal government, can be traced to institutionalized bias. (P. 476)

A major land use issue whose resolution is critical to the revitalization of inner cities and minority communities is that of the environmental remediation and economic redevelopment of brownfields. As opposed to green fields, or undeveloped land, a brownfield is an abandoned, idle, or underused property where redevelopment or expansion is limited by actual or perceived environmental contamination. The barriers to development that brownfields pose for our oldest urban areas may relegate substantial portions to permanent wasteland if present environmental policies and economic development practices continue. With their continuation, employment and economic development prospects are diminished for inner-city residents.

From an economic development and planning perspective, two factors are key for explaining failed efforts to revitalize inner cities during the latter half of this century. First, industrial restructuring has eroded the economic base of inner cities, thereby eliminating manufacturing jobs and leaving vacant industrial properties. Second, metropolitan regions' overly decentralized land use control, development practices, and public service funding have facilitated the growth sectors' (typically given some sort of services label) location outside the inner city. The resultant growing inequality between the urban poor and wealthy is well documented (see, as only a small sample of recent work, Kozol 1991; Reich 1992; Sassen 1991; Rusk 1993; Squires 1989; Wilson 1993).

The inability to resolve the issue of widening inequality is further exacerbated by efforts in recent years to resolve another of our nation's critical issues: remediation and control of contaminated land. National environmental legislation has profoundly altered the rules of the urban redevelopment game. As a result of this legislation, we have under way a process of "environmental redlining," or "brownlining" (i.e., identifying areas to be excluded from redevelopment consideration), that significantly diminishes efforts to improve the economic status and quality of life of populations residing in areas containing contaminated land (Leigh 1994).² For much of the inner-city minority community, this means victimization twice in this century by redlining practices that have actually been reinforced by federal policies.

Although industrial activity is most recognized as a source of environmental contamination, it is important

to recognize that certain commercial activities—notably gas stations, auto repair shops, and dry cleaners—are also highly correlated with environmental contamination. Historically, gas stations and dry-cleaning establishments were neighborhood businesses, so most urban blocks contain at least one.

State and federal regulations intended to prevent or remediate environmental contamination have resulted in large-scale market failure for brownfield redevelopment projects. Knowledge and suspicion of a site's contamination typically result in it no longer being considered for redevelopment and can even taint prospects for contiguous sites. Developers shun such sites because of the liability that owners of a contaminated site assume by law, whether or not they were the actual contaminators, and because of the costs—which may not be fully calculable at the outset—incurred to clean up the site for reuse.

An analysis by Leigh and Gradeck (1996) provides insight into the incidence and location of environmentally suspect, tax-delinquent (ESTD) properties—potential brownfield sites—for the city of Milwaukee by plotting the Tax Assessor's list of 473 ESTD properties by city census tracts. Specific variables from the 1990 U.S. Census of Population were attached to a database of ESTDs that the authors created to provide insight into the socioeconomic status of the population living in census tracts containing ESTD properties. In brief, this exercise uncovered that the socioeconomic status of the population most affected by ESTD properties is lower than that of census tracts with relatively few such sites, that the city's black population is disproportionately affected, and that the average number of ESTD sites in tracts within Milwaukee's empowerment zone is more than double that of tracts outside the zone.

In another analysis by Leigh and Coffin (1998) that focused on the city of Atlanta, a database that incorporates known sites along with potential sites of contamination was built. The identification of potential sites was based on the nature of their historical land uses (commercial or industrial known to generate hazardous by-products) dating back to 1910. To explore the implications for inner-city residents, the historical land uses and officially listed sites were integrated into a Geographic Information System (GIS), along with socioeconomic characteristics of census tracts. The analysis of known and potential sites revealed that they are overwhelmingly located in census tracts with the lowest incomes (those below \$12,500), higher numbers of nonwhite population versus white population, and highest population density (with the exception of the northwestern section of the city, which is an industrial corridor). Compared with most major cities, Atlanta's densest areas of population are relatively low, yet the highest concentration of potential and

known brownfield sites are located in census tracts for which no or very little population growth is projected.

Brownfield properties may be unattractive for development for numerous reasons, including inadequate infrastructure, blighted neighborhoods, high crime rates, or lack of an adequately trained workforce. Perceived or actual contamination provides one more reason for developers to invest in the suburbs because the liability for cleanup falls on all potentially responsible parties. Potential buyers often shy away and instead seek uncontaminated land in suburban areas. What remains are vacant sites scattered throughout the urban center of industrial cities.

The inadvertent but serious consequences for brownfield redevelopment of environmental remediation requirements are beginning to be addressed. Some chipping away of the overall market failure is occurring as private developers and lenders become more knowledgeable about contamination and the risks and costs associated with redeveloping such properties. Where extraordinary returns may be expected, these properties will be redeveloped. Extraordinary returns will, of course, most likely be generated by properties that are well located, have particularly desirable structures on them, or are relatively large sites with the possibility of storing contaminants on one portion designated for nonintensive use. In other words, the private sector can be expected to “cream off” the best of the contaminated properties for redevelopment. However, the brownfields in most of the inner city’s poorest neighborhoods will simply fall out of the market. Those sites put such neighborhoods at higher risks of hazardous material exposure, vagrancy and criminal behavior, and deflation of surrounding property values.

Within the public sector, program innovations by some states have occurred in response to the need to resolve the impasse created by national environmental legislation. To work, these programs must be able to effectively supersede federal legislation. At the local level, city governments such as Milwaukee’s are beginning to evaluate their problem properties and develop means by which to dispose of, or redevelop, them. By what criteria will they choose properties for resolution? Clearly, if the properties number in the hundreds (Milwaukee’s number of tax-delinquent and environmentally suspect properties topped 500 after the completion of Leigh and Gradeck’s analysis), not all can be remediated and redeveloped.

Serious consideration must be given to the criteria by which the number of brownfield properties are reduced to avoid promulgating yet another force for widening urban inequality. Cost-benefit analysis has been suggested as an appropriate method for making environmental remediation choices. It would, however, work counter to the goals of environmental justice if an

inner-city version of a rationale that Hanink (1995) cited were to prevail. In discussing the issue of international environmental rights, Hanink quoted a World Bank memo that

suggested the costs of pollution in poorer countries were lower than in richer countries on human capital terms. The loss of health or life of a poor country’s average resident represents less forgone income than the same loss to an average rich country resident [and] the demand for high-quality environments is probably highly income elastic, so poorer people are more willing to accept environmental degradation as a necessary condition of production than are richer people. (P. 381)

It is, in fact, just such a rationale that the environmental justice movement claims has led to the historical siting of toxic waste facilities and other undesirable land uses next to poor minority communities.

Will fiscally squeezed city governments feel pressured to use only economic criteria in selecting brownfield properties to receive the limited remediation dollars that have recently been made available? If so, we risk undervaluing the costs of allowing brownfield sites to remain in poor neighborhoods on the basis of foregone tax revenue, redevelopment opportunities, profits, and residents’ participation in the economy. Although the layer of contaminated properties below those with which the private sector would not deal is treated, the “bottom of the barrel” will still remain untouched, thereby contributing to a widening of the gap between the worst-off neighborhoods and the rest of the city.

The Stigma of Crime

Critically underrecognized, crime, or the perception of crime, serves as a rationalizing force working against motivating a stronger political and metropolitan-wide effort to revitalize the inner city. Furthermore, efforts to “get tough on crime” concentrate societal focus on incarcerating criminals—who are disproportionately racial minorities from inner cities—rather than alleviating the economic and social conditions that contribute to their criminal development.

Although regional solutions are necessary to solve the problems of the inner city, the suburban portions of metropolitan regions, citing their concerns that it is a dangerous place, often turn their backs on the inner city. Interestingly enough, although the incidence of the kinds of crime most associated with inner cities is declining, concerns about crime have been increasing. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reports that serious reported crime declined 9.4 percent between 1991 and 1996, and violent crime declined 12 percent. Yet, Gallup surveys that asked people what they considered to be the most important problems facing the nation found that those citing crime grew from only 1

percent in 1990 to 52 percent in 1994. Some, but by no means all, of a portion of this increase must be attributed to the fact that 1994 was the year a major crime bill was before the Congress and administration (Littman 1998). But this also helps to illustrate the point, to be discussed in more detail subsequently, that the media plays a significant role in fueling the fears of suburbanites toward inner cities and their residents. Bad news makes for good news stories, and violent-crime reports dominate the news. The white suburbanite, however, is not “the most likely victim of personal crime, [it is instead a] male, 16 to 19 years old, black, living in an urban area, and with a household income under \$7,500” (Littman 1998, 110).

This is not to deny that crime is a genuine problem in the inner city, but it is far more a problem for residents of the inner city than for the suburbanites who travel there. Harold Rose, the first and only African American president of the American Association of Geographers, pioneered in studies of black violence and criminal behavior. “Black on black” violence and gang activity are, arguably, the nation’s greatest crime and violence problems. But as Rose and McClain (1990) have noted,

To rationalize higher-than-average homicide rates in the nation at large by stigmatizing the population at highest risk represents a misdirected effort. However, some criminal justice researchers apparently find it easier to label black homicide offenders as “normal primitives” (see Sigert and Farrell, 1976) and/or to assign them other pejorative labels than to arrive at an objective assessment of the persistence of elevated risk in the nation’s black communities. (P. 1)

Rose correlates the rising levels of victimization and homicide in ghetto communities across the nation with the deterioration of the manufacturing economy and intensification of labor market problems for inner-city residents. Emerging evidence also suggests that at least some portion of the decline in crime noted previously is attributable to major cities’ police departments underreporting crime. For example, in 1998, the FBI criticized the city of Atlanta’s police department for underreporting or improperly categorizing (downgrading to less serious crimes) as a means of making the city look as if its performance were improving. A city’s motivation for doing so may be protection of its tourist and convention activity, but the result is the undermining of what should be serious public attention to improving the conditions of poor, urban, and largely minority neighborhoods.

Carpini (1998) offers insight into how the media saddle the inner city with the stigma of crime. He notes that the U.S. mass media’s private ownership, high centralization, and elite domination pose particular problems for poor, local, and nonwhite communities that lack the

economic resources needed to effectively control or get access to the media. The media increasingly focus on creating mass audiences and, therefore, have little incentive to represent the interests of select communities such as poor, inner-city neighborhoods. Media outlets for information exchange within minority communities have decreased markedly. Carpini writes: “At least as troubling as under-representation is the misrepresentation of minority populations. Minorities in the main stream media are consistently and disproportionately portrayed in a negative light.”

Notable for our focus here is Carpini’s discussion of the way the media frame social issues and prime public reaction to them. Television, the most common source of information in the United States, tends to frame issues episodically, as opposed to thematically. Furthermore, Carpini notes the increasing tendency to use episodic framing in the electronic and print media.

To elaborate, episodic framing shows issues in specific or concrete terms (homeless person, unemployed worker, airline bombing) with a focus on high visual appeal, whereas thematic framing places an issue in a broader context such as an in-depth report consisting primarily of a “talking head.” The following quote that Carpini takes from Iyengar helps to illuminate the prevalent “blame the victim” and “avoid the victim” attitudes toward the inner-city resident:

Viewers who are exposed to news coverage that is thematically framed tend to assign responsibility for national issues to societal factors—cultural values; economic circumstances; or the motives, actions and inactions of government officials. . . . However, when television news coverage is heavily episodic (as is usually the case for issues such as poverty, crime, and terrorism), viewers attribute responsibility not to societal forces, but to the private motives and actions of poor people, criminals, and terrorists, respectively. (P. 12)

Suburbanites not only fear traveling into the inner city but also having inner-city residents traveling into their communities. This factor plays a part in suburban communities’ refusal to allow city mass transit lines to extend to the suburbs. Without this extension, however, inner-city residents’ employment prospects are significantly diminished.

Thwarted Mass Transportation Systems

The provision of transportation services to inner-city residents is vitally important to improving their opportunities for participating in the economy. Continuing suburbanization of employment opportunities means that inner-city residents must have a means of traveling to the suburbs for work. Ironically, in Motor City of all places, only one in four residents owns a car (Meredith 1998). The city has a high unemployment rate, whereas

the suburban corporate sector cannot get enough workers; nonetheless, suburban Detroit has long refused to coordinate its bus system with the separate system for the city. This apartheid regional mass transit system makes it all but impossible for inner-city residents, who were 76 percent black, to gain access to jobs in the suburbs, where the residents are 91 percent white.³

In the Atlanta city region, the two highest growth counties of the metropolitan region, Gwinett and Cobb, cannot get enough workers to fill many of their retail and other service sector positions. As a consequence, jobs such as those in fast-food establishments, which normally pay at or close to a minimum wage, are being bid up to attract suburban teen and retired workers. Both of these counties, whose population is approximately 90 percent white, have refused to allow the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit System (MARTA) to be extended to them.

PROMISING APPROACHES TO INNER-CITY REVITALIZATION

For inner cities, the latter half of the twentieth century has been a prolonged period of disinvestment and outmigration of population and economic activity. That this tide of disinvestment and abandonment continues to this day does not result from inattention to the urban plight. We have reviewed a long history of redevelopment efforts undertaken by the public and nonprofit sectors at the local, state, and national levels, as well as by “good corporate citizens” across a wide spectrum of economic activity. At the end of this century, however, structural racism’s subtle and not-so-subtle impacts continue to diminish African American and other racial minorities’ opportunities to become full-fledged members of the American society and economy and to have their fair share of the evolving American Dream.

Although much has been made of the failure of a half-century’s efforts to revitalize the inner city, very little has been made of the failure to acknowledge how continued racism has defeated these revitalization efforts. At the very least, we should take from the past the understanding that large-scale, lasting success in inner-city revitalization must evolve from an approach that explicitly recognizes and seeks to eliminate racism. From this common understanding, we can renew past efforts that have shown some promise and develop new approaches. This article concludes with a discussion of those approaches that have shown some promise and with suggestions for potential new approaches.

We have seen past success in the financing of inner-city housing, which can mean providing low-cost loan advances to pay for the construction of affordable, multifamily housing or ensuring the availability of loans to inner-city residents for the purchase or renovation of single-family homes. These monies are often the prod-

ucts of community reinvestment programs initiated by local banks or lending institutions—programs that were initiated in response to the national *Community Reinvestment Act (CRA)* (1977, 8 Pac. L.J. 1021, *1139). The basis of the *CRA* is that financial institutions that make profits through holding inner-city residents’ savings must use some of their capital for inner-city reinvestment. In many instances, *CRA*-type programs include construction loans or economic development loans, which may come from various sources. Another approach involves the formation of coalitions or organizations to monitor the performance of lending institutions to ensure that they follow the *CRA*. With or without the *CRA*, successful inner-city economic development entails a commitment to the development of community lending goals (Rosen 1992). Squires (1994), however, believes that “the *CRA* has dramatically altered the economic and political context in which mortgage lending occurs. . . . Most lenders today acknowledge a responsibility to better serve diverse community credit needs” (p. 70). Squires goes on to observe that “racial segmentation and stratification in housing remain defining traits of urban communities in the 1990s” (p. 71). But he also sees great promise for inner-city reinvestment when the news media, academics, and labor and church groups, as well as local and state officials, use the information on home lending available from the *Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA)* and the requirements and leverage of the *CRA*.

The 1995 revisions to the *CRA* were supposed to be a force for overcoming the reluctance of the private development community to focus on brownfield sites, thereby eliminating the need to create a specific brownfields community reinvestment act. The extent to which brownfield sites are associated with, and contribute to, neighborhood economic deterioration should be an important criterion for allocating scarce public resources in resolving this urban problem. It suggests, counter to the market approach, that the “bottom of the barrel” brownfield sites in the lowest socioeconomic neighborhoods should be given greater weight over the first layer of sites below which the private sector will choose to redevelop. If such public intervention is not forthcoming, we may expect the spatial and economic inequalities between the urban poor and wealthy to widen further (Leigh and Gradeck 1996). So far, despite the recent revisions, the *CRA* does not appear to be helping to solve this critical problem.

The movement to develop housing in inner-city areas has its roots in the development of community-based organizations and coalitions of low-income housing supporters, social service agencies, housing authorities, neighborhood activists, tenants, commu-

nity development organizations, and others committed to improving local housing and economic opportunity for residents of inner-city areas and some suburban areas. The formation of coalitions to improve housing in cities has, therefore, been one important avenue for community reinvestment. These coalitions may involve different players but are typically focused on improving neighborhoods through attention to housing and economic development.

Experience shows, however, that community-based organizations must carefully monitor the establishment of income levels that qualify projects for public funds for low- and moderate-income housing. For example, as recent experience in Atlanta shows, proposals to base the definition of moderate income on existing median income levels can lead to distorted definitions, depending on the area of analysis. An original proposal for inner-city housing sought to use the metrowide median household income, a figure well in excess of \$50,000. To allow households to qualify using this figure as the basis of determination would clearly mean that the funds were not going to the inner city's most needy.

Community-based urban policy has undergone a significant change since the 1970s. President Carter's Initiative for a National Agenda recommended the shifting of jobs and capital out of inner cities to enhance the nation's competitive advantage, and President Reagan's reduction of aid to local governments focused on facilitating regional economic restructuring rather than on the social consequences of that restructuring. These developments resulted in increased significance for community-based organizations and neighborhood coalitions in housing development and economic development (Goetz 1996). Recently,

the particular solution put forward by the movement includes greater regulation of the private sector development process, leveraging resources for affordable housing from the private development market, greater reliance on non-market actors (such as nonprofit CDCs) and alternative property ownership models, and community based planning. (Goetz 1996, 168)

Graf (1997) argues that economic development that focuses on renovating downtown and developing the tourist and service industries misses the mark and that what is needed are "mediating institutions, voluntary associations that are nongovernmental in their support and genesis." A powerful civic sector can mediate market excesses. Such an approach means a healthy society that has both a civic and market component, including the construction of new social institutions charged with creating and supporting a climate in which social relations contribute to economic success. These institutions

must be pluralistic, independent, and powerful and must stress self-sufficiency, develop leadership from their rank and file, and support the notion of common public good.

The successful revitalization of the inner city also requires the development of human resources or capital. Although the difficulty of the human resource problem in inner cities explains why it is often overlooked, human resources remain the foundation that must ultimately support American cities and their economies. The need to improve the state of human resources in our cities can be addressed through the joint efforts of social service agencies, school officials, churches, the business community, and other concerned groups. Perhaps the single most important need is the formation of alliances to improve the quality of local public schools and assist in identifying employment opportunities for inner-city residents of all ages (Robinson-Barnes 1997). The success of regional economies links to the economy of local areas, including cities, and this perspective must be part of any comprehensive approach to economic development.

At the same time, ensuring that the inner city is part not just of the regional economy but of the global economy as well will be increasingly important. The global economy has come about, in large part, as a result of advances in telecommunications and information technology. To be a part of this economy, an area must have the necessary information technology infrastructure, such as fiber optic networks. Just as inadequate transportation systems have precluded inner-city residents from participating in the economy, inadequate investment in information technology infrastructure for inner-city neighborhoods could prove to be another barrier to economic development. Back offices and call centers could be located just as well in the inner city as they are in exurban areas if present racial biases are eliminated. If inner-city schoolchildren are not given the same access to computers as suburban children, we have yet another—and potentially very serious—gap in human capital in the making. Policymakers are beginning to recognize and propose solutions to this problem (see, e.g., Schon et al. 1998).

Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta are exploring lower-cost means of access to the information superhighway through using cable television as a substitute for personal computers. The proportion of African Americans subscribing to cable television is higher than for any other ethnic group. Thus, providing cable services as a means for those living in public housing to access the World Wide Web and distance learning opportunities could, for once, create a positive structural race difference. It could help fill some of the gaps in media outlets for poor, inner-city, and minority communities that have occurred as the

media have become increasingly privatized, centralized, and elite dominated. However, additional efforts must be made to counter the crime stigma attached to the inner city and poor minorities by the current media and communications structure.

Boston and Ross (1997) argue that the core element of revitalizing inner cities is the restoration of human potential, which means creating communities where individuals have the opportunity and capacity to play an important role in determining their future. It also means integrating inner-city communities into the economic, political, and cultural life of surrounding metropolitan areas. Such integration can be accomplished only through a comprehensive approach that diffuses progress throughout the entire community rather than concentrating it among a privileged few. Individual profitability and the welfare of the community must be balanced. This means that the process of tapping the competitive advantage of the inner city must expand its human potential rather than stifle it.

Boston and Ross (1997) describe the proliferation and explosive growth of African American-owned businesses in the Atlanta metropolitan area and find that African American firms are about eight times more likely to employ African Americans than are firms owned by non-African Americans. Bates (1993), in his recent book, *Banking on Black Enterprise: The Potential of Emerging Firms for Revitalizing Urban Economies*, also concludes that black business development is important to generating inner-city jobs and reversing urban decline. He advocates supporting newly emerging black-owned businesses in nontraditional industries because these businesses are not only experiencing a significant growth in financial and employment capacity but also are employing a predominantly black workforce. Consequently, inner-city revitalization strategies and programs should support black business development.

Boston and Ross (1997) go further in their discussion and present data supporting the argument that some of the most successful black firms tend to locate in lower-income neighborhoods, employ African American workers, and recruit a significant portion of their workforce from the inner city. Therefore, these firms should not be neglected in favor of strategies designed to attract outside businesses into the industrial districts of the inner city. Although such strategies should not be abandoned, the increasing importance of black-owned businesses in revitalizing the inner city must also be recognized. Within a supportive public policy environment, these firms can reduce black unemployment and equalize racial disparities in unemployment.

As we observed at the beginning of this final section of our article, there has been little acknowledgment of how continued racism has contributed to the defeat of a

half-century's efforts to revitalize inner cities. The planning field is not alone in its culpability for failed revitalization efforts, but the misappropriation of its tools has, perhaps more than in other fields, made it a facilitator of social exclusion and economic isolation. Today, however, planners are at the forefront of efforts to create what Campbell (1996) has called the "sustainable and just" city, or "one which has a healthy, growing economy, where resulting growth is distributed fairly, and where the growth and development process does not degrade the region's ecosystem." Furthermore, this city explicitly promotes social justice by seeking a more equal distribution of resources among different racial and socioeconomic groups and between the inner city and the rest of the metropolitan area.

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NOTES

1. Loosely, structural racism is a concept defined by its contrast to individual racism. It refers to societal structures and institutions that may be overtly racist in their conception or have inherently racist outcomes even though such outcomes were not part of their original design.

2. *Redlining* was the term coined to describe the practices, begun in the 1930s, whereby real estate agents and mortgage lenders would draw red lines around areas on city maps where blacks lived. Home loans were not made on properties in redlined areas because neighborhood house values were considered unstable.

3. According to the 1990 census of population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990), the city of Detroit, MI was 75.7 percent black and the ten counties outside of Detroit that constitute the consolidated metropolitan statistical area (CMSA) had an average 90.6 percent white population. (The range was 78.2 percent to 98.2 percent white.) Suburban Atlanta's (GA) Cobb County population is 87.5 percent white and Gwinette county is 90.9 percent white.

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