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*Planning in America's Legacy Cities: Toward Better, Smaller Communities after Decline*

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Urban planning in the United States focuses almost exclusively on controlling and shaping the effects of growth and is ill-equipped to deal with cities or neighborhoods experiencing sustained disinvestment and depopulation. The American Assembly focused its 110th forum on the challenge of “Defining a Future for America’s Cities Experiencing Severe Population Loss.” The planning profession’s response to the chronic conditions in these cities—which the Assembly defined as “America’s Legacy Cities”—is the focus of this chapter. We contend that these historically industrial communities face a set of planning and development challenges resulting both from their development as centers of heavy manufacturing during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and from the widespread downsizing and abandonment of these industrial centers that began in the late 1940s and continues to this day.

Urban planning’s perspectives on creating places that improve the quality of life for residents and others has much to contribute to understanding about how to remake these historically industrial communities into better, though smaller, places after they have lost a large share of their peak populations. Urban planning’s approaches to involving citizens in making decisions about the future of their cities and neighborhoods can encourage processes that leave residents and civic leaders committed to working toward a better future while realistically accepting that a city will not return to its past. Cities experiencing extensive disinvestment

without concerted efforts to influence the direction of change become new kinds of places in any case—but by accident or by surprise—and not in as positive a way as they could. Strategic efforts to control the negative effects of blight on nearby areas, for instance, and to make investments that can reinforce others' commitments to the place hold the promise of purposefully guiding change toward better outcomes. The durability of the built environment and the complexity of legal claims to property mean years of blighting disinvestment pass before neighbors, new owners, and others can reuse structures and vacant land in more positive ways. Planners can take a strong role in shaping and expediting such transformation.

Few U.S. planners choose to work in places where little development is occurring; those who do choose such work find few jobs. By “planners,” we mean anyone with or without formal training in urban planning who works on envisioning the future of cities and neighborhoods as places and on implementing those visions. Even formally trained planners have had little exposure to ways that they can apply planning knowledge and techniques to situations where disinvestment, rather than investment, is the principal challenge.

Few publications and little professional training exist to guide those planners as they try to intervene in the process of persistent decline. The challenge for American schools of planning and for the planning profession generally is to develop the ways of thinking and the professional practices that will enable planning practitioners and related design and policy professionals to intervene more effectively in the process of decline taking place in many historically industrial communities. The challenge for individual planners who work in these places is to develop the creative insights, political skills, and professional techniques to work effectively in cities that need to change from centers of past industrial production to cities with more diversified and sustainable local economies. In this chapter, we derive lessons from our experiences as planners in such cities both to contribute to the body of understanding for the profession as a whole and to share several practical insights with planners who choose to practice in these communities.

To date, urban planning as a field has offered little for planners in America's legacy cities.<sup>1</sup> The recent edition of the “Green Book,” often called “a handbook of local planning,” addresses ways to encourage citizen participation, reuse surplus property, and build on strengths where population has declined, nearly always with the aim of developing again. Several chapters address revitalization of blighted neighborhoods with new development to replace old, abandoned, or obsolete uses but do not consider what to do when such new development is not practically possible.<sup>2</sup> A search of the American Planning Association's Planners' Bookstore in 2010 turned up only two publications that a planner working in an abandoned area of a city with few prospects of new growth would find quite useful.<sup>3</sup> If a planner arrived in a historically industrial community with high levels

of abandonment and wanted to gain quick insights into how to plan with decline, rather than against decline, he or she could not readily find useful resources—such as Planning Advisory Service reports (although one on planning in cities after population decline was in process as of mid-2011), webinars, or in-service seminars—directed at meeting that need. And while the American Planning Association's National Planning Conference featured individual sessions on the planning aspects of shrinking cities in recent years, the topic has yet to receive the sustained attention given to managing growth (through applying techniques of Smart Growth and New Urbanism, for instance) or to addressing crises such as that experienced by New Orleans.

The abandonment of America's legacy cities has taken place over decades, not weeks, and severely affects only the Northeast and Great Lakes regions. Perhaps because of this, the fate of these regions' cities, towns, and neighborhoods has aroused little sustained interest in the planning profession. The continued lack of attention to the future of these historically industrial communities is perplexing, however, because many cities in these two regions have experienced the persistent expansion of areas within their boundaries where almost no prospect for development exists—either at present or for years, and perhaps decades, to come. As Robert Beauregard shows, among the nation's fifty largest cities, nine experienced loss of population in every decade between 1950 and 2000—Baltimore, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C. Many other smaller cities, such as Youngstown, have experienced sustained population loss over several decades.<sup>4</sup>

In the Great Lakes states, furthermore, entire metropolitan areas—not just central cities—have experienced little, if any, growth. Development at the edges of these metropolitan areas often comes at the expense of existing development in the core cities and their inner-ring suburbs, leading to a pernicious pattern of no-growth sprawl in outlying rural areas and on prime agricultural land, coupled with abandonment and disinvestment in cities at the center. Thus *the* challenge for planners working in the legacy cities of the Northeast and Great Lakes regions—and New Orleans—is to find ways to manage depopulation and disinvestment in a manner that will achieve goals other than the traditional ones of encouraging or controlling growth.

Some planners and allied professionals have begun to investigate the challenge of depopulation, abandonment, and disinvestment in this country's historically industrial communities. Various universities and policy centers have brought scholars and practitioners together to think through these issues. Several graduate schools in the Great Lakes region now offer courses and design studios that specifically address historically industrial communities. Based on our experiences working in several legacy cities, we suggest redefining the planners' traditional roles to address the characteristics of these cities and the historically industrial

communities within them and recommend seven strategic directions that planners can pursue in order to understand and more effectively address the change taking place in these cities and neighborhoods.

## **Redefining the Planners' Professional Role**

As Cassius stated in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars. But in ourselves, that we are underlings." He could as easily have been addressing contemporary planners as he was his co-conspirator when he spoke of taking responsibility for one's status in the civic arena. While the challenges of legacy cities fall well within the purview of urban planning, planners' voices have thus far not stood out in the policy discussion of ways to address disinvestment and property abandonment. A growing number of lawyers, judges, policy specialists, and public officials have elected to fill the gap and have developed ways both to address the challenge and to realize the opportunity vacant property presents to their cities. They have improved administrative approaches to the management of vacant land and structures, gained control of abandoned property through the reform of the legal system, and used code enforcement creatively.<sup>5</sup> They have led the effort to lobby state legislators for the powers necessary to streamline the foreclosure process and address property abandonment at the scale of the problem.

Some planners have collaborated with other professionals to incorporate these strategies and tactics into a broader vision to address what a place can become and to identify the strategic choices that citizens need to make to achieve goals. But too often, the planners' perspective makes little contribution to legal and administrative efforts to champion innovative practices, such as vacant property registration, land banks, or the creation of a dedicated housing court. The work of the planner—in envisioning a better future urban form for a city that is losing population and in showing how various policy approaches can achieve a better future for the place as a whole—remains isolated from work of others addressing the consequences of community disinvestment.

This chapter discusses insights and derives principles from our work in several cities that have lost large shares of their peak populations. Our aim is to contribute to a body of understanding that can support planners' work in such places.<sup>6</sup> One of us (Morrison) was among the planners who led the development of the *Youngstown 2010* plan,<sup>7</sup> following twenty-one years as the director of the City Planning Commission in Cleveland, Ohio. The other (Dewar) has, since 1990, taught courses at the University of Michigan, where graduate urban planning students have developed strategies to strengthen neighborhoods with the help of community partners in Detroit. Over this extended period, she has been involved in numerous discussions about addressing population loss with leaders of community development corporations, their trade associations, leaders of other community-based organizations, and the various collaborations leaders of

neighborhood efforts have initiated in that city. Since 2004, she has taught several courses that assigned graduate students the task of working with the Genesee County Land Bank and Flint's neighborhood organizations and develop plans in that legacy city.

We focus this discussion on two cities—Youngstown and Detroit—that, in stark ways, exemplify the challenges and opportunities for historically industrial communities in transition from the “old economy” that fueled them for decades to “new economies,” often yet to become apparent. Both Youngstown and Detroit grew to maturity as one-industry towns (Youngstown in steel, Detroit in automobiles) whose fortunes rose and fell with those of the industries they served. Both cities developed their neighborhoods with low-density, detached single-family homes, often owner-occupied. Both have lost three-fifths of their populations from their peak and face the challenge of dealing with widespread abandonment and tax delinquency as a result of the loss of jobs, the flight of middle-class residents to the suburbs, and, more recently, the plague of high-risk mortgage lending. Both have no prospects for a return of the jobs and population that once drove their economies, filled their neighborhoods, and supported their commercial districts and anchor institutions. Both have become poster children of the deindustrialization of North America. Both face the challenge of managing a growing inventory of vacant and often tax-delinquent land and structures. Furthermore, they face the complex problem of the messy and uneven pattern of abandonment. In each city, neighborhoods have experienced different levels of disinvestment and abandonment, so that planners and others responsible for managing the city have difficulty responding to the challenge of abandonment at scale. And, finally, both have leadership working tenaciously to meet these challenges with new language and new strategies and techniques.

Table 1: *Population and Housing Changes in Youngstown and Detroit*

	<i>Census year of peak population</i>	<i>Peak population in thousands</i>	<i>2010 population in thousands</i>	<i>Change</i>
<i>Detroit</i>	1950	1849.6	713.8	-61.4%
<i>Youngstown</i>	1930	170.0	67.0	-60.6%
	<i>Census year of peak housing units</i>	<i>Peak housing units in thousands</i>	<i>2010 housing units in thousands</i>	<i>Change</i>
<i>Detroit</i>	1960	553.2	349.2	-36.9%
<i>Youngstown</i>	1960	51.0	33.1	-35.0%

Sources: U. S. Census Bureau, various years; U. S. Census Bureau, 2010.

Many differences exist, as well; the most obvious is that Detroit has more than ten times the population of Youngstown (see *Table 1*). Youngstown is ahead of Detroit in planning for a smaller city and in implementing a citywide plan so the experiences of each yield lessons in different aspects of planning for a smaller, better

city. Youngstown's new plan was completed in 2005; an administration-led process to develop a strategic framework plan has begun in Detroit. In Youngstown, a broadly expressed community narrative and a renewed sense of common mission have emerged, while neither has yet developed in Detroit. In Youngstown, city and university officials have led the planning process. In Detroit, planning for ways to address vacancy without rebuilding has thus far mainly come from community-based organizations, coalitions of community-based developers, and staff in a few city agencies.

Experiences in these two cities and elsewhere show that to have an effective role in planning a city after decline, planners need to see their profession as one that manages change, not just growth, and one that responds to and shapes forces that cause disinvestment and abandonment, not just the forces that fuel new development. Making this conceptual leap is difficult. To work in these places and be effective advocates for their future, individual planners and their local and state professional associations will, of necessity, need to develop the insights, attitudes, and skills to address a range of new issues. The following sections discuss seven lessons for practicing planners. Our discussion emphasizes ways that planning in a city after decline differs from planning in a growing city.

### *Understand the Depth of the Political Challenge*

Planning professionals often avoid the rough-and-tumble of local politics, choosing instead to see elected officials and other civic leaders as policy makers and themselves as professional advisers in a public decision-making framework that, ideally, is rational, transparent, data-driven, and result-oriented. This mindset hampers planners working in cities that are experiencing sustained and often devastating rates of un-employment and population decline. To intervene effectively, the planning practitioner must appreciate the profound difficulty local elected officials and civic leaders have in addressing sustained decline and need to work with them to develop the insights necessary to understand the process of decline, the language they require to engage their constituencies in productive discussions about the challenges the city faces, and the tools that will enable the residents and civic leaders to move forward in creating a city with a better quality of life.

Strong forces interfere with the acceptance of population and employment loss and oppose efforts to plan for a smaller city. At the level of the civic narrative, public acceptance of sustained population decline contradicts the widely-held American belief that population growth equates with "success" and population decline equates with "failure." As nationally syndicated columnist Bob Herbert wrote, accepting population loss communicates a decision "not to rise to the challenges before us" and to watch "greatness ...steadily slipping away."<sup>8</sup> American cities—unlike their European counterparts—are relatively young and have

known only growth through the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. American cities know no history of urban decline and rebirth as do the many European cities that have experienced the ravages of epidemics and war over centuries. Widespread abandonment of the once-vibrant “old neighborhoods” and once-prosperous downtowns of America’s legacy cities has taken place within a single generation as freeway-supported suburbs drew millions of households away from central cities and streetcar suburbs in pursuit of their piece of the American Dream and racially segregated new neighborhoods. The consequences for the people in the neighborhoods left behind have been unprecedented and unnerving.

At the level of local politics, loss of population equates to loss of political power or “clout” and engenders resistance from local political figures who regard that metric as paramount. As a candidate for the mayor of Flint (now the mayor) said during his election campaign in 2009, acceptance of decline “smacks of surrender.”<sup>9</sup> Population loss also has profound economic consequences for both city officials and elites, as it typically results in the loss of local wealth. The city’s function as a “growth machine” means that both of these groups have much to gain politically and financially from population growth and the increase in the value of land and much to lose from a decline in population and land values.<sup>10</sup> Both of us have attended community meetings where mayors and other elected or appointed officials touted the revival of the city while the audience could readily observe extensive vacant structures and vacant land throughout the area.

Frequently, other constituencies, particularly minority-race groups, oppose any talk of “planned shrinkage.” Most of the country’s legacy cities had aggressive urban renewal programs that, by the early 1970s, had cleared many well-established African-American neighborhoods without providing better—or even adequate—alternative places to live.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, any hint of further clearance of African-American neighborhoods through planned “decommissioning” raises the specter of more neighborhood destruction and inequitable treatment. Such suggestions have led to strong political resistance.<sup>12</sup>

One insight that the planner can bring to local elected officials and civic leaders is the realization that numerous other cities face similar challenges of disinvestment and decline. All too often, the citizens and leaders of these cities believe that no other similarly affected cities exist with comparable histories and economic structures. They engage in nostalgia, wishful thinking, or heroic gestures and look for the quick fix that will restore their city to its former greatness. Just such a pattern emerged in Youngstown in the years following “Black Monday” (September 19, 1977), when Youngstown Sheet and Tube’s Campbell Works abruptly shut down, beginning a four-year period during which Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley lost every major steel mill, ten thousand union jobs, and most of their economic base. In the years following Black Monday, Youngstown leaders attempted, unsuccessfully, to facilitate employee ownership of the mills. When that effort failed, the leadership pursued one “silver bullet” project after

another: an Avanti automobile factory, an indoor motor-sports racetrack, a U.S. Department of Defense payroll center, a dirigible assembly plant, an airplane factory, and an air cargo hub at the Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport. Each of these projects was either short-lived or stillborn, and the promise of good jobs to replace those lost when the mills closed went unfulfilled.<sup>13</sup>

While Youngstown initially stood alone, other “steel towns” in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana, and Illinois soon joined it. The auto cities of Michigan and other Great Lakes states likewise experienced major plant closings from the late 1970s on. Other Great Lakes cities have seen their industrial bases erode or disappear. From Akron (rubber), Rochester (Kodak), and Dayton (NCR) to Elkhart (recreational vehicles), legacy cities, large and small, have experienced—or continue to experience—the impact of deindustrialization. Despite the wave of plant closings taking place across the region, Youngstown failed to make common cause with cities like it and, for over twenty years, attempted to go it alone.

While “misery may love company,” the need for legacy cities—both in this country and abroad—to acknowledge that they are experiencing similar challenges is more than a simple act of commiseration. It can empower local leaders to think differently about their city’s future. Youngstown has experienced just such a transformation in its civic consciousness. The national and international response to Youngstown’s precedent-setting planning process opened its citizens’ eyes to the fact that other cities were experiencing similar patterns of decline. Youngstown’s leadership gained significant insights from Flint, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and other similarly placed cities as citizens began to confront the widespread property abandonment in the city’s neighborhoods.

As a result of its engagement with similar cities, Youngstown’s leaders no longer promote silver bullet panaceas or portray the city as a helpless victim of forces beyond its control. They now engage with federal and state agencies and with organizations such as the Center for Community Progress (formerly the National Vacant Properties Campaign), Greater Ohio, the Brookings Institution, and the German Marshall Fund to develop new tools locally and lobby for new powers and resources at the county, state, and federal levels. Planners working in historically industrial communities can help their political and civic leadership understand the nature and extent of the challenges facing their cities and develop the political language and policy initiatives to address them. They can also encourage local leaders and organizations to engage with other similarly challenged cities to develop common advocacy strategies directed at securing the powers and resources needed to address these challenges at scale.

### *Understand the Power of Memory and Civic Identity*

In cities that have experienced sustained decline, the planning process should, on the one hand, acknowledge the history and civic identity of the city and

its neighborhoods as assets and, on the other hand, enable residents to address openly the wrongs and divisions that are also the legacies of the past. In cities that formerly depended on manufacturing, the deep divisions of race, class, and ethnicity and the profound disruption of urban renewal and interstate highway construction often remain vivid memories.

Historic patterns of division based on race, class, and ethnicity continue to inform contemporary discussions. As these cities developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the owners and managers of large manufacturing corporations used these divisions to slow unionization and control their workers. Neighborhoods were deliberately segregated, reinforcing the divisions that existed within the mills and factories. Later, during the 1960s and 1970s, urban renewal, highway construction, and white flight to the suburbs disrupted these neighborhoods and began the widespread abandonment of once dense working-class neighborhoods. As whites left, the remaining population became increasingly a minority-race one; these residents faced white hostility if they moved to the suburbs, and until the late 1960s they could rarely obtain mortgages. The long-term residents who remained behind saw a dramatic increase in the conversion of single-family houses to rental properties, the arrival of absentee owners and slumlords, high turnover among renters, increasing disinvestment, rising crime, falling property values, and, finally, extensive demolition of vacant structures and the abandonment of entire streets and blocks. In the most disinvested areas, few new homeowners have arrived in recent decades, so discussions about what such areas “should become” often strikes fear in minority and elderly residents who have endured many of the misguided changes that led to their neighborhoods’ destruction.

In order to enable citizens of a battered city such as Youngstown to determine what the city can become in the future, the planning process must engage with the past and address deep feelings of injustice, distrust, and loss that these cities’ industrial heritage created as by-products. Planners who choose to work in these places often need to act like family therapists or social workers, engaging citizens where they are and helping them move forward together. All too often, deep memories of past injuries impede citizens’ ability to envision a promising shared future and take the actions to move toward it. Planners must listen—very intently and very intentionally—as people talk about their history as well as their aspirations. They must learn to appreciate the “family dynamics” of cities and neighborhoods that, in some ways, function as extended families and to encourage those who participate in the planning process to deal honestly and respectfully with one another. Only then can a community come together around a common purpose.

Youngstown’s planning team learned that lesson in the course of developing the *Youngstown 2010* plan. Well into the planning process, the team determined that the “usual and customary” citizen participation process was not fully engaging key constituencies, particularly African-Americans. After the final round of

community meetings, Community Development Director (and later Mayor) Jay Williams reported to the team that too many citizens had approached him with their concern that the process was not dealing with true issues of importance to them for him to feel comfortable moving forward. The team decided to use an already scheduled public television broadcast on the *Youngstown 2010* planning process to focus on the issue: "Race and Youngstown 2010: Vision or Division?" Citizens of Youngstown were invited to attend and participate in a one-hour live "town hall" broadcast which Williams moderated. He set ground rules of mutual respect and civility and invited attendees to talk openly about their views on race, with the aim of moving the city to a better future. Williams began the session with a video overview of the city's history of race and class conflicts and then opened the floor for discussion.<sup>14</sup> As the hour neared an end, the planning team and the producer agreed that the discussion had not exhausted the topic and decided to reconvene the town hall session in a second broadcast. During that broadcast, the team again decided that the topic needed further airing and, with the audience's concurrence, taped a third hour-long segment.

The team knew that going live to discuss difficult and, at times, inflammatory issues in an open civic forum was risky but essential for the plan itself to have credibility among citizens and gain the full support of the mayor and city council. The sessions were hard-hitting but ultimately therapeutic and cleared the air of the suspicion and distrust that threatened to sink the entire planning process. The strategy of confronting deep-seated injuries and conflicts convinced the public and their political representatives that *Youngstown 2010* was not just another pro forma civic engagement process that pretended to listen to people and then largely ignored what they had to say.

In Detroit, as the open meetings for the development of a strategic framework plan began in fall 2010, planners tried to launch immediately into imagining the city's future despite little preparation, but the baggage of the past interfered. Residents expressed deep distrust of the city officials, who, they said, must have a secret plan, of the foundation leaders who were paying for the planning process for what the residents felt must be suspect reasons, and of other residents who were younger or of a different race.<sup>15</sup> The meetings became settings to air complaints, grievances, and suspicions rather than sessions focused on defining the community's shared vision for its future. The planning process moved into a next stage of meetings in early 2011. This time, the structure of the meetings kept complaint and protest under control. At each meeting, a city official made a PowerPoint presentation that included questions for the audience. Attendees had clickers that allowed them to select an answer to each question from several suggested answers; they could also write comments on pieces of paper. In numerous cases, the answers to these questions had no implications for further development of a plan. City officials answered a number of questions from the audience at the end of the presentation. The process prevented discussion of suspicions and

wrongs and allowed no open disagreements or challenges. Although two hundred or so people normally showed up for a meeting, the number dwindled to about half that as the meeting proceeded.

Planners working in legacy cities can also help residents articulate the unique and empowering aspects of their shared history. A city's industrial history is not just a liability like so many contaminated factory sites. The history of a place and its people informs its cultural identity and shapes the shared experiences and values that define "who we are" as a city or a neighborhood.<sup>16</sup> These cities and neighborhoods often constitute communities of memory with a strong sense of group identity that defines a commonly understood "genetic code" of place. While this shared identity can lead to an insularity and parochialism hostile to new ideas and people from outside the area, a planner who understands the value of shared identity as a place-based asset can shape place-specific planning and economic development strategies that build on that shared identity and have a "rightness of fit" that can attract sustained political support.

Just such a collective realignment has taken place in Youngstown. For several decades following Black Monday, the Youngstown business and political communities pursued strategies that bore little relationship to its century-old industrial base: metals and ceramics. Only in the past decade has the city's civic leadership aligned around industries deeply embedded in Youngstown's industrial history. Youngstown State University's College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) has inaugurated a research-based Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering that focuses on the application of advanced "heavy" materials—principally metals and ceramics—to new products, while the region's chamber of commerce and political leadership have focused their efforts on supporting firms that are manufacturing high-quality products from these materials. As a result of this alignment of civic energy around "doing what we know, only better," Youngstown is now home to the world's largest producer of impact-extruded aluminum containers and a major international producer of seamless steel pipe for the natural gas industry, and counts among its most successful local manufacturing firms a company producing lightweight aluminum/ceramic vests for the U.S. Department of Defense and a company providing precision measuring and metals fabricating services to a wide range of industries.

### ***Pursue a Planning Process That Enables Residents to Develop a Shared Vision for a Smaller City or Smaller Sections of a City***

The participation and involvement of residents has to extend beyond addressing legacies of distrust and division. In Youngstown, planners led the process that brought widespread acceptance that Youngstown could become a smaller, better, and more sustainable city. A critical factor in the success of the planning process was the decision early in the process to engage residents "early and often" by using

many different forums and marketing channels and to advance the planning process at a pace that would enable people to trust that the process—and the plans that resulted from it—truly reflected their aspirations and concerns. The case study following this chapter details this process.

The Youngstown experience showed that this kind of participation differs considerably from the usual public hearings that government planners conduct as required for various purposes. Rather, the goal is to develop a process to elicit real engagement that takes the views of residents seriously in ways that affect the direction of the plan itself as response to residents' input.

The experience of planners working in Youngstown and Detroit suggests several other lessons about public participation, as well. Planners who themselves see possibilities in planning after decline can give residents the facts. They can communicate the scale and extent of the transition taking place in neighborhoods and open a dialogue that enables residents and civic leaders to discuss the reality of becoming a smaller city and the possibility of adjusting their metric of success from size to quality. Planners can use geographic information systems (GIS) and simulation to identify the patterns of decline and growth in their cities and focus limited public dollars on interventions that directly address quality of life by reducing crime and blight, improving mobility and the perception of safety, and identifying economic development projects—such as neighborhood grocery stores—that the smaller market can still support. And they can assume the role of “practical visionary” and help city leaders and residents to imagine an achievable future as a smaller but more sustainable city. Techniques that visualization and representation software make possible can enable planners to show residents and city officials the city's current conditions and help them illustrate what new ideas would mean in neighborhood changes.<sup>17</sup>

By taking these actions, planners gain credibility and work effectively with citizens to envision a realistic future for their neighborhood and their city. In many cases, the public has moved ahead of the planners, politicians, and other civic leaders in accepting the reality of shrinkage and in seeking realistic strategies for addressing the negative impacts of decline. Planners in Detroit encouraged residents to think of vacancy as an opportunity for creating a new kind of place, rather than as a problem.<sup>18</sup> As a result, public meetings held in a very empty area of the city inspired residents to contribute new ideas and insights. They proposed “reinventing” vacant areas rather than pursuing redevelopment plans that likely would not occur.

### *Engage with Anchor Institutions That Function as Urban Magnets*

Hospitals and universities function as some of the most important anchor institutions remaining in legacy cities. Despite their economic importance, city officials and residents often have conflicted relationships with these institutions. While

such institutions employ many people and thus have a significant number on their payrolls, they often function as islands of prosperity in high-poverty neighborhoods with which they may have only intermittent and often hostile relationships. These institutions generally have a large physical footprint comprised of an interconnected complex of imposing buildings having little or no relationship to the surrounding neighborhoods. The design of these institutions normally focuses on the often exacting program requirements of the institution's users, with minimal concern for how meeting such requirements will affect adjacent streets, sidewalks, and non-institutional buildings.

Planners working in historically industrial communities typically seek to minimize the negative effects of their anchor institutions on surrounding neighborhoods. They should also ask how best to engage with these institutions in ways that will create place-specific development opportunities in the neighborhoods surrounding them.

To capitalize on the presence of these institutions, planners can see them as magnets as well as anchors, predictably drawing students, employees, visitors, and patients to their city from the surrounding region. Planners should determine how many students daily attend their urban college or university and learn where they live and how they arrive on the campus. They should probe the latent market these students create for housing on or near the campus and the mix of entertainment and retail uses they would support within a convenient walking distance of their classrooms, labs, and housing. Planners should understand the number of new employees the university or hospital hires annually and identify what opportunities exist to house a segment of this market within a convenient walk or short bus ride to the campus or hospital. Of particular interest are faculty members recruited from other cities who enjoy urban living, hospital residents who seek good-quality housing adjacent to the hospital, where they will practice for long hours, and employees looking for affordable workforce housing that will enable them to reduce the cost and inconvenience of the daily commute. Planners should understand the markets these magnet institutions create and work with them to develop the off-campus environments that will attract students, faculty, employees, patients, and visitors and enable them to spend their housing, retail and entertainment dollars in the city.<sup>19</sup>

In short, planners in historically industrial communities have to ferret out latent demand "hidden in plain view." They need to develop land use, urban design and economic development strategies that take full advantage of the opportunities created each day by people coming into their city to work and study.

Youngstown officials pursued just such an approach when they agreed to collaborate with Youngstown State University in the development of a new College of Business Administration. By 2001, university administrators had determined that they needed to replace the College's existing building, a cramped and anonymous classroom/office building constructed in the 1970s and functionally obsolete

thirty years later. The college's dean and the university's planning staff began to investigate alternative sites, and city leaders solicited them to leave the confines of the university's central campus and build in downtown Youngstown. The dean rejected the idea of relocating downtown, citing the students' need to attend classes in buildings clustered on the central campus. She did, however, sympathize with city officials' desire to direct some of the energy—and spending power—of university students from the center of campus to the center of downtown, four blocks away. After investigating a number of suitable sites, university administrators and city leaders agreed on a site at the southern edge of the university's footprint, and city officials agreed to construct the site and connect it to downtown and the central campus by developing a streetscape-enhanced roadway between the two and by targeting economic development incentives on properties adjacent to the new road. As a result of this decision, the university developed an iconic, state-of-the-art academic building to meet the needs of the college while linking the campus and the downtown in a direct and highly visible way. Since the commencement of construction, adjacent property owners have invested significantly in their buildings, while the city has seen a welcome influx of students who use the new roadway to frequent downtown establishments.

### *Manage Neighborhood Change Strategically*

As a city becomes smaller, planners must engage specifically in understanding and managing the processes of neighborhood change. Neighborhood planning and community development usually focus on redevelopment, rebuilding, and revitalization. Instead, planners in legacy cities need to figure out approaches other than redevelopment for handling property. At the same time, the combination of stretched city budgets, shrinking Community Development Block Grants, and insufficient staff resources mean that a shrinking city's government often cannot support all the activities needed to manage change in neighborhoods. This resource limitation means that city officials should make difficult decisions about the different kinds of support that varied areas will receive.

Effective management of neighborhood change in the face of decline requires designing and implementing a planning process that neighborhood residents see as fair and equitable. Even in areas where so few people remain that no neighborhood organizations or block clubs exist to speak for residents, planners need to seek residents' views on what trade-offs they would accept, given the city's much smaller population. Residents in denser neighborhoods likewise need the opportunity to deal with the past in the context of envisioning a future for their own areas. Planners need to provide choices for those who have few options and engage in a planning process that involves those people in making the decisions that affect their lives.<sup>20</sup>

In evaluating the future of individual neighborhoods, the planner must acknowledge that some neighborhoods either no longer exist or will not exist. Much of their housing stock is surplus and unsalvageable because demand for many of these properties has disappeared from both the city and the surrounding metropolitan market. Much of this housing is like a dry snake skin; it has done its job and now has no useful future. Many of the most extensively abandoned neighborhoods in Detroit and Youngstown were built rapidly in the early part of the twentieth century to accommodate the enormous numbers of people arriving for work in their booming mills and factories. With a few exceptions, most worker housing built in this era was poorly constructed and is expensive to renovate to meet contemporary standards. Once renovated, such properties do not necessarily sell or rent due to weak demand for housing in these neighborhoods.

In the face of such realities, the planner needs to reimagine and repurpose these neighborhoods and abandon notions of repopulating them for the foreseeable future. Youngstown's plan specifically states, "As a place with fewer people but the same amount of land, Youngstown can afford to be generous with its urban land as it explores new options for the city's neighborhoods and open space systems."<sup>21</sup> Youngstown now allows residents to take over abandoned lots adjacent to their homes.<sup>22</sup> Detroit officials have sold city-owned lots to adjacent owners but have not adopted policies that go as far as Youngstown's. Detroit officials could, for instance, offer long-term leases at little or no rent to residents who care for city-owned land that they have often integrated with other property around their homes.

In heavily abandoned areas, Youngstown officials experimented with a program to encourage residents to relocate to intact streets elsewhere in the city. When residents from these neighborhoods requested repair funding, city planners offered them fifty thousand dollars to buy a new home elsewhere in the city. As of fall 2009, no home owner had accepted the incentive, however, and planners put their efforts into other approaches. In Detroit, Mayor Bing announced in December 2010 that city officials would encourage residents of sparsely settled areas of the city to move to denser areas. While the city's budget deficit motivated the mayor to encourage such moves to try to save money on delivering services in nearly empty areas, no one had apparently analyzed how much money the city would save by reducing services in vacant areas.<sup>23</sup> Mayor Bing's message of wanting to persuade people to move because the city government could not afford to provide services in nearly vacant areas contrasted sharply with the positive message in Youngstown of the prospect of becoming a better, smaller city for all.

With large numbers of vacant lots, city officials in many historically industrial communities are considering uses of vacant land other than for housing and commercial buildings. Planners have a central role in this discussion. They can consider revisions to the city codes and practices that discourage appropriate

“non-traditional” urban uses. They should also point out appropriate locations for these new uses, taking account of the activities’ location criteria in the context of an overall vision of reinvention of very vacant areas. In Detroit, urban farming has received considerable discussion. Numerous other possible new uses also exist, such as energy generation and deconstruction facilities. In Detroit, years of discussions have been devoted to seeking ways to accommodate community gardening and urban agriculture and to provide assurances about land control. Beginning in 2007, Cleveland adopted new zoning provisions to promote urban agriculture. These zoning-code amendments included the establishment of “urban garden zoning districts,” which permit urban gardens and prohibit all other use of a property; reinstated the provisions permitting residents to raise bees, chickens, ducks, rabbits, and larger livestock in urban neighborhoods (and reversed a decision to prohibit these uses made in a code revision a decade earlier); permitted agriculture as a principal use on all vacant residentially zoned lots; and established “urban agricultural overlay districts” to allow larger-scale farming activities in the city.

In the neighborhoods with some blight and some vacant lots, a planner should work with residents on an array of approaches calibrated to address the extent of disinvestment and vacancy in various parts of the neighborhood. Programs to transfer vacant lots to adjacent owners, create community gardens, landscape vacant lots with native plants, and create play lots often strengthen a neighborhood when enough residents remain to care for these. Key in such neighborhoods is to reinforce the residents’ commitment to the place and to celebrate their determination to stay so that they continue to maintain their property and remain engaged in neighborhood issues.<sup>24</sup> In Detroit, the Detroit Vacant Property Campaign has made small grants to neighborhood associations to enable neighbors to care for vacant houses and protect houses going through mortgage foreclosure from destruction. In Youngstown, the Raymond John Wean Foundation offers what it calls “Neighborhood Success Grants” of five hundred to five thousand dollars to groups of residents, as well as to community, school, and faith-based organizations to support the development and implementation of creative ideas that can enhance their neighborhoods. Foundations in Cleveland funded community development corporations to implement demonstration projects showing how to reuse vacant land in strategic locations to create new urban landscapes that enhanced neighborhoods (the case study following Chapter 6).

In some of these in-between neighborhoods, building new housing on vacant lots may reinforce confidence in the areas as long as the extent of blight has not reached a tipping point such that interventions will have considerable difficulty stopping decline. One criteria that should be considered when selecting sites is where new housing can inspire other property owners’ confidence in a neighborhood. Developers often can acquire vacant land most easily in the most

blighted areas, but these often are not the places where new construction should occur. Nonprofit developers, like for-profit ones, need to look for evidence of a demand for housing where they wish to build.

Intact neighborhoods that have not yet experienced much disinvestment and have few, if any, vacant lots nonetheless feel the effect of the continuing loss of their city's population (at the rate of over twenty thousand people each year in Detroit). They suffer from the blighting influence of a few scattered abandoned properties and the wave of mortgage foreclosures that have emptied sound single-family properties and have converted many to investment rental property with absentee landlords. In these areas, planners need to work with residents to enforce relevant city codes, quickly address signs of disinvestment to prevent the incursion of blight, and reinforce residents' confidence that their neighborhoods can remain strong.

All of these types of neighborhoods need quick demolition of dangerous, derelict structures, but few local governments in legacy cities have the resources to remove such buildings quickly throughout the city. Detroit officials have generally prioritized the demolition of structures near schools. Planners can offer ideas about how to carry out demolition more strategically—placing priority on demolitions where much housing remains, for instance, and where residents are working to strengthen a neighborhood. This means that demolitions may rarely occur in the areas of the city that already have substantial amounts of vacant land.

Finally, planners need to address the problems of obsolete neighborhood-oriented commercial corridors. These commercial corridors grew up along the cities' streetcar lines and main arterial roadways and served the older neighborhoods. In the face of population loss and profound changes in consumers' shopping habits, vacant lots and buildings pock many of these once vital strips. The buildings that remain often show signs of disinvestment. While Main Street retail revitalization programs can support a few sections of corridors that still have some intact structures with operating businesses, large sections of these commercial districts no longer meet the needs of contemporary retail businesses and require new purposes. Planners need to work with business associations and with neighbors who live in nearby blocks to speed the process of getting rid of blighted, vacant structures and implementing reuse of vacant land in more attractive, low-maintenance ways. They need to work with business owners to encourage them to locate near nodes of shopping where they will have a larger customer base, although they will pay higher rents.<sup>25</sup>

### *Identify Legacy Assets and Rediscover the Urban Landscape*

To be effective in shrinking legacy cities, the planner must see the city anew, focusing not just on the obvious liabilities left behind as factories closed and neighbor-

hoods collapsed but also on the legacy assets. Identifying these assets requires the planner to understand how the city worked—when it worked—and develop a vision for the future that accounts for and takes advantage of these assets—whether an art museum, a collection of historically significant houses, a nineteenth-century park, or a network of underutilized rail lines and sidings that can support new kinds of uses in vacant industrial sites. Often these assets are “hidden in plain view” from local residents and public officials who continue to mourn the loss of the city’s industries and neighborhoods and believe that everything of value disappeared when the factories closed and the jobs disappeared.

Among the most compelling legacy assets of historically industrial communities are the landscapes that remain after decline. Many of these cities grew rapidly, without benefit of a plan or zoning. In the rush to build workforce housing, developers leveled forests, channeled streams into culverts, filled wetlands, and obliterated other natural features. The wide-spread abandonment of mills, factories, and working-class neighborhoods offers these cities an opportunity to restore the natural features and position them as assets for the future.

Understanding the latent power of legacy landscapes requires that the planner look at the land with new eyes. One can try to imagine what the architects and landscape architects who designed these industrial cities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries might have proposed had the urban land now vacant and the watercourse no longer diverted for industrial use been available when they did their work. Youngstown and Detroit are both rediscovering their riverfronts, which mills and factories once lined, and they are exploring the potential of these legacy landscapes. In Youngstown, the Mahoning River functioned for over a century as an open industrial sewer running for thirty miles behind an almost continuous wall of steel mills. With the mills gone, the river has become a prominent feature in the downtown area. City officials are pursuing environmental remediation of the river and the development of a bikeway that would connect the university and downtown to the nearby Mill Creek Park. In Detroit, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy has transformed derelict, inaccessible riverfront property into the RiverWalk, which now provides public access in a park setting to a stretch of the river near downtown.

Planners can use observation and analysis to propose ways for a city to connect and leverage landscape assets. The *Youngstown 2010* plan did just that, recommending that the city assemble tax-delinquent properties adjacent to several existing parks to expand the green space network, connect the assets with bicycle and pedestrian paths, improve the visibility and accessibility of these resources, and position them to serve as stronger assets for adjacent neighborhoods. Even in Detroit’s disinvested neighborhoods, housing around parks often remains in good condition, while many opportunities exist to expand and enhance parks through incorporation of vacant land.<sup>26</sup> The city government, however, faces severe budget

constraints and cannot support the maintenance needed to keep parks vital. In the context of a large deficit, the mayor, the city council, and parks officials have considered closing many parks.

Planners can also explore repurposing vacant urban land to restore the city's natural systems. Without the press of population growth, city officials can consider naturalizing abandoned sites with the intent of reducing runoff into aging storm sewer systems.<sup>27</sup> Both the Philadelphia Green and Sustainable Cleveland initiatives explore this topic. In Detroit, plans for sections of the city and for individual neighborhoods pointed to ways to reuse vacant lots for water retention in residential areas with clusters of lots. The Youngstown plan suggests assembling large tracts of abandoned, and often swampy residentially zoned land with hydric soils and repurposing the land as wetlands and wildlife sanctuaries.<sup>28</sup>

Planners can borrow from agricultural practice to introduce the concept of "fallowing" to the discussion about what to do with cleared urban land left after decline. Planners could advocate assembling abandoned sites for an as-yet-to-be-determined use and holding these in a land bank until the sites "ripen" for future reuse. In the interim, these sites can remain as passive landscape elements in a smaller, greener city.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Get Rid of Visible Liabilities***

Besides identifying and enhancing the city's assets, planners need to focus resources on minimizing liabilities and their impacts on the city and on neighborhoods. In cities with strong demand for land, a burned-out building or a vacant industrial site quickly gets reused. Typically, only ownership uncertainty or environmental liabilities cause delays. In contrast, cities that have experienced large-scale population and employment loss cannot rely on demand for property to recycle a vacant building or site and return it to productive use. City officials must instead act expeditiously to remove the overhang of surplus housing, commercial buildings, and industrial property that depresses the value of surrounding properties, discourages reinvestment, and can harbor and encourage criminal activities.

Residents and city officials often believe that if only contaminated industrial sites could get cleaned up, new development would occur. However, in legacy cities, such new development does not necessarily follow. In southwest Detroit, an Empowerment Zone program made possible the cleanup of several large contaminated sites where no indication of demand for property existed. The sites remained vacant. The cleanup effort would have done better to focus on cleanup of sites near housing and schools in order to remove a threat to children's health and safety and of sites that many people passed every day, so as to remove an eyesore.<sup>30</sup>

Planners can use available tools such as geographic information systems to assess their city's inventory of blighted and abandoned properties, to analyze pat-

terns of disinvestment, arson, and crime, and to direct limited city resources to removing the most visible and noxious blight. When developing “clean and green” programs, planners can also borrow the site selection techniques that billboard companies routinely apply and target limited resources to the most visible corridors and sites and thus maximize the impact on their city’s “curb appeal.” These companies select sites based on street visibility and traffic count and value most highly the sites that the largest number of motorists sees. The planner can apply the same approach to the selection of high-visibility sites and corridors for priority blight removal and can encourage greening and maintenance of the cleared sites.

## Conclusion

Planners can take a stronger, more effective role in remaking cities after decline if they reframe their work as managing change, not guiding growth and development. They have many opportunities for improving the quality of life in cities after large-scale loss of population and disinvestment in property, but these rarely involve redevelopment. Because of the considerable shift in perspective, planners working in these settings need more resources and opportunities to learn how to manage a city’s adjustment after decline. Without these, planners continue to work on development, or they struggle on their own to invent new ways of thinking, when, instead, they could learn from one another. The prospect of reinventing the practice of planning in America’s legacy cities and historically industrial communities provides an important challenge for planning professionals and educators for the years to come.

## Notes

1. We use the terms “legacy cities” and “historically industrial communities” throughout this chapter. The first term refers to the municipality as a whole, while the second term more broadly refers to cities (usually smaller) that committed their economy almost exclusively to heavy manufacturing and to neighborhoods (usually in larger cities) that grew up close to mills and factories and experienced precipitous population loss after these plants closed. Other terms have emerged to describe cities that have experienced persistent population loss and disinvestment. Residents and leadership criticized the terms *shrinking cities* and *weak market cities* for being pejorative and rejected these terms in favor of “cities in transition.” We believe that the latter term is anodyne and of little analytic use: Every city everywhere is “in transition” at any given time. (In the words of Bob Dylan, “He not busy being born is busy dying.”) Calling the cities confronting the powerful forces of deindustrialization and depopulation “cities in transition” conflates these cities—with their distinct and compelling narratives—with others going through dramatic change of other kinds and fails to give this class of cities a name that is useful when developing the policies and practices that will address the forces they face.

2. Hack, Birch, Sedway, and Silver (2009). See, especially, pp. 71, 88, 146.
3. Mallach (2006); Bonham, Spilka, and Rastorfer (2002). In 2011, the American Planning Association added to this list with a Planning Advisory Service report on urban agriculture (Hodgson, Campbell, and Bailkey [2011]).
4. Beauregard (2009). See also Rieniets (2005), p.24.
5. The sessions of the conferences of the National Vacant Properties Campaign presented these ideas and innovations.
6. Our thinking has benefited from the work of other planners whose publications are helping to create the body of work to turn the planning profession's attention to the issue of planning after decline. For example, see Cleveland Land Lab (2008, 2009); Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (2006); Mallach (2006); Mallach, Levy, and Shilling (2005); Shilling, Schames and Logan (2006).
7. City of Youngstown (2005).
8. Herbert (2010).
9. Brooks (2009).
10. Molotch (1976); Logan and Molotch (1987); Elkin (1987).
11. For example, Thomas (1997); Highsmith (2009).
12. Cooper-McCann (2010).
13. Editorial (2011).
14. Western Reserve Public Media (2004).
15. As Bockmeyer (2000) has pointed out, a "culture of distrust" pervades Detroit's politics.
16. Linkon and Russo (2002).
17. For examples of such efforts, see Cleveland Land Lab (2008, 2009); Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative. (2006)
18. For example, Doherty et al. (2008); Bradford, et al. (2007).
19. Rodin (2007).
20. Fainstein (2000); Krumholz, Cogger, and Linner (1975).
21. City of Youngstown (2005), p. 6.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
23. Christie (2008); W. D'Avignon, city of Youngstown planner, communication with University of Michigan urban planning students, October 2009; Gerritt (2010); Aslesen et al. (2010).
24. Morrish and Brown (2000).
25. Adams, et al. (2010).
26. Doherty, et al. (2008).
27. Cleveland Land Lab (2008); Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (2011).
28. For example, Batsakis, et al. (2009); Bralich (2009).
29. See the development of this idea in Nassauer et al. (2008).
30. Casadei et al. (2003).

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## *Case Study: Youngstown 2010: America's First Shrinking Cities Plan*

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On a snowy December evening in 2002, over fourteen hundred citizens of Youngstown and its surrounding suburbs came together in Stambaugh Auditorium to discuss a vision for their city's future. The setting was apt, Stambaugh Auditorium is a neoclassical performance hall (with acoustics said to rival those of Carnegie Hall) built in 1925 on a site overlooking the Mahoning River. For over one hundred years, the thirty mills that stretched along thirty miles of the river poured out iron and steel, creating the wealth that built both the auditorium and the city which was already known as "Steel Town, USA." In January 1996, nineteen years after the first of these mills was shuttered, Bruce Springsteen played Stambaugh and sang "Youngstown" to a sell-out crowd. Not since that winter night had the people of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley come together in such numbers to define and celebrate their common identity.

While Springsteen's elegy was about Youngstown's proud past, the topic for that night's discussion was the future of Youngstown. From the *Youngstown 2010* planning team, the audience heard a revolutionary concept: Youngstown should abandon the thought of becoming again the city it once was. Instead, it should accept the reality that it is a smaller city and strive to become a sustainable mid-sized city with a more diverse and balanced economy than it had in the past. Over the next three years, Youngstown engaged in a multi-faceted community planning process that engaged a wide cross section of city and suburban residents in detailed discussions of Youngstown's future. Over five thousand people participated directly in developing the *Youngstown 2010* plan. And on January 27, 2005, thirteen hundred members of the Youngstown community reconvened in Stambaugh Auditorium to discuss the final plan and voice their support.

Youngstown's planning process began in the mid-1990s, when members of the city council decided to update the city's 1951 comprehensive plan and

began to sequester the necessary funds. The formal process began in earnest in late 2001, when Youngstown's then mayor, George McKelvey, and Youngstown State University's president, David Sweet, agreed to co-convene a process that would update the city's plan and simultaneously prepare the university's first comprehensive master plan. Mayor McKelvey appointed Community Development Director Jay Williams to lead the city team and President Sweet recruited me to head the university team. The city/university planning team engaged Urban Strategies, a Toronto-based urban design firm, to assist in designing and implementing the planning process. Together, the team and the consultants agreed to pursue a two-part planning process that would enable citizens' issues and insights to emerge and be addressed over an extended period of time. The team decided to divide the work into a "listening and visioning" first phase and a more traditional "comprehensive planning" second phase. The team agreed to define "vision" as "an agreed-upon set of community goals and a description of the changes that would be needed to achieve these goals" and to define plan as "the detailed framework of specific policies and regulations that puts the vision into action."<sup>1</sup>

The team chose to begin the first phase by inviting local leaders to participate in a round of focus groups that would identify the city's strengths, weaknesses, assets, liabilities, aspirations, and fears and help the team frame the broad outlines of a community vision statement. In order to insure that the focus groups represented the full range of community leaders, the team took pains to define leader broadly. The team reached beyond the usual A-list civic leaders to include individuals from unions, churches and other religious organizations, social service organizations, and ethnic associations; student leaders from the university and area high schools—both public and parochial—also participated. The result was a diverse group of over two hundred local leaders who engaged in a dozen workshops about the city's future. The workshops were structured as SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and each participant was asked for a final thought.<sup>2</sup>

The team and the consultants analyzed the insights from these focus groups and developed a vision statement, which they presented to the public on December 16, 2002. The vision they presented had four "thematic headlines":

- *Accepting That We are A Smaller City* and striving to be a model of a sustainable, mid-sized city;
- *Defining Youngstown's Role in the New Economy* and aligning Youngstown with the realities of the new regional and global economies;
- *Improving Youngstown's Image and Enhancing Quality of Life* by focusing on becoming a healthier and better place to live and work; and

- *Heeding a Call to Action* by adopting an achievable and practical action-oriented plan that will make things happen.<sup>3</sup>

Under each of the headlines the team recommended “Actions” and “Issues for Discussion” for Youngstown citizens to consider and identified a list of topics to address in the subsequent comprehensive planning process. Following the presentation of the vision, Jay Williams led a three-hour open-mike discussion and called for volunteers to help the planning team carry out the more methodical and time-consuming process of developing a new comprehensive plan.

The team then embarked on what became a three-year effort to update the city’s existing comprehensive plan, a document first adopted in 1951 and amended in 1974, three years before Black Monday, the day that Youngstown Sheet and Tube’s Campbell Works was shuttered and the collapse of the city’s economic base began. To sustain the enthusiasm of that December evening, the team established a core of volunteers to conduct neighborhood field studies and convened working groups to deal with specific topics of interest, including the role of the arts in the emerging economy and the future of downtown and the adjacent campus of Youngstown State University. The team carried out formal neighborhood planning sessions and participated in many discussions in church basements, high school and university classrooms, and community group meetings. The team combined this face-to-face communication with quarterly reports to the public, using the facilities of Western Reserve Television, a PBS affiliate allied with the university. The *Youngstown Vindicator* assigned a reporter to cover the *Youngstown 2010* plan and gave the neighborhood meetings and forums consistent and thorough front page coverage. Finally, the team engaged local media and marketing experts to develop and promote the 2010 “brand.” The group developed a logo and a strategy that included bumper stickers, billboards, public service announcements, editorial board briefings and the quarterly report to the people on Western Reserve Television. City and university officials agreed to use the 2010 brand to identify major projects then being developed—including a new university recreation center and a new city-owned convocation center—as “Youngstown 2010” projects, thus “doing” while “planning” in accordance with the vision’s “Call to Action.”

These efforts produced a groundswell of support for a new way forward: “The evolving vision took center stage in the local media and among elected officials as the community became thoroughly engaged in the planning process and excited by the possibilities it held.”<sup>4</sup> The depth of support for the new plan was manifested both by the Youngstown City Council’s enthusiastic adoption of *Youngstown 2010* as the city’s new comprehensive plan in 2005 and by the approval (by 74 percent of Youngstown voters) of a charter amendment requiring that the plan be updated every ten years. Subsequently, Jay Williams ran successfully for mayor of Youngstown. The first African-American to be elected to that office, Williams ran on the promise that he would implement *Youngstown 2010*.

The *Youngstown 2010* plan and process received the Outstanding Community Planning award by the Ohio Planning Conference in 2005. *The New York Times* recognized the plan's idea of "Creative Shrinkage" as one of the "Best Ideas of 2006." Finally, the American Planning Association recognized the team's commitment to extensive and exhaustive public participation with the 2007 National Planning Excellence Award for Public Outreach.

## Notes

1. City of Youngstown (2005), ch. 2.
2. Ibid., pp. 17-22.
3. Ibid., p. 18.
4. Ibid., p.17.

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