

**PLANNERS AS SUPPORTERS AND ENABLERS OF DIASPORIC
PLACEMAKING:
LESSONS FROM CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE**

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Courtney Elizabeth Knapp
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ABSTRACT

Planners as Supporters and Enablers of Diasporic Placemaking: Lessons from Chattanooga, Tennessee

Courtney Elizabeth Knapp, Ph.D.
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Professional urban planners have long struggled with questions about how to better support the planning and development of socially equitable and racially just communities. This dissertation project expands this conversation by exploring three centuries of ‘diasporic placemaking’ in the southeastern U.S. city of Chattanooga, Tennessee. I define ‘diasporic placemaking’ as creative, everyday practices through which historically uprooted and migratory populations create communities of material security and cultural belonging from shared social and physical environments. From there, I ask how planners might come to better support and enable multiracial diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga and other complex, racially and culturally diverse cities.

The project builds upon literature in citizen participation, planning education, placemaking, theories of diaspora, cultural studies, and participatory action research. Methodologically, it combined ethnographic techniques (narrative interviews, participant observation, and archival analysis) with an action research partnership between the author, Chattanooga Organized for Action and the Chattanooga Public Library. Together, we launched two experimental initiatives: the Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative and the Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Both were designed to be alternatives to mainstream planning initiatives underway in Chattanooga and to be created with and for the benefit of low income residents, especially communities of color.

The dissertation proposes that diasporic placemaking, as a theory and practice of sociospatial development, should be incorporated into mainstream citizen planning and equitable community development discussions. The history of multiethnic placemaking in Chattanooga provides keen insight into how collaborations and contestations between historically uprooted populations have generated local urban social and spatial orders. Assessing other cities in the same light may help planners and other urban professionals understand how to integrate anti-racism values and practices into urban planning and redevelopment in more substantive and transformative ways.

Furthermore, this dissertation proposes that a new era of citizen planning for community self-determination and interdependence lies before us. This updated mode of placemaking should understand how formal politics operate and help residents understand how to navigate public bureaucracies, but it must be ultimately concerned with shifting the powers of urban storytelling, analysis, and decision-making power into the hands of society's most underrepresented and marginalized members.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Courtney Elizabeth Knapp was awarded a Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning from Cornell University in August 2014, where she worked under the chairmanship of Dr. John Forester to complete a participatory action research dissertation project focused on supporting and enabling multiethnic placemaking and community development in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She earned a B.A. in Philosophy and Political Science (2003) and a M.A. in Gender/Cultural Studies (2006) from Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts. She went on to complete a second M.A. in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning from Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts (2008).

Prior to re-entering academia in 2010, Courtney worked as a researcher and community planner with several Boston-area community development corporations. She also worked as a researcher in the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy's Department of Community and Economic Development, and as a research and planning fellow with Project for Public Spaces in New York City. Furthermore, she spent a year employed as a regional Economic Development and Housing Planner for the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Courtney's research interests include housing, economic and cultural development, placemaking, and environmental justice. She will join the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at California State Polytechnic University-- Pomona as an Assistant Professor of Community Development beginning in the fall of 2014. She lives in downtown Los Angeles with her wife, Rebecca, a landscape architect, and their two cats, Penelope and Danzig.

For
Janice Knapp Pielert,

A loving aunt, mother, sister, and daughter

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INTRODUCTION:

DIASPORIC PLACEMAKING IN THE RENAISSANCE CITY OF THE SOUTH

For more than half a century, professional urban planners have struggled with questions about how to better support the planning and development of socially equitable and racially just communities. While some scholars and practitioners focus on methodological questions, asking how planning practice might be improved to better reflect and accommodate the varying needs and wants of diverse communities,¹ others challenge conceptual/discursive tropes, calling on members of the planning and community development communities to critically deconstruct and clarify what is meant when we throw around fuzzy terms like ‘diversity,’ ‘public,’ ‘community,’ ‘stakeholder,’ ‘citizen participation,’ ‘capacity building,’ and ‘empowerment.’²

Advances in the subfields of advocacy, equity, and community-based planning, environmental justice, and just sustainable development have done much to illuminate how historical legacies of racialized, procedural exclusion and uneven geographic development have negatively and disproportionately impacted communities of color.³ Importantly, many of these studies have centered on practical strategies of resistance and alternative world-building, showing how historically marginalized and excluded residents build place-based movements in

¹ See Arnstein (1969), Hartmann (1970), Albrechts (2001), Al-Kodmany (2001), Beebeejaun (2006), Agger and Lofgren (2008), Baxamusa (2008), Bernstein and Norwood (2008), Ataov (2009), Bailey and Grossart (2009), Sletto and Wirsching (2011).

² Davidoff (1965), Arnstein (1969), Sandercock (1998) and Alexander (2007), Biruk and Prince (2008), Archibald (2009).

³ Davidoff (1965), Krumholz and Forester (1990), Hartman (2002), Cole and Foster (2001), Harwood (2007) Thomas (1998), Jennings (1993), Agyeman (2005).

collaboration with and in opposition to the public sector and other institutional actors influencing planning and development decisions in complex urban environments.⁴

Although the specifics of their critiques and counterexamples vary across time and place, most social justice-oriented planners and policymakers agree that certain procedural conditions and post-planning outcomes are necessary for projects to be considered transformative (as opposed to nominal) in advancing racial and spatial justice. First, directly and disproportionately impacted and/or historically marginalized residents must be centered in planning processes, either by being brought directly into institutional planning endeavors as vested stakeholders⁵ and/or trained to utilize tools and resources to launch and manage their own community-based planning initiatives.⁶ The purposes of centering historically marginalized people and neighborhoods range from opening up dialogue and promoting intercultural understanding⁷ to helping enable autonomy and self-determination through anti-establishment community-based visioning and action planning.⁸ Second, development outcomes must directly and substantively benefit residents and communities who have historically been excluded from socioeconomic opportunity structures and distributional benefits.⁹

⁴ Leonie Sandercock's (1998) notion of "insurgent planning histories" is one of the most popular frameworks within contemporary planning theory and practice for understanding the planning activities employed by underrepresented and/or marginalized and exploited groups to counteract and/or subvert public and private sector plans. Similarly, Clyde Woods' (1998) genealogy of Black resistance against the "plantation bloc" epistemology of development in the Mississippi Delta offers a historically-grounded theory of emancipatory, though "arrested," development. See also Hartmann (1970; 2002), Fitzgerald and Howard (1983), Romo (1983), Gilkes (1988), Dubrow (1992, 1996), Manning Thomas (1994, 1998), Grengs (2002), Elwood (2006), Harwood (2003 and 2007).

⁵ Davidoff (1965), Arnstein (1969), Forester (1999).

⁶ For accounts of a long term planning action research project in East St. Louis, Illinois, see Reardon (1994, 1998, 1999, 2005); in New Orleans, see Reardon, Ionescu-Heroiu and Rumbach (2008). Harwood (2003 and 2007) discusses environmental justice planning partnerships in Santa Ana, California; Grengs (2002) explores linking community based planning with transportation justice organizing in the case of the Los Angeles Bus Riders Union (BRU).

⁷ See especially Forester (1987, 1999, 2009), Innes (1995 and 1999), Bollens (1998 and 2002) and Umemoto (1998, 2001).

⁸ Reardon (1994, 1998) and Grengs (2002), Hartmann (2002), Harwood (2003).

⁹ Arnstein (1969), Clavel (1986), Hartmann (2002), Fainstein (2010).

Despite these longstanding calls for more participatory planning and equitable development, several important studies have demonstrated that democracy-in-action vis-à-vis planning practice is easier said than done. These critics point to a range of deep-seeded cultural and socio-spatial barriers that preclude transformative processes and ultimately, inhibit transformative planning and development outcomes. Cultural barriers include communicative, linguistic, and epistemological divides, while socio-spatial barriers include vast differences in physical and social mobility, legacies of mistrust and dashed promises, and differences in the experiences of everyday life in neoliberal cities characterized by uneven geographic development.¹⁰

This dissertation project contributes to and expands conversations about how to better plan for and develop more just and sustainable multicultural places by exploring three centuries of multiethnic placemaking in the southeastern U.S. city of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Through a multi-method, trans-disciplinary analysis of the racialized politics of planning and development during the modern and post-modern periods, I demonstrate how past and present ‘diasporic placemaking’ activities have propelled urbanization over the course of the city’s three hundred year history. I also ask how urban planners, broadly defined, might come to better support and enable multiracial diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga and other historically complex, racially and culturally diverse urban environments.

I define ‘diasporic placemaking’ as creative, everyday practices through which historically uprooted and/or migratory populations create communities of material security and cultural belonging from their social and physical environments, and I argue that city planners and other professional urban interventionists have much to learn from the complex histories of

¹⁰See especially Forester (1998, 2009), Umemoto (2001 and 2006).

diasporic collaboration and contestation in the cities where we live, work and play. Over the past two decades, important studies have been published that emphasize the power of a range of extra-institutional and extra-professionalized planning actors, including neighborhood associations, environmental justice groups, youth, college students, and others.

In the spirit of Leonie Sandercock's (1998) call to move beyond "mainstream planning history" and explore the "transformative possibilities" found in "insurgent planning histories,"¹¹ I pay special attention to the interplays between official, city- and institution-backed planning initiatives and those organized by ordinary citizens, including artists, activists, neighborhood leaders, students, educators, and others. In this sense, this dissertation contributes to the growing collection of insurgent planning historiography by reconstructing a diverse and complex history of local community building in Chattanooga that falls outside of and against what is considered mainstream planning history and practice.¹²

Conceptually, this trans-disciplinary project draws from literature in citizen participation, planning education, placemaking, theories of diaspora, critical race and cultural studies, geography, and participatory action research. In doing so, I extend Thu Su'o'ng Thi Nguyen's (2010) discussion of diasporic 'hybrid placemaking' among Vietnamese immigrants in an Austin, Texas, elementary school into the realms of urban planning and community development, bridging his assessment of how "this displaced population created a sense of place

¹¹ In the introduction to her popular text *Towards Cosmopolis*, Sandercock (1998) sets the ground for a text meant to "puncture" and "demythologize" the "heroic image of planning history" (37) by centering the voices of women, people of color, and members of the gay and lesbian communities. She reminds her readers that "professions, like nations, keep their shape by moulding their members'/ citizens' understanding of the past, causing them to forget those events which do not accord with a righteous image, while keeping alive those memories that do... The boundaries of planning history are not a given. These boundaries shift in relation to the definition of planning (as both ideas and practices) and in relation to the historian's purpose... In emphasizing planning as a regulatory or disciplinary practice, we may miss its *transformative possibilities*, which in turn may be connected to histories of resistance to specific planning practices and regulatory regimes" (1998: 35-36).

¹² Stacy Harwood's (2007) discussion of the impact of city-led neighborhood improvement programs in Santa Ana, California, revealed complex legacies of limited empowerment, cooptation, and gendered divisions of labor.

and belonging within circumstances of “painful postcolonial hybridity”¹³ with critical planning literature concerned with intercultural/interracial communication, improved citizen engagement and participation, planning education and capacity building, and urban socio-spatial justice.

Why Chattanooga?

Chattanooga, Tennessee, is a city inscribed with rich and diverse cultural and material histories. Quite literally, it is a site of multiple, overlapping diasporas, where several historically uprooted and migratory populations, including Native Americans, African Americans, whites, and Latinos, have sought to create places of material security and cultural belonging from shared urban environments.¹⁴ Originally a Cherokee settlement and commercial landing known as Ross’s Landing, downtown Chattanooga evolved into a dynamic and prominent leader of the New South industrial movement, earning the nickname the “Dynamo of Dixie” by the early 1900’s for its manufacturing and industrial prowess.

A relatively diverse but highly racially segregated city, Chattanooga developed socio-spatially according to strict racial codes of conduct. In spite of its slavery and Jim Crow legacies, Chattanooga’s urban core evolved into a prominent African American center of cultural and economic production between the late 19th and early to mid- 20th centuries. Furthermore, focusing in on how race and racism took place in Chattanooga reveals important historical legacies of multiracial placemaking and community building which defied, if not outwardly rejected, de facto and de jure racism and racial segregation.

¹³ Nguyen, T. S. T. (January 01, 2010). Vietnamese Diasporic Placemaking: An Ethnographic Moment in Uneven Geographic Development. *Educational Policy*, 24, 1, 159-188, page 160.

¹⁴ Patterson and Kelley quoted in McKittrick and Woods (2007), page 27. The study joins a long tradition of historical and cultural studies work focused on overlapping diasporic communities. See also Carole Boyce Davies (2007), Earl Lewis (2000 and 2004), Michael Gomez (2005a & 2005b, 2006), and Stuart Hall (2003 and 2007).

Like many other New South cities, the second half of the twentieth century brought legal desegregation, Urban Renewal, massive de-industrialization, urban flight, suburbanization and overall inner city decline to downtown Chattanooga. Since the early 1980's, however, local placemakers have embarked on a series of major urban revitalization campaigns oriented around tourism and creative economic development. Several of these initiatives have centered on Native American and African American history and culture in efforts to re-ignite the city's economic engines while simultaneously honoring the contributions of local communities of color.

The transformation of the riverfront back into a Cherokee—and to a lesser extent, an African American— place of cultural meaning and belonging, combined with policy measures aimed at formalizing repentance and establishing a set of mutual stakes with respect to the preservation and support of Native American culture and history, have produced unique urban landscapes which may function as models for other U.S. cities willing to confront their sinister and oftentimes violent pasts. Assessed together, these formal, institution-backed efforts provide important examples of using placemaking and community development to engage in the work of cultural recognition and socio-spatial reconciliation.

While several placemaking efforts have centered upon Native and African American history and culture, they nevertheless run the risk of excluding contemporary communities of color from participating in the full benefits of reinvestment and revitalization which are transforming their historic neighborhoods. Most significantly, the redevelopment of the riverfront and historic inner urban core neighborhoods in downtown Chattanooga have been prioritized to the exclusion of most historic working class African American neighborhoods across the city. Today, more than ever before, downtown Chattanooga is a place of vast uneven

geographic development.¹⁵ Yet critical public narratives of development and change are subsumed by the dominant success story which emphasizes only the socio-spatial highlands when celebrating the city's commitments to a creative and cosmopolitan city. Assessing Chattanooga's renaissance, which has been largely confined to neighborhoods in the inner urban core, in its broader, local and regional contexts therefore ultimately illuminates local patterns of what Leonie Sandercock (1998) termed the "noir side of planning"—which is to say, doing so brings to light the disparities between neighborhoods and people whose cultures, histories, and local economies are considered worthy of reinvestment and cultural preservation by local planners and policymakers and those whose are deemed worthy of disinvestment, displacement, and socio-spatial exclusion.

Toward a Reparative City

In the face of local and regional patterns of de facto and de jure racism, physical dispossession and dislocation, institutional exclusion and neglect, cultural co-optation, and today, "revanchist"¹⁶ gentrification policies and practice, Chattanooga's historically uprooted and

¹⁵ Harvey (1985) famously located capitalism's perpetual crisis in its search to overcome self-destruction vis-à-vis a "spatial fix." In its eternal quest for expansion and accumulation, capitalist modes of production develop complex social and physical infrastructures to support their continued expansion. These structures include legal, financial and educational institutions; state administrations and bureaucracies; and built environment improvements, including transportation infrastructure and communications technologies. However, the relentless drive to move into new markets ensures that these infrastructures will eventually reach 'obsolescence' and be abandoned by capital itself. These socio-spatial switches are never smooth because the social and physical infrastructures previously employed to facilitate capital expansion take root and cannot easily be abandoned. The effects of this innovation-obsolescence paradox is the best captured by Harvey and others' (Smith 1984) theory of uneven geographic development. This position argues that the socio-spatial contradictions inherent to capitalism produce vastly uneven (inequitable) geopolitical and economic landscapes as they expand into social space. As capital circulates and expands into new and renewed (Smith 1984, 1996) territories across the globe uneven geographic development gets (re)produced. In some places, accumulation is high, while in others it is low. While supporters of a neoliberal agenda may point to these movements as evidence of capital's dynamism and technological innovativeness, Harvey and others who adopt a critical spatial perspective point to the volatility of this movement as proof of capitalism's instability and inevitable decline. See, for example, Harvey 2008 and 2012, Soja 2010, Marcuse 2012.

¹⁶ Neil Smith (1996) argued that an "emerging revanchist urbanism of the *fin de millenaire* city, especially in the United States, embodies a revengeful and reactionary viciousness against various populations accused of "stealing" the city from the white upper classes. Gentrification, far from an aberration of the 1980s, is increasingly reemerging

marginalized residents have good reasons to distrust mainstream, institution-backed planners and policymakers—especially when they suddenly become interested in long forgotten or ignored neighborhoods. This dissertation argues that socially and spatially vulnerable residents need their own community-based revitalization plans. To be legitimate and responsive to local needs, the plans must be created by and directly benefit low and moderate income residents, especially in communities of color. They should use the historic and cultural assets of the residents and their neighborhoods to inform place-based equitable redevelopment agendas rooted in community self-determination and interdependence.

Toward these ends, this dissertation contributes to ongoing conversations about how planners and planning, broadly defined, fit into historical reconciliation and racial reparations agendas and frameworks. At its core, it is a call to hold ourselves, as urban practitioners—and much more fundamentally as citizens of an interconnected world comprised of multiple, overlapping global diasporas—accountable to the fact that reparations are not merely about redressing injustices wreaked in the past. “The issue is not what happened long ago,” Richard America told planning scholar and activist Chester Hartmann during a 1994 interview. Rather, “The issue is the current unjust enrichment flowing from continuing injustices over many generations.”¹⁷

as part of this revanchism, an effort to retake the city.” (xix) In the final chapter of his text, he expounded upon this idea of revenge, writing “This revanchist anti-urbanism represents a reaction against the supposed “theft” of the city, a desperate defense of a challenged phalanx of privileges, cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighborhood security. More than anything the revanchist city expresses a race/class/gender terror felt by middle- and ruling-class whites who are suddenly stuck in place by a ravaged property market, the threat and reality of unemployment, the decimation of social services, and the emergence of minority and immigrant groups, as well as women, as powerful urban actors. It portends a vicious reaction against minorities, the working class, homeless people, the unemployed, women, gays and lesbians, immigrants” (207-208).

¹⁷See Hartmann and Florida’s (1994) conversation about “accounting” for racial reparations in *Poverty & Race* (July/ August 1994). Chester Hartmann is one of the only activist scholars in the field of urban planning to take the question of reparations for African American slavery in the United States head-on. He has argued that “Official theft demands restitution, even if decades have passed since the criminal act... And since the cumulative damage done to institutions and systems that impact African Americans is what needs remediation, the moneys likely should

From Diagnosis to Action Planning

As an urban researcher and activist with professional experience working as a public space, economic development and affordable housing planner, I felt that for the reasons stated above I could not in good conscience limit this dissertation project to the promises and limits of existing diasporic placemaking across downtown Chattanooga.¹⁸ Taking my inquiry into how planners might better support and enable diasporic placemaking from theory into practice, this research project involved two significant participatory action research components. In the spirits of “co-planning” and “bottom up, bottom sideways” participatory action research,¹⁹ this dissertation intervened and expanded current conversations underway in downtown Chattanooga about race, place, culture, history, and equitable development by launching two experimental grassroots capacity building and community planning initiatives: the Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative and the Planning Free School of Chattanooga (PFSC). Both experiments were designed to be legitimate alternatives to mainstream planning practice underway across the city and to be created with and for the benefit of low income residents, especially communities of color, who call Chattanooga their home.

not go to individuals...but should be directed to creation of educational, employment, and housing opportunities that will over time eliminate what threatens to be a permanent U.S. underclass. (2002,364).

¹⁸ My sense of obligation was rooted in both professional and personal commitments to social justice. In 2005, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) established a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. This Code includes the following “aspirational” goal: “We shall seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. We shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs. for the profession.” Beyond the professional code of ethics that the planning profession adheres to, I root this project in the self-reflexive, epistemological frameworks of critical race feminists Patricia Hill Collins, who described (2000) carrying an “ethic of personal accountability” into all aspects of daily life, including professional and academic endeavors (Collins 2000 265). See also Lightweis-Goff’s auto-ethnographic introduction in (2011). *Blood at the root: Lynching as American cultural nucleus*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

¹⁹ Ken Reardon (in Eckstein and Throgmorton 2003) described his (and his students) processes of cultivating community buy-in for a planning action research project in East St. Louis by pitching participatory action research as “co-planning,” whereby the local knowledge of community residents was combined with the “expert knowledge of professionals to produce innovative solutions to messy social problems while simultaneously enhancing the organizational capacity of community-based institutions” (19).

Methodology

This dissertation project combined traditional ethnographic techniques with a mixed-method participatory action research project. The reason behind this unconventional approach was to develop a methodology which might disrupt the hegemonic practices and representations of urban development and change in Chattanooga that conceal and misrepresent patterns of uneven geographic development and social inequality across the city. In the spirit of critical geographer Nicholas Blomley's call to "unsettle" the city, I reconstruct several historic and contemporary "community landscapes" across downtown Chattanooga: places populated by people, their stories, memories and hopes for the future.²⁰

Choosing an action-oriented narrative approach made sense given the theoretical and practical goals of the project. Jerome Bruner (1986) described narrative inquiry as a search for meaning that can't be captured by traditional quantitative or even standard qualitative methods. Narrative inquiry focuses on rich, detailed storytelling. Bruner argued that methodologically, narrative inquiry is concerned with the construction of dual landscapes: landscapes of action and landscapes of consciousness. In so far that this research sought to produce relevant, action-oriented accounts of how diasporic placemaking has, continues to, and might come to unfold across downtown Chattanooga, a 'storied' approach to data collection and analysis was a natural choice of methods.

²⁰Blomley (2007) joined a line of critical geographers and anthropologists who argue that cartography, land surveying, and other superimposed socio-spatial representations of land are colonial projects of dispossession and displacement. Colonial settlements were both nodes of empire and "speculative spaces" (110). Technologies such as cartography and land surveying were necessary to formalize and coordinate the expansion of the empire. Maps and surveys, in their capacity to superimpose a rationally organized space onto land, as well as their power to omit, served as a form of "organized forgetting" of the processes of dispossession and displacement inherent to colonial expansion and settlement in the New World. In contrast, Blomley positioned "community landscapes" in direct opposition to the "empty speculative platforms" represented in settlers' maps, Urban Renewal plans, and today, neo-liberalized urban revitalization and "Back to the City" schemes. For more information, see Blomley, N. K. (2004). *Unsettling the city: Urban land and the politics of property*. New York: Routledge.

Archival analysis

A major goal of this project was to ask what planners stand to learn about their own values and practice when they study the histories of diasporic placemaking that fall before and outside of the technical profession. Chapters 2 through 7 weave together found archival documents and existing historical analyses to construct “thematic and dialogical/ performance narratives” focused on diasporic placemaking in downtown Chattanooga.²¹ In addition to maps, plans, and other ‘official’ representations of development and urban change, I consulted unofficial and nontechnical representations of life in Chattanooga, including footage of and artifacts from direct actions and community events; photography, and film; poetry and musical traditions such as the blues.²² While the majority of archival work related to this project was conducted personally, more participatory modes of co-inquiry and knowledge co-production were employed during the action research phase of the project.²³

Semi-structured, narrative-based interviews with local placemakers

Narrative inquiry has the power to bring contested hi/stories to light, provide entry points for making sense of complicated, contradictory stories about self and community, and serve as a basis for personal empowerment.²⁴ Susan Chase (2005) and Irving Seidman (2006) argued that part of narrative inquiry’s power lay in its ability to capture subjects as they attempt to make sense of themselves through the lens of personal experience. The subject recounts her own story,

²¹ Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

²² In the introduction to their influential text *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick argued that an emancipatory approach to racialized spatial production requires interdisciplinary tools and perspectives. “To critically view and imagine black geographies as interdisciplinary sites,” they wrote, “from the diaspora and prisons to grassroots activists and housing patterns—brings into focus networks and relations of power, resistance, histories, and the everyday, rather than locations that are simply subjugated, perpetually ghettoized, or ungeographic” (7).

²³ Hayden, D. (1995). *The power of place: Urban landscapes as public history*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

²⁴For more detailed accounts of the transformative power of storytelling, see Bruner (1986), Chase (2005), Forester (1999 and 2008).

by and for herself and using her own terms; in this sense narrative inquiry involves “constructing and communicating meaning.”²⁵ In this sense, storytelling involves subjectification-- agency-making— even when the story being uttered recalls experiences of dehumanization, exclusion, or repression. John Forester (1999 and 2009) pointed out that storytelling can transform both the speaker and the listener, noting the potential powers of utterance and discourse when he contended that “what’s said is often more important for what it *does* as a practical performance (making a promise or offering reassurance, for example) than for whatever it *labels*, describes, or names.”²⁶

I designed the placemaker interviews as modified “in depth, phenomenologically-based” interviews. The goal of the phenomenological approach is to invoke detailed stories in three areas: personal experience and life history, experience and process (stories of practice), and critical reflection.²⁷ In total, forty seven (N=47) local ‘placemakers’ living and/or working in downtown Chattanooga were interviewed for this project. A ‘placemaker’ was defined broadly as a person whose professional or personal work involved actively inscribing the local urban environment with some sort of story or identity. Participants included planners, architects, artists, activists, neighborhood leaders, nonprofit executives, foundation officers and elected officials.

The standard placemaker interview guide (Appendix A) was developed and organized into three content areas: 1) personal background and experiences; 2) process-oriented questions/

²⁵ Chase, S. (2005). “Narrative Inquiry: Multiple Lenses, Approaches, Voices.” In N.K.Denzi and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd Edition, pages 651-680). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, page 660.

²⁶ Forester, J. (2009). *Dealing with differences: Dramas of mediating public disputes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, page 12.

²⁷ The three-part technique is promising because it provides time between sessions for self-reflection on the part of the subject, space for the researcher to adapt subsequent interviews to the data that emerges from previous sessions (thus resulting in more grounded theory), and a strategy for getting “thick, rich” data without being exhausting to the participant. For more information, see Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.

stories of practice; and 3) critical reflection. Within the first category, participants were asked to reflect on four topics: their personal background and connection to Chattanooga, the factors leading to and motivating their placemaking work, their perceptions of urban change in the city, and the historical events and moments that they believe have most significantly shaped the identity of the city.

Within stories of practice, participants were asked to paint pictures of their work by commenting on the following content areas: 1) their role in local placemaking and community development initiatives; 2) their experiences with stakeholder engagement and reaching “unusual suspects”; 3) their experiences with local partnership and coalition building; their techniques for negotiating local politics; 4) the social message of their work and any visioning processes that helped form that narrative; 5) and lastly, any lessons learned from past professional mistakes.

In the final section of the interview, participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of four topics: 1) the existing and potential roles of art and cultural development for advancing urban transformation; 2) the significance of community history to their specific placemaking practices; 3) any barriers and challenges that inhibit their work; 4) and finally, what sort of “place” Chattanooga is. These interviews were transcribed and coded thematically using Atlas TI software. Passages from the interviews are integrated throughout the dissertation project. In total forty seven (N=47) placemakers were interviewed for the project.

Participant Observation

Due to the people and place-oriented nature of this research it was important to engage directly with the neighborhoods and sites studied. Over the course of twelve months (July 2012 to July 2013), I regularly visited and participated in public and community events on the Tennessee Riverfront, several neighborhoods in East Chattanooga (especially Glenwood and

Lincoln Park), East Martin Luther King Street (formerly East Ninth Street), and the Central Business District. I paid special attention to how people used the spaces and how they interacted with others using them for similar or different purposes.

Action Research Component: Two Experimental Planning Interventions

The participatory action research component of this project evolved out of a partnership between myself, a doctoral candidate in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University, members of Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA), a community-based nonprofit working to “initiate, support and connect” place-based social justice movements in Chattanooga, and staff from the main branch of the Chattanooga Public Library.

My relationship with COA organizers began to gel after an initial site visit to downtown Chattanooga in July 2011. During this trip, I made appointments with and introduced myself and to as many local community development and placemaking actors as I could arrange during the week-long trip. One of these conversations included a spirited discussion with COA co-founder Perrin Lance, who described for me his organization’s early trials and tribulations to organize around and illuminate the daily experiences of the “other Chattanooga”—which is to say, those historically uprooted and oppressed residents whom the current urban renaissance had exploited and/or left behind.

It quickly became obvious to both Lance and myself that our meeting had been serendipitous, and that an action research partnership might provide mutual benefit and gain. Lance and his co-organizers considered working with me an opportunity to have someone with credentials, training and experience working as an urban planner lend their eyes and ears to the local social justice struggle in downtown Chattanooga. I saw collaboration with COA as

potentially connecting me into an existing network of social justice-oriented placemakers organizing across the city.

We spent the next year shuffling draft research proposals and local newspaper articles between one another in an attempt to devise an agreeable partnership. As Chapter 7 illustrates in detail, much of what we preconceived about the collaboration went out the door shortly after I arrived in Chattanooga, when we were forced to adapt and respond to significant changes in COA's membership base and organizing strategy. Although stressful while it was unfolding, these moments of crisis, dissonance and organizational restructuring became crucial opportunities for improvisation and experimentation in the months that followed.²⁸

The purpose of the action research component of this dissertation was twofold. First, we sought to recruit and train citizen planners from historically uprooted and marginalized communities by inviting them to attend free workshops vis-à-vis the Planning Free School of Chattanooga.²⁹ Second, we engaged residents and local stakeholders in alternative community

²⁸ According to Forester (1999), designing deliberative spaces that are open to improvisation is not akin to saying "anything goes." The best improvisational jazz musicians are powerful not because they abandon the 'rules' of tone, rhythm, and cadence entirely. Rather, they utilize these structures strategically; they play with the rules and use this play to open up new musical possibilities. Such is the case for planners who utilize "moral improvisation" to enable new spaces for sharing stories and knowledge, fostering (potentially) new interpersonal relationships and solidarity, and inspiring collective action. He writes, "The morally improvising planner should counteract exclusionary power by working to include representative voices of affected stakeholders; by anticipating the self-protective behavior and claims from powerful actors; by exposing the systematic suppression of data; by resisting rationales of resignation and invoking potentially radical, if also traditional, values of agency, respect, dignity, and so on. The morally improvising planner who ignores the suppression of citizens' voice or data weakening the claims of the powerful would be willfully blind, hardly responsible to the basic obligations of public-service planning" (236).

²⁹ Kozol (1972) challenged free school educators to become active participants in the struggle for racial and social equity and justice. While he saw the free school model as holding great potential for transformative social change, he maintained that such work requires long term commitment to place, intellectual rigor, and technical competency. He wrote, "There has to be a way to find pragmatic competence, internal strength and ethical passion all in the same process. This is the only kind of revolution that can possibly transform the lives of people in the land in which we live and in the time in which we are now living... The question, then, in my own sense of struggle, is as follows: How can the Free School achieve, at one and the same time, a sane, ongoing, down to earth, skill oriented, sequential, credentializing and credentialized curricular experience directly geared in to the real survival needs of colonized children in a competitive and technological society; and simultaneously evolve, maintain, nourish, and revivify the "uncredentialed," "unauthoritative," "unsanctioned," "non-curricular" consciousness of pain, rage,

visioning and strategic planning processes with the goal of producing culturally relevant, equitable community development plans for participating neighborhoods.³⁰

The Planning Free School ran between January and May 2013, while the SPARC Initiative is ongoing (as of July 2014). We designed both interventions with two broad, overarching goals in mind: 1) to increase residents leaders' capacity to participate in formal, city-wide design, planning and development conversations; and, 2) to support and enable low and moderate income residents to exercise new forms of place-based autonomy, self-determination, mutual aid and interdependence through neighborhood- and a "People's Coalition"- based visioning and action planning.³¹

The action research initiative utilized an asset-based community development model combining urban planning, popular education, traditional community organizing, and social work to produce bottom-up 'comprehensive' community plans.³² Although this initiative

love and revolution which first infused their school with truth and magic, exhilaration and comradeship. Few schools up to now seem to have been able to both; some that I know, however, come extremely close" (44-45/ 49).

³⁰ See Okubo (2009), Reardon (1994 & 2009), Jennings (1994), Umemoto (2004), Macedo (2009).

³¹ There is not much scholarly work published about free schools, with several important exceptions from the last three decades of the twentieth century. Generally speaking, the Planning Free School of Chattanooga abided by a definition similar to the one advanced by Jonathan Kozol (1972), who defined a free school according to six criteria. He wrote: "I am speaking for the most part about Free Schools 1) outside the public education apparatus, 2) outside white man's counter-culture, 3) inside the cities, 4) in direct contact with the needs and urgencies of those among the poor, the black, the dispossessed, who have been the most clearly victimized by public education, 5) as small, decentralized and localized as we can imagine, 6) as little publicized as possible" (16).

³² Asset-based community development (ABCD) engages residents and local stakeholders in community visioning and strategic planning process (Okubo 2009), with the goal of producing equitable community and neighborhood revitalization. Asset-based community development emphasizes engaging local stakeholders in processes of identifying key assets (organizational, cultural, political, economic/business, landscape/ environmental), opportunities and challenges within their neighborhoods; the strengths identified through the participatory process are then used as a basis for planning documents containing a set of public policy and community development priorities and recommended interventions (Vincent 2009, Hearn & Tanner 2009). Additionally, these ABCD processes can be used to develop a set of key indicators against which the success of the community planning (in this case, settlement upgrading) initiative may be benchmarked and evaluated in the future (Phillips and Pittman 2009). Butterfield, Kebede and Gessesse (2009), for example, describe an ABCD project where one hundred female heads of household living in an urban slum in Ethiopia were involved in an assets survey which inventoried individual skills, community participation skills and entrepreneurship experience within the community. These processes of engaging with their local environments and searching for historical and cultural meaning to effect policy change may help to foster stakeholder buy-in and civic engagement, resulting in a more robust and effective

focused on neighborhoods located within the urban core, we recognized that diasporic placemaking occurs across a range of local and trans-local/ regional geographic scales. This multimodal, multi-scalar understanding of community planning suggests the importance of devising creative solutions to place-based problems, including multidisciplinary collaboration and regional coalition building.³³

We were compelled to frame both planning interventions as alternative, social justice-oriented initiatives in order to distinguish our processes from the official, city-backed citizen planning initiatives that many historically marginalized residents have good reason to distrust.³⁴ To this end, the Planning Free School's motto "coordinated action in the pursuit of a just and sustainable city" was meant to capitalize on a recognition that public processes must be convened to allow residents who have been left out of and disproportionately burdened by mainstream planning and revitalization initiatives to share their perspectives on— and community-based solutions to— uneven geographic development in their cities.

Through their participation in this engaged research initiative, Chattanooga Organized for Action has ramped up their efforts even further by working with historically marginalized neighborhoods to develop neighborhood and coalition-based community plans. These initiatives are grounded in the premise that cultural and creative expressions are central to the projects of

program/intervention and increased community capacity to respond to critical local planning problems in the future. For more information about asset-based community development, see Kretzman and McKnight 1993, Haines 2009.

³³According to Ed Soja (2010), spatial (in)justice is "situated and contextualized in three overlapping and interactive levels of geographical resolution" (8): the creation and enforcement of political boundaries (ranging in scale from the block group to the multi-national level); endogenous struggles over the distribution of urban benefits and burdens; and on the regional/ "meso-regional" scale (which illuminates patterns of uneven geographic development). Given the fact that spatial (in)justices organize themselves across a multitude of scales, Soja call for renewed focus on regional coalition building, regional democracy and an overall 'regionalization' of the "right to the city" framework: "The struggle over the right to the city," he asserts, "extends regionally to the countryside, to rural areas and the rainforest as well." In this sense the right to the city is at its most fundamental level a struggle over space.

³⁴Several important studies have illuminated the adverse effects that dashed promises and legacies of distrust have on public participation and representation. See, for example, Arnstein (1969), Davidoff (1965), Thomas (1997), Harwood (2002 and 2007).

equitable development and community self-determination in socially complex, culturally diverse cities like Chattanooga.

Deep Reckoning

The stories of diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga explored in this dissertation suggest that racial reconciliation and reparation work in the United States is far from complete. On the contrary, in cities where local populations make up multiple, overlapping diasporas, the work of social and cultural healing vis-à-vis placemaking and community development has just begun.

Additionally, I argue that planners are uniquely poised to advance social justice in the cities that they serve by becoming “enablers” of community self-determination and interdependence vis-à-vis diasporic placemaking.³⁵ My position is reminiscent of advocacy planners of the 1960’s and 1970’s, and community-university partnership advocates of the 1980’s and 1990’s but with important distinctions. In particular, I revisit the ideas of advocacy and community-university collaboration in the context of twenty first century urban justice and sustainability, using two experimental planning initiatives to illustrate what happened when residents, professional planners, community organizers, public librarians and social workers joined forces to consciously dismantle the divisions between citizen stakeholders, planning experts and political decision-makers.

I assess the limits of historical diasporic placemaking, but I also expand conversations about planning and community change in downtown Chattanooga. In doing so, I ask how diverse communities of multiple, overlapping diasporas might collectively dig deeper, to create places where we understand and define ourselves in relation to one another’s common

³⁵ Ward, C., Wilbert, C., & White, D. F. (2011). *Autonomy, solidarity, possibility: The Colin Ward reader*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.

humanity—not in relation to the economic stakes we might bring to the game. How might we arrive at a place where our social commitments to one another are not merely strategic maneuvers, but enactments of deep commitments to human interdependence and social equity?

Overview of the Chapters

This dissertation is organized into three sections; each contains several chapters. This introductory chapter has argued that urban and regional equitable development requires deeper commitments from professional planners to support and expand diasporic placemaking. Part I (Chapters 1-4) is entitled “Theoretical and Historical Roots of Diasporic Placemaking.” Chapter 1 draws from theories of spatial production, diaspora, placemaking and participatory planning to add conceptual depth to the project. Chapter 2 examines competing public narratives of urban progress and change in downtown Chattanooga to demonstrate how cultural processes of placemaking have the power to reinforce and subvert historical legacies of racialized uneven geographic development.

Chapter 3 charts the history of early urban planning and development in the context of Cherokee removal and the making of a modern Native American diaspora. Chapter 4 extends the theme of diasporic placemaking into African American and multiracial placemaking in downtown Chattanooga from its early days until the mid-twentieth century. By historicizing popular narratives of urban development and change in downtown Chattanooga, I demonstrate why it is important to include deep historical reckoning as part of any community planning process that impacts historically marginalized or exploited populations.

Part II, “Constructing the 21st Century Cosmopolitan City,” focuses on the limits of formal, institution-backed planning initiatives, demonstrating how creative and cultural development have been central to both Chattanooga’s mainstream revitalization agenda and

grassroots communities' efforts to demand a more just and equitable city. Chapter 5 explores issues of cultural recognition and racial reconciliation in the context of the city's thirty year return to the Tennessee riverfront. Chapter 6 demonstrates how the arts and cultural development have been used along the East Martin Luther King Boulevard./ East 9th Street corridor and neighborhood to catalyze and counteract equitable community development. Chapter 7 explores the Lincoln Park neighborhood's experiences planning for community self-determination and interdependence to show how reframing urban development as processes of diasporic placemaking can profoundly impact planning and community development outcomes.

Part III, "Supporting and Expanding Diasporic Placemaking," discusses the action research component of the dissertation project to illustrate how an innovative collaboration between urban planners, grassroots organizers and public librarians helped enable and expand the politics of multiethnic diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga. Chapter 8 describes the evolution of Chattanooga Organized for Action, the social justice community organizing nonprofit with whom I partnered on this research project, as they transitioned from a popular protest group into a 501-C3 nonprofit who "initiates, supports and connects" place-based social justice movements across downtown Chattanooga.

Chapter 8 also discusses the Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative. The SPARC Initiative is, at the time of this writing, an ongoing effort combining urban planning, community organizing, and social work to help residents in historically marginalized neighborhoods exercise community self-determination and interdependence. The SPARC process takes participants through several stages, including identifying and training block leaders, conducting social and neighborhood assessments, storytelling, visioning, and

action planning. As neighborhoods build individual capacity and create plans, the focus of SPARC expands to combine neighborhood visions and plans into a coalition-based plan.

Chapters 9 and 10 present and explore the Planning Free School of Chattanooga to argue that creative engagement and popular education tools are needed to ask and answer uncomfortable questions about life in Chattanooga. These processes should and can enable new forms of deep collective reckoning; they must account for legacies of paternalism and unfulfilled promises, and they must consciously dismantle exploitative social and cultural structures. To conclude, I synthesize the major lessons learned through my participation in this multifaceted project into three broad areas as diasporic placemaking teaches us about: 1) how cities and regions evolve socio-spatially; 2) how planners and planning educators advance or inhibit diasporic placemaking in complex urban environments; and 3) what we might learn about participatory action research as a set of dynamic methods with the potential for catalyzing social change. I end with a brief discussion of future research areas opened up by this project.

PART I:
THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL ROOTS OF DIASPORIC PLACEMAKING

CHAPTER 1:
CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS:
DIASPORIC PLACEMAKING AND THE (DE) COLONIZATION OF URBAN SPACE

This theoretical chapter draws from literature in citizen participation, planning education, placemaking, theories of diaspora, critical race and cultural studies, geography, and participatory action research to construct a framework for understanding diasporic placemaking's potential to (de)colonize space. To begin, I discuss the "spatial turn" in late 20th century critical social theory in order to show how analytical discourses of space and place have evolved from 'stages' and 'containers' into actively produced webs of physical, social, and cultural interactions. From there, I ask how theories and practices of diaspora, meaning the studies and actions related to the forced, induced, and voluntary migration of various racial and cultural groups around the world complicate and expand the 'spatial turn' cannon by centering questions related to colonialism and the racialization of place. Finally, I connect both of these theoretical discussions to action-oriented urban planning literature focused on democratic participation and the equitable development of diverse communities.

By connecting ideas about sociospatial production with theories of diasporic identity formation, and then linking them to practice-oriented literature focused on participatory placemaking and planning, I lay the conceptual ground for subsequent chapters to demonstrate how diasporic collaborations and contestations have produced the complex urban environment that Chattanooga today call their "home."

Activating Space

Placing diasporic placemaking and insurgent historiography in the context of critical social theory's "spatial turn" adds theoretical depth to this dissertation project. Over the past forty years, critical social theory and practice have been revolutionized by a growing recognition that space and spatial production are central to theories of social change and development 'progress.' Arguments that space "matters"—not only in a normative, ideological way, but more importantly, in an everyday *lived* sense of the word—have resounded from across the disciplines, and transformed not only the historically 'spatial' fields of geography, city planning and architecture, but also unusual suspects within the humanities, including history, literary theory, anthropology and semiotics.

Henri Lefebvre (1974) famously asserted that social practice is comprised of three distinct, interrelated, trajectories of production: spatial production, representations of space, and representational spaces. At the cornerstone of his unified theory of social production, Lefebvre maintained that the "perceived-conceived-lived triad" must grasp this multidimensional spatiality of social life. Lefebvre's unified triad of spatial production rested on the idea that 'modern' socio-spatial practice has been dominated by 'monocentric' strategies which flatten, homogenize, compartmentalize, and ultimately annihilate, space.

The destructive social consequences of annihilation through abstraction throughout the course of modern history are manifold. Dispossession, exile, slavery, and war are all symptoms of the annihilation-through-abstraction logic of spatial production. To combat these nihilistic impulses, Lefebvre's "science of space" depended on "the bringing-together of disassociated aspects, the unification of disparate tendencies and factors...It sets itself up in clear opposition

to...homogenizing efforts... It implies the mobilization of differences in a single movement... differences of regime, country, location, ethnic group, natural resources and so on.”¹

The connection between knowledge and power revealed by the idea of spatial hegemony² suggests both oppressive and emancipatory potential for spatial practice, depending on whether knowledge production is exercised as *savior* or *connaissance*. Lefebvre wrote: “The connection between knowledge (*savior*) and power is thus made manifest, although this in no way interdicts a critical and subversive form of knowledge (*connaissance*); on the contrary, it points up the antagonism between a knowledge which serves power and a form of knowing which refuses to acknowledge power.”³ He later defined the former (*savoir*) as abstract conceptualization— theory that is understood as preceding and guiding social practice—and the latter (*connaissance*), “knowing” through practice and everyday lived experience. “Like all social practice,” Lefebvre

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell, page 60.

² ‘Hegemony’ was introduced by Antonio Gramsci to explain the future role of the working class in defining and controlling modes of political-economic production. For Lefebvre (1974), the term was also useful “for analyzing the action of the bourgeoisie, especially in relation to space” (10). Hegemony, as the active deployment and reification of a dominant socio-spatial logic through institutions, ideas, and everyday social practice, gains its political power and legitimacy (in its modernist, bourgeois manifestation) by actively promoting space as a “closed system”—a totality of social relations “which must be closed for it to be complete.” This consolidation forecloses a range of possible reinterpretations of social life which begin to surface once we reconceive space as an active, persistent state of everyday becoming, effectively ensuring that the dominant spatial structure continues to benefit and reinforce the political legitimacy of the ruling class. Lefebvre’s ‘unified’ theory of socio-spatial production gains its unification by being rooted in respect for heterogeneity and the ‘right to be different.’ In this way, Lefebvre’s triad was a revolutionary departure from exclusive rational-scientific modes of general-theory building and an appeal for universal participation in the conscious reclamation and redefinition of social (spatial) practice.

Blomley (2007) joined a line of critical geographers and anthropologists who argue that cartography, land surveying, and other superimposed socio-spatial representations of land are colonial projects of dispossession and displacement. Colonial settlements were both nodes of empire and “speculative spaces” (110). Technologies such as cartography and land surveying were necessary to formalize and coordinate the expansion of the empire. Maps and surveys, in their capacity to superimpose a rationally organized space onto land, as well as their power to omit, served as a form of “organized forgetting” of the processes of dispossession and displacement inherent to colonial expansion and settlement in the New World. In contrast, Blomley positioned “community landscapes” in direct opposition to the “empty speculative platforms” represented in settlers’ maps, Urban Renewal plans, and today, neo-liberalized urban revitalization and “Back to the City” schemes. For more information, see Blomley, N. K. (2004). *Unsettling the city: Urban land and the politics of property*. New York: Routledge.

³Ibid., page 10.

reminded us, “spatial practice is lived directly before it is conceptualized; but the speculative primacy of the conceived over the lived causes practice to disappear along with life.”⁴

This preoccupation with abstraction has the effect of obscuring spatial practice as an active, grounded and dynamic political struggle to claim and (re)define concrete space. For this reason, one can avoid employing the scientific ‘objectivizing’ gaze by shifting the ‘object’ of their inquiry from *things in space* to the *actual production of space*, i.e. socio-spatial practice. In this sense, knowledge re-interpreted as *connaissance*, or practical knowing, is rooted in an understanding of space not as a “passive locus of social relations,”⁵ nor as a sum of objects, nor even as the mental space that orders them according to a particular logic. Rather, space ‘takes place’ actively, becoming a complex network of power struggles which both form and are informed by particular sociocultural and geographic landscapes at particular moments in time.

In related work, Doreen Massey (1985, 2006) characterized space as neither a social container nor a stage, but rather as an ever-unfolding “simultaneity-of-stories-so-far.”⁶ Urban geographer Edward Soja (1985) developed a theory of socio-spatial dialecticism which asserted the “mutual constitutive-ness” of social and spatial life, writing “spatiality situates social life in an active arena where purposeful human agency jostles problematically with tendential social

⁴Ibid., page 34.

⁵Ibid., page 11.

⁶ Massey describes a set of three axioms upon which her theory of heterogeneous socio-spatial production and possibility resides. First, space is the product of interrelations which constitute and are constituted by interactions. In other words, space is fundamentally about the relationships (i.e. power dynamics) between different beings and objects, not the presence—or absence—of beings and objects themselves. Second, as previously discussed, space is characterized by “coexisting heterogeneity” and “contemporaneous plurality,” not segregated homogeneity or historicized uni-linearity (9). Thirdly, space is in a process of ever-becoming, and for this reason it is inherently *ateleological*, having neither destiny nor end. For Massey, the second and third propositions were of particular interest, for they suggest a range of political and cultural opportunities for linking social change to spatial production through everyday creative/imaginative and political acts. Crucially, Massey’s characterization of space as a “simultaneity-of-stories-so-far” extended critical spatiality well beyond a simple refusal or reaction to modernist logics which support and reinforce the abstraction of space from place (Massey 2005, 6). Above all else, *For Space* was a call for new critical imaginings of creative, heterogeneous spatial production. See Massey, D. B. (2005). *For space*. London: SAGE.

determinations to shape everyday activity, particularize social change, and etch into place the course of time and the making of history.”⁷

In other words, space both produces and is produced by social life. Conversely, social life produces and is produced through space. This “mutual *constitutive-ness*” of social and spatial practice (which is to say, the *activation*, or *deobjectification*, of space) forms the common bedrock of the “spatial turn” in critical social theory, grounding and connecting an otherwise disparate set of intellectual and political projects together through their common emphasis on the social production of space vis-à-vis every day, lived experience.

To be certain, multidisciplinary assertions about the centrality of space have opened important pathways for understanding the relationships between historical, geographical and cultural production. Soja (2010) called this awareness a “new spatial consciousness”⁸ rooted in an understanding that if space is socially constructed, it can be deconstructed and reconstructed according to different socio-spatial logics—including emancipatory ones. For Soja, this growing awareness about the contestability of space demands that we ask ourselves a crucial, though largely suppressed question: according to which sociospatial logics do we wish to unfold?

(Counter) Hegemonic Planning Practice

Despite analytical developments advancing the multiplicity and contestability of spatial production, urban planners tend to emphasize local histories relative to our professionalized fields—leaving out the stories of urban placemaking that precede or fall outside of the scope of

⁷ Soja quoted in Urry and Gregory (1985), page 90.

⁸ Soja claimed that “we make our geographies, for good or bad, just or unjust, in much the same way it can be said that we make our histories, under conditions not of our own choosing but in real world contexts already shaped by socio-spatial processes in the past and the enveloping historically and socially constituted geographies of the present”(103). Insofar that space is an actively unfolding, dynamic, heterogeneous process of social becoming, there exists the potential for making and remaking ‘the world.’ For explorations into the multi- and inter-disciplinary nature of the “spatial turn” see Urry and Gregory (1985), Massey (1985 and 2006), or Soja (1985, 1989, 1996). For interdisciplinary accounts of the “spatial turn” see Warf, B., & Arias, S. (2009). *The spatial turn: Interdisciplinary perspectives*. London: Routledge.

formal, professionalized city and regional planning. The consequences of this shortsightedness are many. Today, after one hundred years of ‘progressive’ urban planning interventions, we continue to struggle to plan and develop equitable communities. Rather than getting closer to our professional ethical goals, social inequality is growing at a faster rate than ever before.

In Chattanooga and many revitalizing cities across the United States, growing social inequality takes the form of highly uneven investment patterns and socioeconomic opportunities structures, wherein historically uprooted and migratory communities—especially low income communities and communities of color—bear disproportionate burdens of shortsighted and narrow minded planning and development decisions. Fortunately, prominent planning scholars have pointed out the dangers of such a myopic view of the profession,⁹ and there is a growing body of case study literature focused on how grassroots communities and social movements use planning theory and practice to demand their rights to the city. This project contributes to these conversations by demonstrating how the three centuries-long history of multiracial diasporic

⁹ With this said, there has been important work done urging planning scholars to look beyond the scope of their professional field and find practical wisdom in community building activities and urban history (and its associated research methods) more generally. Once again, Sandercock’s (1998) discussion of insurgent planning history is highly instructive because it acknowledges that long histories of alternative world-building lay outside of what is traditionally considered planning history and practice. Excavating and reconstructing these subaltern histories is a critical task because “planning in the multicultural cities of today and tomorrow requires a very different approach from that of the modernist paradigm. In order to imagine the future differently, we need to start with history, with a reconsideration of the stories we tell ourselves about planning’s role in the modern and postmodern city...The future multicultural city—*cosmopolis*—cannot be imagined without an acknowledgment of the politics of difference;...a belief in inclusive democracy; and the diversity of social justice claims of the disempowered communities in our existing cities” (Sandercock 1998: 44). Related, Carl Abbott (2006) analyzed the “conceptual and historiographical differences” between planning history and urban history and argued that though distinct, urban history has vast implications of planning theory and practice. By expanding the scope of our analyses, we have the potential to better understand “what policies have worked and which have failed, to understand the reasons behind the planning choices inscribed on our metropolitan regions, to know how city people have defined and defended their identities—to know the history of our values, institutions, and built environment—is to be more thoughtful and effective planners” (312). Similarly, Margot Huxley (2013) advocates a genealogical or critical historical sensibility, arguing that “a critical historicization of a concept, policy or programme attempts to bring to light the convergence of assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of thinking that enable something in the world to be seen as a problem to which there are possible solutions” (1528). Through historicizing public participation, in particular, we can come to understand how specific policies and approaches evolved and understand better their promises and limitations in practice.

placemaking in Chattanooga has simultaneously foreclosed and opened up transformative possibilities for place-based racial and spatial justice.

Theorizing Diasporic Placemaking

In the spirit of Soja and other critical spatial theorists, this dissertation asserts that urban planning scholars and practitioners have the potential to help support and enable multiracial and multicultural “spatial liberation” in the communities where we work, live and play in part by reframing planning and urban development as processes of collaborative and contested multicultural diasporic placemaking. The term “diaspora” itself is an expansive concept, applying to diverse people in a variety of unique geographic, political, sociocultural and historical contexts. Etymologically, the term is derived from the Greek word *diasperien*: dia- “across” and -sperien “to sow or scatter seeds.” Braziel and Mannur (2003) argued that the term has historically had a negative connotation, signifying the forced dislocation and displacement of subjects from their homelands, due to religious exile, slavery, and war. In its most literal sense, however, “diaspora” has a more benign meaning, signifying movement, dispersion, and migration.

Literature produced from within and across the global diasporas have long demanded historically grounded, critically nuanced assessments of the racialization of spatial production.¹⁰

¹⁰ For early works, see W.E.B. DuBois (1930) *The Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880* and Clair St. Drake's (1945) *The Black Metropolis*. More recent works include Robin D.G. Kelley (1990), Clyde Woods (1998), Joseph Inikori (2000), Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Eds.) (2007), Carole Boyce Davies (2013). W.E.B. DuBois's *Black Reconstruction* is arguably the most influential account of the racialization of space. Du Bois illustrated how racist attitudes toward African Americans prior to, during, and following the Civil War precluded the success of Negro emancipation in the wake of chattel slavery. Despite these overt hostilities, African Americans managed to relocate families, settle farms and towns, build schools, and participate in politics in significant numbers. Unfortunately, these gains were quickly arrested. In 1871, the Freedman's Bureau was systematically dismantled by racist legislators; six years later, federal troops were withdrawn from southern communities. With virtually no mechanisms to hold them accountable to their actions, conservative whites unleashed waves of terror against African Americans. By the twilight of the Reconstruction Period (1860-1880), a combined rural sharecropping-urban New South socio-spatial order had taken hegemonic root in the Delta and across the American South. For the next fifty years, this logic dominated spatial development across the South, producing a variety of

These critics, who range in scope, discipline, and creative medium, have demonstrated how space and race are themselves mutually constitutive—which is to say, spatial reproduction is inseparable from racial reproduction, in so far that spatial relations inform and are informed by race relations, and vice versa—each serving to reinforce and adapt to the other as history unfolds.

In their powerful essay “Nobody Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean” Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (2007) challenged their readers to assume a new take on an old question: how are black bodies implicated in the production of urban space? They argued that rather than take an essentialist view, scholars should conceptualize race-space co-production in terms of the power that communities of color exert to create and sustain cultural belonging and togetherness despite enduring centuries of structural and spatial exclusion and violence.¹¹

McKittrick and Woods rejected claims that Black diasporic experiences are limited to dislocation, catastrophe, migration and abandonment, but acknowledged that these forces must be considered when we think about the how “the lives of subaltern subjects are shaped by, and are shaping, the imaginative, three-dimensional, social, and political contours of human geographies.”¹² To this end, they challenged their readers to turn inward and ask themselves “how [our own] geographic desires might be bound up in conquest?” and prompted us to

locally-and regionally-specific uneven geographies and spaces of cultural belonging, including those found in historic and contemporary downtown Chattanooga.

¹¹ Most studies, the authors contend, take one of three disparate ‘units’ of analysis: the body, economic/historical materialist, or metaphoric. Each of these scopes has the effect of “reducing black geographies into geographic determinism, the flesh, or the imagination. . .In short, a black sense of place and black geographic knowledges are both undermined by hegemonic spatial practices (of say, segregation and neglect) and seemingly unavailable as a worldview” (McKittrick and Woods (2007), page 7).

¹²McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). *Black geographies and the politics of place*. Toronto, Ont: Between the Lines, page 5.

reimagine placemaking as “spatial liberation and other emancipatory strategies [which] can perhaps move us away from territoriality, the normative practice of staking a claim to space.”¹³

Articulating Diasporic Belonging and Citizenship

Forced and induced migration dominated the movement of people around the world between the late 15th and mid-19th centuries and therefore must be central to any conceptualization of ‘diaspora’ as a field and tool of social analysis. Joseph Inikori (2000), for example, examined the economics of the African Slave trades across the Atlantic Ocean, Sahara Desert, Red Sea and Indian Ocean during the first four hundred years of modern western expansion and development. In doing so, he assessed the extent to which slave labor and the slave trade “accelerated or retarded” political-economic shifts from “primarily agrarian/ agricultural to primarily industrial” modes of spatial production, not only in terms of European and New World accumulation, but also in terms of the extractive pressures on labor and natural resources within continental Africa during this four hundred-year time period.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid, 5.

¹⁴ Additionally, Inikori estimated the percentage of economic development transactions that depended on or were in some way supported by slave labor/trade during this time. He demonstrated how the trans-Atlantic slave economy produced a sophisticated division of and demand for specialization, including trade and finance, transportation, manufacturing, mining, export staple agriculture in plantations, commercial agriculture in medium freehold farms, and the sale of labor. These divisions were ordered regionally, producing varied political economic landscapes which reflected the economic specializations taking root across the New World. The middle and Northeast regions of the United States developed their economies around commercial foodstuffs for export to plantations in West Indies, finance and credit, import/export trades, shipbuilding, lumber production, fishing, and industrial manufacturing. The Southern United States, in contrast, with its agrarian and plantation-based economies, dominated global tobacco and cotton production. Through this structural transformation indigenous economic structures and practices in the West Indies were replaced with export-oriented, cash crop plantations, primarily sugar, coffee, cotton, and indigo. Continental Africa, in contrast, argues Inikori, received virtually no share of the global industrial investment during this time; its function in the global economy was limited almost exclusively to the acquisition and exportation of enslaved bodies. Taken together, these economic innovations and specializations produced “favorable demand conditions” for rapid urbanization, both in the sense of the expansion of urban centers and in the general sense of improved land. Industries associated with the slave trade included shipbuilding; guns, ammunition and the manufacturing of special metal goods, and most significantly, the cotton textile industry. In other words, the trapping, transportation, enslavement, and exploitation of Africans formed the cornerstone of European and North World global economic expansion and development for the first four hundred years of modern history. In addition to supplying Europe and its colonial territories with tens of millions of man hours in free labor, the overall slave system’s demand for specialization in both inputs and outputs “had important linkage effects on other industries...They also made an important contribution to the process of urbanization” (293). For more

However, scholars who theorize diaspora in positive and generative terms warn against de facto victimhood narratives, which ultimately foreclose possibilities for re-imagining the regional and transnational flows of people and ideas between places as the basis for socio-spatial justice and liberation. Ruth Simms Hamilton (2007), for example, warned that the “scope, analysis, and interpretation of the diaspora must exceed the narrow view of slavery and its aftermath.”¹⁵ Similarly, Carole Boyce Davies and Babacar M’Bow (2007) challenged their readers to consider how voluntary migration and movement has influenced the evolution of transnational diasporic communities and identities before, during, and after the transatlantic slave trade. Together, these three forms of migration have resulted in the “relocation and redefinition of diasporic peoples in a range of international locations.” They write,

The African diaspora—the dispersion of African peoples all over the world—is in effect an *already existing* globalization of African peoples. Created through centuries of migration, it *preceded*, at the level of demographic, the economic and communications structures now defined as globalization.¹⁶

For Boyce Davies and M’Bow, the multiple modes and products of human migration form the bedrock of a theory and potential “geopolitical reality” of diasporic belonging and citizenship for the twenty-first century. The history of treating Africans as “deportable subjects,” they argued, has produced a sense of ‘statelessness’ among the people of the global African diaspora. But as members of a self-identified group who seek political and economic legitimacy in a geopolitical

information, see Inikori, J. E. (1993). *Slavery and the rise of capitalism*. Mona, Kingston, Jamaica: Department of History, University of the West Indies.

¹⁵ Hamilton, R. S. (2007). *Routes of passage: Rethinking the African diaspora*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, page 7.

¹⁶ Carole Boyce Davies and Babacar M’Bow “Towards African diaspora citizenship : politicizing an existing global geography” in McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). *Black geographies and the politics of place*. Toronto, Ont: Between the Lines.

arena which demands the terms of nationhood, some terms of diasporic “sovereignty” must be articulated.¹⁷

Self Determination and Interdependence

For many individuals writing from a position of diasporic ‘statelessness,’ spatial control and land reform are at the heart of any truly transformative equitable development process.¹⁸

Frantz Fanon (1961) described this spatial imperative accordingly: “for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.”¹⁹ Similarly, Clyde Woods (1998) argued that land reform is “the only solution to the question of guaranteeing subsistence, formalizing the group economy, and gaining political, cultural, and personal dignity and freedom.”²⁰

In addition to a spatial imperative, diasporic placemaking involves personal and interpersonal articulations of community belonging. Ruth Simms Hamilton (2007) argued that “the ongoing struggle of Black people for human dignity and liberation is a creative process. It embodies contradictory crosscurrents and conflicts such as the dialectical relationship between creativity and action, travail and reaction”²¹. Hamilton pointed to the “shared historical experiences” of geographic displacement and social oppression, as well as the shared experiences of endurance and resistance, as constitutive elements uniting otherwise vastly diverse people and communities together as members of the global Black Diaspora.

¹⁷ To this end, the authors propose a theory of diasporic national belonging that radically departs from western traditions of citizenship by using voices from within the African diasporas to frame the terms of self, community, spatial practice, and ‘progress.’ In their views, the politicization of African diaspora citizenship would put into practice a central intent of pan-Africanist thinkers: to create an international network of ideas and practices that can then be positioned as a usable political body for the benefit of common yet distinct and geographically dispersed communities.

¹⁸ DuBois (1930), Fanon (1968), Woods (1998).

¹⁹ Fanon, F., & Farrington, C. (1968). *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press, page 44.

²⁰ Woods, C. A. (1998). *Development arrested: The blues and plantation power in the Mississippi Delta*. London: Verso. Page 56.

²¹ Hamilton, R. S. (2007). *Routes of passage: Rethinking the African diaspora*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press. (408).

Similarly, Patterson and Kelley (2007) argued that ‘diaspora’ is a shared process and condition experienced by diverse colonized people living across the world. Diasporizing involves common processes and conditions of imperial expansion and modern empire building, but also, and arguably more importantly, shared processes and experiences of resistance, adaptation, resilience, and transformation. Their conception of ‘diaspora’ as shared processes and conditions of exploitation and resistance presents an analytical frames to help us think and speak beyond essentialist discourses which foreclose emancipatory possibilities, and imagine diasporic sites as interdisciplinary and trans-historical places of cultural exchange and political solidarity.

Many who theorize diaspora place great emphasis on *articulation* as the creative process through which diasporic identities and cultures manifest themselves. The processes and conditions of diaspora are ultimately generative and creative in nature; they are actions and declarations of survival and resilience. To this point, Patterson and Kelley (2007) highlight the dialectical nature of diasporic being and becoming, arguing that for as much as the diasporic experience is one of uprooting and oppression, it is more importantly characterized by of resistance, adaptation, resilience, and transformation. This dual understanding of diaspora allows for imagining diasporic sites of connected histories and “overlapping migrations,” and therefore potentially as transformative spaces of cultural exchange and political solidarity. This conceptualization provides an analytical framework of cultural difference that moves beyond hegemonic logics of “fetishized difference”²² which have been used to divide and conquer popular multicultural social justice movements for more than five centuries.

Relatedly, Stuart Hall (2007) described the unique processes of diasporic identity formation as “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’ ...belonging to the future as much as to

²² For more information about transnationalism’s impact on identity and racialized property in the late capitalist period, see Hong, G. K. (2006). *The ruptures of American capital: Women of color feminism and the culture of immigrant labor*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

the past...undergoing constant transformation... subject to the continuous play of culture, history, and power.”²³ Citing Hall’s ideas about diasporic migration and cultural belonging, Kelley and Patterson (2007) argued that in so far that there is no inherent “belongingness” for diasporic citizens, relationships must be deliberately articulated. This idea—that belonging is not always already bound to a particular place or community, and that it is up to directly impacted people to articulate their own terms of attachment and togetherness—has great emancipatory potential for local anti-racism and anti-colonial struggles across the globe. Recent moves to create a cultural and political discourse around Native American-African American “indivisibility” is one example of re-imagining cultural belonging, kinship, and togetherness in the context of multiple and overlapping diasporic placemaking.²⁴

In this dissertation, I suggest that diasporic placemaking, as a theory and practice of sociospatial development, can inform and enrich mainstream diversity planning and equitable community development discussions. The history of multiethnic placemaking in Chattanooga provides insight into how collaborations and contestations between historically uprooted populations generate urban social and spatial orders. Doing so may help planners and other urban professionals understand how to integrate anti-racism agendas into urban planning and redevelopment in more meaningful and transformative ways.

²³ Stuart Hall (2007) “Thinking About Thinking” Afterword to Meeks, ed. Caribbean Reasonings. *Culture, Politics, Race and Diaspora* (Ian Randle), page 236.

²⁴ For example, work that excavates and reconstructs the long, deeply intertwined Native American-African American cultural histories—both in the Southeast and later west of the Mississippi River-- have led some contemporary scholars and political activists to employ a language of “indivisibility” when discussing Black-Native relations in the United States. The notion of the ‘indivisibility’ of is rooted in notions of kinship, common socioeconomic experience, and political solidarity and establishes ethical and epistemological foundations for imagining radically new forms of political solidarity and community togetherness, and are direct rejections of the “divide and conquer” strategies of racial formation, categorization, and division exercised by colonial powers across the globe, including in and around the site of present day Chattanooga. For more information about diasporic indivisibility, see Forbes (2004), Miles (2005), Miles (2008), Tayac (2009).

In Chattanooga, for as long as there have been socio-spatial movements to dislocate, dispossess, segregate, and exclude on the basis of race and cultural difference, there have been multiracial-and-cultural movements to resist, subvert, and counteract divide and conquer practices. In their place, multiple overlapping diasporic communities have forged presents and imagined futures based on mutuality, interdependence, and respect. From 18th and 19th century Black-Cherokee families to the African American-Jewish anti-lynching campaigns of the southern labor movement in the 1930's; from one minister's efforts to marry whites and Blacks during the Reconstruction era to another's work in solidarity with the Black Panther party in the 1970's, as well as his efforts to save the city's few remaining public housing developments today, the history of diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga is longer and infinitely more complex than mainstream accounts of race and space in the city would have or want you to believe. The story of downtown Chattanooga as a site of complex overlapping diasporic sociospatial production should be examined through this critical, intersectional lens.

By exploring stories of urban diasporic placemaking, we find long and instructive histories of anti-racist and anti-colonial practice. In defense of these abolitionist placemaking practices, McKittrick and Woods (2007) wrote:

The act of making corners, neighborhoods, communities, cities, rural lands, rivers, and mountains sacred is central to their defense and the defense of the communities that love and cherish them... The people of urban and rural communities that are undergoing gentrification, the prisoners, refugees, and orphans, and all displaced persons from Africa to Africaville have different desires for home. They want to build new homes in places that have barred their entry. They also want to explore and reimagine the politics of place. The realization of these desires can transform the world when these visions are based in traditions that see place as the location of co-operation, stewardship, and social justice rather than just sites to be dominated, enclosed, commodified, exploited, and

segregated. Black geographies will play a central role in the reconstruction of the global community.²⁵

The challenge for social justice-minded planners shifts from imagining entirely new modes of urban spatial consciousness, to locating, excavating, cultivating and enabling the critical spatial awareness which has been present and active in diasporic communities since the dawn of colonialism and the ‘discovery’ of the New World.

Diasporic Space

If the term ‘diaspora’ signifies physical migration as well as a set of conditions and processes, articulations, and radical democratic possibilities, what then are diasporic spaces? In short, they are spaces of action and complexity; of hybridity and contradiction; of simultaneous colonization and radical decolonization.

Diasporic spaces are, on the one hand, sites of expropriation, displacement, containment, and deportation: the master’s house, the missionary schoolhouse, the stockade pen, prison, and public workhouse. In a sense, diasporic spaces are abstracted and commodified; they are places emptied out of their community landscapes—the “abstract, cadastral grid”—reconfigured into property available for the taking. To continue with the frontier metaphor, diasporic space is, in the words of Nicholas Blomley (2004), “settled,” or colonized space, for it was through land enclosure and urban economic development that people of color across New World have been uprooted, relocated and forced underground to seek refuge from the social relations that were designed to exploit their land and labor.

Katherine McKittick alluded to a subterranean space: the half-hidden “tension between the mapped and the unknown.”²⁶ Ang-Lygate (1996) described diasporic spaces as

²⁵ McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). *Black geographies and the politics of place*. Toronto, Ont: Between the Lines, page 6.

“(un)locations—spaces where experiences of diaspora reside that are invisible, largely unacknowledged, and therefore under-theorized.”²⁷ In the context of property, diasporic spaces are spaces of insecurity and tenuousness-- a constant reminder of the potential for the “profound loss of land and livelihood.”²⁸ Often times these are the spaces that have been neglected or abandoned by the structural forces of capitalism: the lowlands in a global landscape characterized by uneven geographic development.

On the other hand, diasporic spaces are radically decolonized and liberated places characterized by movement and creative improvisation. Clyde Woods (2007) and Michelle R. Scott (2008a; 2008b) described these spaces of cultural production as sites of subaltern epistemologies and locally situated knowledge; spaces charged with vigilant attention to memory and hope for a radically different future. Moreover, diasporic spaces are spaces of overlapping culture and potential togetherness: places with the potential to subvert and bypass, if not dismantle, the isolating chains of private property and rugged individualism. Woods and McKittrick (2007) referred to these critical sites of diasporic cultural belonging and material security as “ethical spaces of geographic reform.”²⁹

Diasporic Placemaking

How do diasporic spaces, having the potential for both liberation and subjugation, become diasporic *places*, in the sense of being actively transformed into sites of antiracist,

²⁶Ibid., page 4.

²⁷Ang-Lygate (1996), page 377.

²⁸ Grace Kyungwon Hong’s (2006) discussion of “propertied subjects” adds theoretical depth to historic transnational and trans-regional migration trends. Propertied subjects are both gendered and racialized, which leads to vast socio-economic disparities along gender and racial lines. Hong describes the intersection of race and gender for women of color as the “profound impossibility of ownership” (236). Despite this profound impossibility Hong demonstrated how communities of color have formed alternative, “subterranean” economies and communities throughout modern history. Subaltern conceptualizations of property and ownership serve as ruptures in the hegemonic processes and structures of capital accumulation and urban development.

²⁹ McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). *Black geographies and the politics of place*. Toronto, Ont: Between the Lines, page 5.

decolonized material security and cultural belonging? Woods and McKittrick (2007) defined ‘place’ as “the location of cooperation, stewardship, and social justice”³⁰—in short, the antithesis to abstracted, colonized space.

Similarly, Thu Su-o-ng Thi Nguyen (2010) characterized “diasporic placemaking” in three ways: as the production of hybridical spaces, as the shedding of light on (un)locations, and as active resistance to flows of global capital. Invoking LeFebvre’s ‘three-dimensional configuration of spatial production’ and Harvey’s notion of ‘uneven geographic development,’ Nguyen argued that peripheral spaces provided critical opportunities for Vietnamese residents living in Austin, Texas, to access services and promote cultural belonging. For Nguyen, it is within these diasporic places that counter-hegemonic discourses and practices were cultivated, and in a sense, where a homespace for these otherwise isolated immigrant residents was forged.³¹

Diasporic placemaking extends existing placemaking literature, which tends to focus the cultural aspects of space without also critically deconstructing the underlying social relations supporting it.³² Increasingly, planners subscribe to ‘place-based’ approaches to urban and regional (re)development, emphasizing the profession’s need to tap into and plan in accordance with the unique identities of neighborhoods, cities and regions. During these conversations, local history, culture, and territory are at the fore. But whose histories, cultures and territorial limits are ultimately represented in place-based programs and designs? How are they represented? Who is doing the telling, and who decides what is ultimately written into space? What are the texts and subtexts of urban spaces intentionally written and what discursive and political work do

³⁰ Ibid., page 4.

³¹ Nguyen is the first scholar to use the term ‘diasporic placemaking’ in an academic context. For more information about his characterization, see Nguyen, T. S. T. (January 01, 2010). Vietnamese Diasporic Placemaking: An Ethnographic Moment in Uneven Geographic Development. *Educational Policy*, 24, 1, 159-188.

³² See for example Hayden (1996), Low and Taplin (2005).

they do? These questions suggest that placemaking, at its core, is deeply political, involving values and judgments about sociospatial belonging, representation, and inclusion/ exclusion.

That placemaking, and by association, planning and community development, are highly political, should come as no surprise.³³ For nearly three decades, planning scholars and practitioners, especially those working and writing from a critical race and/or feminist position, have problematized the success of placemaking movements, arguing that places are typically inscribed with white, middle-and-upper class narratives consistent with the myths of American Exceptionalism, Manifest Destiny and, at best, the liberal multicultural melting pot.³⁴ According to these views, placemaking tends to uncritically highlight only those narratives that reinforce the locale's—and by extension, nation's—legitimacy as an economic, political and cultural success and superpower.

While everyday, lived experiences regularly contradict these narratives, few communities actually inscribe their landscapes with stories that complicate the master narratives of freedom, democracy and social progress. Leonie Sandercock (1998) called this sin of omission the “noir” side of planning history, and argued that the writing over-and-out of planning's dark side from the master professional narrative has deleterious effects on planners and the communities they serve. She wrote:

³³ Since its inception, city planning has touted itself as a ‘civic’ and progressive social movement (see, for example, the proceedings from the First National Conference on City Planning, held in Washington DC in May, 1909), and for more than fifty years, scholars and practitioners have defined the profession in terms of its roles in negotiating, cultivating and counteracting political, economic and cultural power. Although certain schools within the diverse realm of city and regional planning persist in the modernist belief that abstracted, uniform, technocratic solutions can ‘solve’ urban social ills, for the most part, these totalizing myths have been debunked, and replaced with conversations about local context and contingency. What continues to unite ‘planning’ as a field of theory and practice, then, is not a particular toolset (though certain tools are emphasized above others), or an underlying ‘progressive’ political orientation, whether rationalistic-comprehensive or contextual and place-based. Rather, the field is unified by its interest in the definition, ordering and ‘improvement’ of concrete social space. To this end, it is also unified in its inextricability from processes of local and regional politics and power. It for these reasons that Forester (1987) declared that “all people may be created equal, but when they walk into the planning department, they are simply not all the same” (305).

³⁴ See the groundbreaking work of Hayden (1996), Sandercock (1998), and Low and Taplin (2004).

Professions, like nations, keep their shape by moulding their members’/ citizens’ understanding of the past, causing them to forget those events which do not accord with a righteous image, while keeping alive those memories that do... The writing of histories is not simply a matter of holding a mirror up to the past and reporting on what is reflected back. It is always a representation, a textual reconstruction of the past rather than a direct reflection of it. Mainstream planning historians have typically seen their subject as the profession, and their object as describing (and celebrating) its emergence. There have been two significant consequences of this approach. One is the absence of diversity in these texts. The other is the absence of any critical/ theoretical perspective. These sins of omission are the *noir* side of planning.³⁵

On the contrary, upon sites of conflict and contestation, communities will often rewrite the sociospatial landscapes in antic attempts to scrub away memories associated with place-based violence and exploitation.

Nicholas Blomley (2004) articulated a theory of urban decolonization that helps clarify diasporic placemaking as a set of contestable and collaborative sociospatial practices. First, he rejected the myths of Manifest Destiny and Terra Nullius (“no man’s land”), arguing that these two spatial representations dominated settlers’ geopolitical imaginations throughout the 19th century and served as political and ethical rationales for indigenous dispossession and displacement. To this point, urbanization across Europe’s settler colonies, including and especially in the United States, did not involve the improvement or settlement of pristine, “wasted” lands. Rather, placemaking and development in the New World involved the “re-settlement” of already existing indigenous sociospatial places.

Related to this point, Blomley conceived of landscapes as spaces composed not only of “bricks and mortar, but also discursive representations.”³⁶ In so far that landscapes are socio-cultural as well as physical, they’re in a persistent state of “contestatory becoming.”³⁷ This

³⁵ Sandercock (1998): 35-37.

³⁶ Blomley, N. K. (2004). *Unsettling the city: Urban land and the politics of property*. New York: Routledge, page 51.

³⁷ *Ibid*, page 53.

notion of contestatory becoming, like the previously discussed relationship between place and diasporic belongingness, opens up a range of political, cultural, and material possibilities for people engaged in struggles over space and place on the ground.

Furthermore, Blomley drew a clear distinction between dispossession and displacement, characterizing the former as the physical removal of people from land or space that they claim as their home and the latter as the sociocultural processes through which a person or community's presence, history, and ties to the land are written out of 'official' stories of place. He described this cultural process accordingly:

The creation of the city requires active placemaking that relies upon certain forgettings of the past, as well as some creative reconstructions. This is a positive and a negative project of effacement and of production. Urban displacement...seems to entail two related maneuvers. First, native people must be conceptually removed from urban space... Second, displacement requires the concomitant emplacement of a settler society: This place is to be made into a white place through physical settlement and occupation.³⁸

What is most important about the distinction between dispossession and displacement is that while dispossession can be "complete", in the sense that a person or group can be physically removed and excluded from a particular space, displacement, as an erasure of cultural ties and relations, can never be a complete or wholly exclusionary process. For this reason, the notion of disruption or, to borrow Sandercock's term, "insurgent" placemaking, opens up important possibilities for reclaiming and decolonizing urbanized spaces through direct action.

Jenny Lightweiss-Goff (2011) argued that insofar as placemaking and development is a key culprit in forgetting, it is also crucial to remembering. "You cannot wash away a bloodstain," she reminded her readers. "Attempts to scrub the stain repeat its dimensions in a

³⁸ Ibid., page 114.

frenzy of repetition that changes the surface and texture that surround it.”³⁹ Instead of futilely attempting to scrub our landscapes clean, we must acknowledge our past, and our present connections to place history vis-à-vis evolving spatial and ideological (i.e. national) territories of belonging.

Lightweiss-Goff posited a form of placemaking that wrestles the power of landscape repetition away from those people who wish to forget the past and places it into the hands of those who are desperate to confront and working through the connections between American violence-belonging in substantive ways. Although perhaps a bit too idealistic in her prescription, Lightweiss Goff makes a compelling case for the connection between spatial and cultural transformation:

At the sites of lynchings, the space—rather than the spectacle—should be the emphasis, because the critique of publicness and consensus disrupts the tourist’s relationship to the ground on which he is standing, or the resident’s relationship to the community in which he is embedded... The repetition of the landscape... can be interrupted with matter out of place that resists seamless replication: the plaque we never notice until the day we notice nothing else.⁴⁰

Lightweiss-Goff’s intellectual project raises important questions about the culture-based urban revitalization underway in downtown Chattanooga. As Chapter 5 explores in detail, in January

³⁹ Lightweiss-Goff, J. (2011). *Blood at the root: Lynching as American cultural nucleus*. Albany: State University of New York Press., page 160. Importantly, Lightweiss-Goff discussed the public spectacle of lynching, and by association, issues of cultural memory and forgetting, specifically in terms of the production of space. In her essay “Vacant Lots: Public Memory and the Practice of Forgetting” she focused on three lynching cases in U.S. history, and traveled to the sites of each of these violent spectacles to assess the current uses and conditions of the sites. In Greenville, South Carolina, for example, Lightweiss-Goff visited the site of the former Southern Provisions Company, where 24-year old African American Willie Earle was tortured and murdered by a white mob on February 15, 1947. Reflecting on the desolation of the now-vacant, overgrown ruins of the facility, she discussed how spatial practice is at the heart of our ability to forget the past: “I wonder now if development joined in a conspiracy against memory—or if, in fact, they share a trajectory of destruction, of occlusion, of ruthless erasure occasionally shaken when a severed head is thrown at the gates of forgetting” (153). Lightweiss-Goff visited each of sites discussed in her book (Greenville, South Carolina, Port Jarvis, New York, and Marion, Indiana), and at each she found virtually no suggestion of the violent spectacle that had occurred at that place. In Port Jarvis, New York, the space where Robert Jackson was violently murdered to the delight of gathering white crowds, has been commercialized and presently houses a Kentucky Fried Chicken and a Baptist Church, prompted Lightweiss-Goff to reflect sardonically, “Here we stand at the axis of the lynching, the crucifixion, and the deep fryer” (161).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pages 174-6.

2002, the City of Chattanooga announced that it had awarded its downtown revitalization plan contract to internationally acclaimed planning firm Hargreaves Associates. Dubbed the *21st Century Waterfront Plan*, this document established several critical community development and placemaking goals and prioritized projects to help re-ignite the physical, social, and cultural landscapes of downtown Chattanooga.

The most compelling aspect of this plan in terms of this dissertation project was its emphasis on re-working historically erased and marginalized cultures and histories into the local urban physical and social landscapes of the city. Three major components of the 21st Century Waterfront Plan, for example, were the revitalization of Ross's Landing, which includes an interactive public art installation that highlights the history and culture of the Cherokee in downtown Chattanooga; the development of a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") between the City of Chattanooga and the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, which "in the spirit of repentance" for indigenous dispossession, intended to bind the parties "together in a relationship expressed in the Cherokee language as *Du-na-li-i-yv* and described in the English language as "a friendship between groups"⁴¹; and the construction of Renaissance Park on the north bank of the Tennessee River, a property which included the site of the original African American settlement in the city ("Camp Contraband"), as well as sculpture and landscape features representing the forced migration of different cultural groups from the city.

Taken together, these efforts provide a set of innovative and creative examples of using placemaking and urban revitalization processes to engage in the work of cultural recognition and political reconciliation. The transformation of the riverfront back into a Cherokee—and to a lesser extent, African American-- "place" of cultural meaning and belonging, combined with policy measures aimed at formalizing "repentance" and establishing a set of mutual stakes with

⁴¹ City of Chattanooga (2006). Memorandum of Understanding, page 1.

respect to the preservation and support of Native American culture and history, has produced urban socio-spatial and political landscapes that radically diverge from previous efforts and serve as a model for other cities willing to do the same.

What the *21st Century Waterfront Plan* fails to account for, however, are the histories of diasporic placemaking that fall outside of the boundaries targeted for reinvestment and which disrupt the narrative of symbolic sociospatial homecoming in the city. Rather, these initiatives privilege reconciliation with the violence of historic Cherokee dispossession over reconciliation with ongoing, everyday acts of spatial exclusion and violence unleashed against African Americans and other people of color in the city. For example, although the 21st Century Waterfront Plan highlights the site of Camp Contraband, it fails to memorialize the two African American men who were brutally lynched on the Walnut Street Bridge just yards away from both Ross's Landing and Camp Contraband. It also provides a narrative of racial reconciliation that obscures ongoing race-based exclusion and uneven geographic development. It is precisely these sorts of contradictions in socio-spatial representation, belonging and material security that my overall dissertation project seeks to identify and counteract.

In response to solipsistic and anesthetized versions of placemaking, a growing number of critics argue for subaltern and 'insurgent' forms of spatial practice—forms that acknowledge the intersectionality and hybridity of diasporic identity, the contingency of history, the contradictions of territory, the exceptions to 'American Exceptionalism,' and the retrogressions of 'American progress.' Leonie Sandercock (1998) summarized the importance—and challenges-- of adopting such an embodied, critically nuanced approach, writing:

We need theories of space and of place; theories of the state and of the role of planning within the state apparatus; theories of power and knowledge; theories of gender and race inequalities; theories of bodies as social constructions; and so on. The list can never be complete, or completed, for two reasons. First, because each new generation rewrites

history according to its own interests and issues... Second, because the boundaries we draw around the object of planning history are determined in the first place by how we define planning. That is, and always will be, a political and strategic decision.⁴²

Reframing planning and community development as processes of multiracial and multicultural diasporic placemaking therefore extends placemaking literature by explicitly linking the cultural identity work of sociospatial storytelling with a local economic justice agenda. To this end, this project explores the long history of diasporic placemaking in downtown Chattanooga in order to better understand how planning and placemaking practitioners might come to support and enable processes that create everyday community spaces not only of cultural belonging, but which also transform historically unequal and oppressive material relations across the city.

Participatory Planning: Improved Processes, Transformed Outcomes?

For three quarters of a century, planners and academics have championed citizen participation in local and regional planning processes. Citizen engagement in urban planning has been called the cornerstone of local democratic practice, and for half a century has been considered a prerequisite for the equitable development of cities and neighborhoods.⁴³

Of course, not all engagement methods are created equal; communities ‘do’ participation in many different ways. In turn, sophisticated participation techniques do not always generate more democratic processes or equitable outcomes for local citizens.⁴⁴ Sherry Arnstein (1969) famously pointed out the significant differences among everyday citizens who are ‘empowered’ through their involvement with local planning initiatives. Arnstein warned against the dangers of participation that amounted to little more than “empty rituals,” claiming:

⁴² Sandercock, L. (1998). *Making the invisible visible: A multicultural planning history*. Berkeley: University of California Press, page 20.

⁴³ Several of these scholars will be explored over the course of this dissertation. See, for example, Haydecker and Shatts (1938), Augur (1945), Davidoff (1965), Burke (1968), Fagence (1977), Forester (1999 and 2006), Portney and Berry (2010).

⁴⁴ Davidoff (1965), Arnstein (1969), Innes and Booher (2004).

There is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process... Participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit. It maintains the status quo.⁴⁵

Susskind and Elliott (1983) argued that citizen participation in neighborhood and municipal decision-making could be organized into three distinct, though related, patterns: paternalism, conflict, and coproduction. "Paternalism," they argued, "is that pattern of participation is highly centralized and advice giving by citizens is either discouraged or closely managed by local government officials."⁴⁶ Conflict involves patterns in which decision-making is centralized but actively contested by citizen interest and consumer groups. Coproduction is the least frequent pattern of participation and involves face to face negotiations between decision-makers and stakeholder groups. Although in some cases citizen participation seemed evolve from paternalism to coproduction by way of conflict, Susskind and Elliott maintain that "these patterns are not phases that inevitability follow each other; rather, they are the by-products of antecedent conditions at the national and local levels, past experiences with public participation, and the confluences of personalities and random events."⁴⁷

Information gathered through stakeholder engagement processes helps planners and local decision-makers craft past, present and future identities and stories of place; they may influence policymaking and budget prioritization. But whose stories are collected? Who gets invited to public meetings and who shows up? Whose values are concretized in final planning and policy recommendations, and whose are relegated to notations in an appendix? Engagement mechanisms may produce important community data, but they don't necessarily move

⁴⁵ Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35, 4, 216-224. Page 359.

⁴⁶ Susskind and Elliott (1983) *Paternalism, Conflict, and Coproduction*, page 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, page 6.

communities up “rungs” of the ladder of citizen control and self-determination. This is particularly true if the community is socioeconomically vulnerable or has a history of being treated as less-than-citizens by paternalistic and/or racist city planners.⁴⁸

Equitable Community Development in Practice

While citizen engagement methods have become more ‘participatory’ over the past three decades, these advances in process have not necessarily produced more equitable, fairly distributed outcomes. On the contrary, in Chattanooga, participatory initiatives like design centers, urban design challenges and idea incubators have exacerbated socioeconomic inequality by further empowering already empowered populations while leaving historically underrepresented communities out of place-based visioning and action planning. These contradictions take on new significance when one considers that urban planners in the city emphasize their successes without critically deconstructing how citizen engagement processes inadvertently reinforce and many times, worsen local and regional social inequality and exclusion.

Rittel and Webber (1973) argued that disconnects between democratic processes and outcomes form the basis of most, if not all, of planning’s “wicked problems.” They argued that technocratic solutions to democratic decision-making could not adequately capture the messiness and contradictions of contemporary social life and democracy-in-action:

The tests for efficiency, that were once so useful as measures of accomplishment, are being challenged by a renewed preoccupation with consequences for equity. The seeming consensus, that might once have allowed distributional problems to be dealt with, is being eroded by the growing awareness of the nation's pluralism and of the differentiation of values that accompanies differentiation of publics... There seems to be a growing

⁴⁸ See, for example, Davidoff (1965), Susskind (1983), Krumholz (1997), Manning Thomas (1997a + b).

realization that a weak strut in the professional's support system lies at the juncture where goal-formulation, problem-definition and equity issues meet.⁴⁹

Issues such as transportation and physical mobility, air and water quality, industrial facility siting, food security, education and economic vitality affect all citizens, whether or not they have technical or professional expertise. To this end, when public participation processes fail, it is rarely if ever because directly impacted populations lacked opinions about the matters affecting their community. Rittel and Webber suggested that the increasing social diversity of places will demand innovative, flexible and radically decentralized approaches to citizen engagement. Their critiques impacted the field of city planning profoundly, inspiring generations of scholars and practitioners to reflect critically on their own professional work in socially diverse communities.⁵⁰

Newfield (2004) noted that horizontal, collaborative atmospheres rarely evolve organically. Many citizens, especially those who have experienced social exploitation and/or marginalization, feel disempowered by institutionalized forms of democratic decision-making-- and for good reason. The challenge posed to planners engaged in equitable community development work lies in our willingness and ability to devise innovative participation processes that work with historically underrepresented citizens to transform themselves into agents “unburdened” by the powerful forces of personal and social disempowerment. When such unburdening occurs, people may increase pride and personal investments in participatory planning and commitments to the health and sustainability of their neighborhoods.

Several studies have demonstrated links between citizen participation and equitable development outcomes. These studies raise important questions about the importance of

⁴⁹ Rittel, Horst and Melvin Webber. 1973. "Dilemmas in A General Theory of Planning." *Policy Sciences* 4: 155-169, page 156.

⁵⁰ A partial list of these scholars includes Forester (1987, 1999, 2009), Durant and Legge (2006), Skaburskis (2008), Innes and Booher (2010), Adams (2011), Balassiano (2011), Farrell (2011), Hartmann (2012).

respecting cultural differences (epistemological and practical/ritual) when entering communities as professionals and outsiders; the demand to account for unprecedented socioeconomic disparities, and the need to focus on sustained patterns of socio-spatial segregation and exclusion in housing, education and workforce development.⁵¹

Action research-oriented community-based planning is one tried (and occasionally proven) method for tackling neighborhood issues while also working to improve residents' sense of self-worth and democratic agency.⁵² Community planning as a particular form of resident-driven, empowerment-focused spatial practice, emerged as a direct response to and rejection of comprehensive-rationalist approaches to urban redevelopment—movements which privileged the 'highest and best use' of urban land above existing communities. Furthermore, participatory planning can help empower communities to make planning and development decisions on behalf of their own neighborhoods.⁵³ Instead of deferring to the technical expertise of professionals who may be unconcerned with the particular needs, hopes and concerns of a neighborhood (especially if it lacks a large property tax base), participatory planning focuses on building capacity among residents themselves to negotiate the terms of planning in their neighborhoods. Several scholars have pointed out that the potential for increased social capital is an important outcome of citizen-based planning.⁵⁴ By bringing many voices around the table and using the spaces created to discuss, deliberate, make decisions, and above all, develop mutual expertise, the potential of citizen-based planning transforms into the promise of just and equitable community movement.

⁵¹For studies focused on planning to support cultural difference, see Sandercock (1998), Woods (1998), and Umemoto (2002). See Harvey (2004, 2008 & 2012) and Marcuse (2010) for essays that demand direct citizen action to combat growing inequality and claim rights to the city. For important work about racialized social inequality in housing, education and workforce development, see (among others) Freund (2010) and Taylor (2009).

⁵²Jennings (1994), Reardon (1993 and 1994), Umemoto (2001 and 2006), Corburn (2007), Forester (2008).

⁵³Jennings (1994), Faber, Loh and Jennings (2002).

⁵⁴See, for example, Jennings (1994) and Reardon (1994).

Ken Reardon (in Forester 1999) described this transformation as “actually transferring skills and power through the process of doing the neighborhood plan.”⁵⁵

Processes that engage historically excluded citizens in sustained, meaningful planning deliberations have myriad potential benefits. Discussing the transformative potential of participation in public deliberations, John Forester (1999) wrote:

Much more is at stake in dialogic and argumentative processes than claims about what is or is not true...At stake too are issues of political membership and identity, memory and hope, confidence and competence, appreciation and respect, acknowledgment and the ability to act together. The transformations at stake are those not only of knowledge or of class structure, but of people more or less able to act practically together to better their lives, people we might call citizens.⁵⁶

Conclusion: Practical Wisdom for Planners and Other Urban Interventionists

Recognizing the immense political power held by professional city planners, Henri Lefebvre (1974) was highly critical of their urban spatial practices. He described planners as “agents of the technostucture” and implicated them deeply in the production of social inequality uneven geographic development.⁵⁷

To this end, the stories of diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga are instructive to planners and other urban practitioners for several important reasons. First, diasporic placemaking raises questions about how professional planners might better subvert socio-spatial hegemonies and advance decentralized, place-based social justice. Is the appropriate role to market and sell communities as racially diverse, tolerant and ‘cosmopolitan’ places when all aspects of daily social, political and economic life are highly racialized? Perhaps it is more appropriate to use our professional skills to help support and enable diasporic placemaking through the creation of

⁵⁵Reardon quoted in Forester, J. (1999). *The deliberative practitioner: Encouraging participatory planning processes*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, page 121.

⁵⁶Ibid., page 116.

⁵⁷ Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell.

citizen planners whose efforts might include, but would certainly not be limited to, bottom-up strategies for combatting racism and classism in the cities where we live, work and play.

In our society's hyperactive desire to be perceived as egalitarian, cosmopolitan, and post-racist, cities and regions initiate liberal multiculturalism agendas meant to celebrate community diversity. While cultural celebration is an important aspect of urban social justice, often times, these uncritical, largely depoliticized agendas take time, energy and financial resources away from the challenging, uncomfortable work of creating and strengthening antiracist cities, regions and societies.⁵⁸ The remainder of this dissertation project will demonstrate why it is so important that we choose the more difficult—and ultimately, rewarding—path.

⁵⁸ Angela Povinelli (2002), for example, argued that liberal multiculturalism agendas do not disrupt or rearrange exploitative socioeconomic structures in the neoliberal nation state. On the contrary, these agendas actually serve, consciously and subconsciously, to reinforce existing social structures and preserve current racialized arrangements of power. See Povinelli, E. A. (2002). *The cunning of recognition: Indigenous alterities and the making of Australian multiculturalism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

CHAPTER 2: COMPETING NARRATIVES OF PROGRESS AND CHANGE: CONSTRUCTING THE COSMOPOLITAN CITY

This chapter contrasts the mainstream story of urban progress in Chattanooga with more critical diasporic perspectives of urban change to demonstrate how cultural processes of placemaking both reify and subvert uneven geographic development in the city. For some Chattanoogaans—in particular, those who have been able to afford to access the fruits of the city’s impressive thirty-year downtown revitalization—the story of the city’s renaissance has been linear and progressive. But for the majority of residents living in the urban core, who cannot afford to access these privileged economic and social spaces, experiences of the city’s renaissance have been characterized by increasing housing costs that outpace the growth of incomes—leading to greater housing insecurity and threat of displacement for folks who live within the urban core.

Among these critical versions of development and urban change, forsaken political promises and the constant threat of physical and cultural uprooting and dislocation prevail. Personal testimonies from poor and working class residents, as well as local social justice activists working in housing, workforce development, and transportation, point to complex legacies of unequal access to planning and development decision-making circles and resource pools. The result of this selective engagement and reinvestment has been highly uneven and inequitable urban landscape, where most struggle, many lose, and a few win. The gravity of these contradictory trends are underscored by published statistics which reveal that Chattanooga had the second fastest growing poverty rate between 2007-2009, the third fastest rising rents in

the nation in 2012, and two of the top fifteen most racially gentrified zip codes nationwide between 2000 and 2010.¹

Despite rising inequality across the city and region, there is real reason for hope. Presently, several popular organizations work to “flip the script” of urban revitalization in Chattanooga by illuminating the highly uneven terrain of reinvestment across the urban core while also calling for a more equitably developed city.² Volunteer-based groups such as Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA), the Westside Community Association (WCA), Concerned Citizens for Justice (CCJ), Occupy Chattanooga, Wide Open Floor, Idle No More Chattanooga, Mercy Junction, and the Grove Street Settlement House complicate Chattanooga’s storybook tale of urban progress through a range of creative, place-based public activities and initiatives, including marches, history tours, protests, street theatre, justice schools, skill sharing, storytelling workshops, spoken word, free stores, discussions with community elders, and solidarity fundraisers.

To transform planning and community development practice, we must be willing to confront and critically deconstruct the stories about urban progress that we tell ourselves about the communities where we work, live and play. I trace the evolution of Chattanooga’s public identity as a ‘cosmopolitan’ city in the South to contextualize the politics of cultural recognition and racial reconciliation happening vis-à-vis arts and cultural development planning today. This chapter briefly traces the genealogy of urban cosmopolitanism in Chattanooga—from its representation as a Cherokee stronghold at the “crossroads of the frontier” to its emergence as the “Dynamo of Dixie” and exception to Southern plantation-bloc racism; today, with a

¹ Kneebone, E. (2010), Reis Analytics (2012).

² Knapp, C. (2013) “Flipping the Script” in *Progressive Planning*. April 2013.

reputation as the “renaissance city of the south.” I argue that the socio-spatial orders produced through multiethnic contestations and collaborations, like patterns of diasporic placemaking more generally, have propelled urbanization in the city. This storyline undergirds many liberal and progressive local residents’ interpretations of urban change and the potential benefits and burdens of neighborhood revitalization, including creative economic and tourism development.

The Racialized Roots of Urban Cosmopolitanism

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘cosmopolitan’ as “familiar with and at ease in many different countries and cultures; including people from many different countries; having an exciting and glamorous character associated with travel and a mixture of cultures.”³ From its most humble beginnings as a ferry landing and trading post, Chattanooga’s growth depended on attracting outside residents and economic investors into the area. With the onset of the Georgia Gold Rush of 1828 and 1829, speculators became eager to settle the areas located to the south of the Tennessee River which at that time was sovereign Cherokee territory. The desire for Cherokee land and resources is shown by the population statistics of the time. In 1820, 821 one people lived in Hamilton County, including 766 whites and 55 African Americans (39 slaves and 16 free Blacks). By the time President Andrew Jackson passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, that population had nearly tripled (2,136 whites, 115 slaves and 25 free Blacks).⁴

Prior to the forced removal of the Cherokee to Oklahoma during the summer of 1838, the Tennessee River marked the legal boundary between the Cherokee nation and the United States. White land grabbers lined up eagerly along the border waiting for the opportunity to seize

³ In Waite, M. (2013). Pocket Oxford English dictionary.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. Population Statistics, 1820-1830 SF1 tables. Available from Social explorer: <http://www.socialexplorer.com>.

Cherokee homesteads and plantations. A popular folksong from the time captures the significance of the Chattanooga region to the settlers' socio-spatial imagination:

All I want in this creation
Is a pretty little girl
And a big plantation
'Way up yonder in the Cherokee nation.

While the lyrics of the song describe colonial settlers' longing for the productive, resource-rich lands held by the Cherokee during this period of early frontier expansion across the Southeast, they also speak to the specific processes of physical uprooting and dispossession underway. Contrary to the stereotype of Native Americans as wandering, nomadic people prone to wasting otherwise productive land, the song describes a modernized, permanent agricultural economy and political structure. In this sense, the forced removal of the Cherokee and four other "Civilized Tribes" from across the Southeast involved the forced seizure and re-appropriation of sophisticated agricultural and economic infrastructures.

Following the forced removal of the Cherokee during the summer of 1838, Ross's Landing was incorporated into the State of Tennessee. After a lengthy debate between the town 'founding' fathers, the name "Chattanooga" was chosen because of its linguistic uniqueness and cultural connection to Native American history. In the context of early arts and cultural development in the city, the naming of Chattanooga matters for two reasons. First, despite not actually knowing what the word meant, the settlers' focus on the 'uniqueness' of the term signals perhaps the first coordinated attempt among local policymakers to brand Chattanooga as an exceptional and cosmopolitan place. Furthermore, choosing a Native American term for the town's name illustrated a romantic nostalgia for the unspoiled, natural world and quasi-reverence for the plight of the dispossessed Natives—two themes that arguably persist to this day.

A famous quote from one of the town's early boosters further illustrates the construction of these exceptionalist narratives. Famous for boasting about the city, Benjamin "Rush" Montgomery allegedly made the following claim about the importance of pre-Civil War Chattanooga:

The buffalo worked out the line; the Indian followed it; the white man followed the Indian; the wagon road and railroad take up the same route; the mountains shut in here; the valleys stop here; Tennessee River must pass through here; fact is, don't you see, this is the funnel of the world.⁵

Montgomery's words prophesized the city's geographic significance in the periods leading up to and during the Civil War. Known as the market where "cotton meets corn," the opening of the Western and Atlantic Railroad during the spring of 1850 catalyzed a major population boom. Between 1840 and 1860, white settlers, their African American slaves, and to a much lesser extent, free Blacks, moved into the town and surrounding county en masse. In 1840, one year after the forced deportation of the Cherokee vis-à-vis the Trail of Tears, Hamilton County had a total population of 8,175, including 7,498 whites, 93 Free Blacks, and 584 slaves. Twenty years later, at the dawn of the American Civil War, Hamilton County had increased to 13,258 people, including 11,641 whites, 1,419 slaves and 192 free Blacks.⁶

Slavery in Chattanooga did not follow all of the same social norms as in the surrounding rural regions. Many slaves living in town labored in industrial positions, and the Black to white ratio was much lower in the city than in the surrounding plantations (enslaved African

⁵ Benjamin Montgomery quoted in Parham, L. L. (1876). *Chattanooga, Tennessee; Hamilton County, and Lookout Mountain: An epitome of Chattanooga from her early days down to the present; Hamilton County, its soil, climate, area, population, wealth, etc. Lookout Mountain, its battlefields, beauties, climate, and other attractions. Chattanooga*, 7.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. Population Statistics and Slavery Schedule, 1840-1860 SF1 tables. Available from Social explorer: <http://www.socialexplorer.com>.

Americans comprised 6.67% and 10.7% of Hamilton County's total population in 1850 and 1860, respectively).

Local historian Raymond Evans (2007) argued that early white policymakers and entrepreneurs used these social differences to construct a narrative about racial tolerance in Chattanooga in order to stymie concerns about slave labor posed by northern capitalists whose investments they wanted to secure. Attempts to lure outside capital investments were wildly successful. In 1850, \$13,100 was spent on manufacturing-related capital investments in Hamilton County, while existing establishments produced \$12,975 worth of manufactured goods. Ten years later, the county boasted twenty two manufacturing establishments, which together employed 214 workers. The total annual investment in manufacturing had grown to \$209,300, while the annual output of manufacturing products was valued at \$395,380.⁷ Following the Civil War⁸, Chattanooga quickly rose to prominence as a leader of the New South. The city's prolific and diverse manufacturing based-economy is reflected in the increases in number of establishments, workers employed in manufacturing, and total capital expenditures and output values for Hamilton County during the decades of southern Reconstruction.

These figures are represented below in Table 2.1. Whereas in 1860, 214 workers were employed at one of Hamilton County's twenty-two manufacturing establishments, ten years later, those figures had more than doubled. By 1890, Hamilton County's manufacturing base had grown to 336 establishments, employing a total of 6,368 workers. The total capital

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. Manufacturing Statistics, 1850-1860. Available from Social explorer: <http://www.socialexplorer.com>.

⁸ Over the course of the war, three major battles were fought as part of the Battle of Chattanooga. More than 12,591 soldiers were killed or injured during these sieges, and the Union troops' seizure of the city in November 1863 marked an irrevocable victory in General Sherman's March to the Sea (Govan and Livingood 1976).

investments and output values in manufacturing increased between 1870 and 1890 by 1612% and 1013%, respectively. By 1930, there were 271 manufacturing establishments located in Hamilton County, employing 21,033 workers and with total product values assessed at \$114,309,637.

Table 2.1: Growth of Manufacturing in Hamilton County, 1860-1900

Year	Total Employed	Total Investment in Manufacturing	Total Output Value	Number of Establishments
1860	214	\$209,300	\$395,380	22
1870	541	\$475,155	\$1,012,335	58
1880	2,133	\$2,045,000	\$3,230,006	58
1890	6,368	\$8,133,499	\$11,264,969	336
1900	6,228	\$8,237,823	\$13,839,811	394

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1860-1900, Accessed via www.socialexplorer.com 2014.

Following the victory of the Union Army over the Confederacy in May 1865, Chattanooga entrepreneurs were quick to extend their hands to northern industrialists and carpetbaggers. An advertisement placed in northern newspapers during this period captures their sentiment:

Wanted Immediately Any Number
Of Carpet-Baggers
To Come to Chattanooga and Settle

The people of Chattanooga, no longer wishing to stay in the background, and feeling the necessity of immediately developing the vast mineral resources surrounding them, by which they can place themselves on the highroad to wealth, prosperity, and power, extend a GENERAL INVITATION to all CARPET-BAGGERS to leave the bleak winds of the North and come to CHATTANOOGA... Those who wish to come can be assured they will NOT BE REQUIRED TO RENOUNCE THEIR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS TENETS, as the jurisdiction of the Ku Klux [Klan] and other vermin do not extend over these parts. Persons wishing to immigrate will be furnished with detailed concerning any business by addressing Box 123 Chattanooga, Tennessee.

VOX POPULI

PS—Those having capital, brains and muscle preferred.⁹

⁹ Quoted in Evans, E. R. (2003). *Contributions by United States Colored Troops (USCT) of Chattanooga & North Georgia during the American Civil War, Reconstruction and formation of Chattanooga*. Chickamauga, Ga: B.C.M. Foster, page 109.

Importantly, the narrative of racial harmony came back into play as Chattanooga was pitched to Northern businessmen as a connected, cosmopolitan city with plentiful natural resources and inexhaustible cheap labor.

Narratives of Urban Revival

Despite having gained an international reputation as the “Dynamo of Dixie,” Chattanooga, like many other prominent industrial centers, began experiencing massive deindustrialization and out-migration in the decades following World War II. The deterioration of the city’s built and natural environments coincided with the degradation of civic morale. Both hit all-time lows during the spring of 1969 after Walter Cronkite announced on the national evening news that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) had concluded Chattanooga was the “dirtiest city in America.”

Unlike many of its Rust Belt counterparts, whose population and industry losses produced situations of irretrievable urban decline, Chattanooga rolled up their shirtsleeves and got to work early. Beginning with the Moccasin Bend Task Force in 1983 and followed by the Venture 2000 initiative and 21st Century Waterfront Plan in 2002, a series of citizen and professional-driven local planning and development initiatives brought Chattanooga back from the brink of the grave. The River City Company, a private nonprofit organization dedicated to coordinating private and philanthropic investments across the urban core, was incorporated in 1986. Subsequently, the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the historic riverfront were targeted for major planning and capital investment programs. Over the past twenty five years, the scope of their target area has expanded. Today River City’s efforts extend into five key areas

of downtown Chattanooga: the North Shore, the Riverfront, City Center, the MLK Street/University district, and the Southside (see Illustration 2.1 below).

The River City Company and their local collaborators have leveraged billions of dollars in private and public reinvestment, spearheading a growing multigenerational Back to the City movement, and expanding the city’s vibrant tourism and high tech creative economies. Today a renewed and vibrant urban core stands as testament to the power of these collaborations: downtown Chattanooga, the “Renaissance City of the South”, has returned to its historical and cultural roots along the Tennessee River and has transformed into a clean, green, and increasingly cosmopolitan southern city.

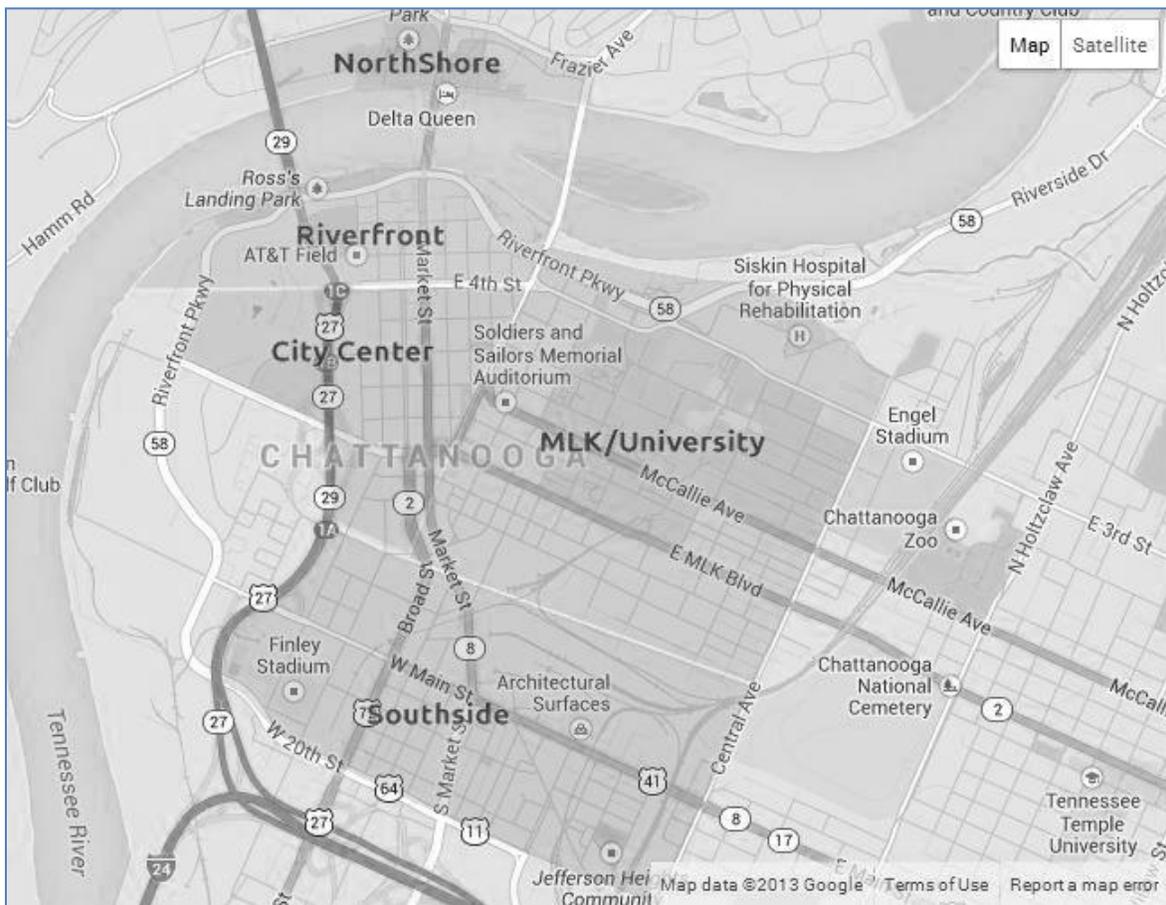


Illustration 2.1: Downtown Districts Targeted for Reinvestment (Source: River City Company 2013)

Defying Regional Growth and Innovation Patterns

Between 2000 and 2009 6,943 residential building permits were issued in the City of Chattanooga. The majority of these permits were for single family homes (5,112) and developments with five or more units (1,424) (Ochs Center 2010). In September 2012, the *Times Free Press* reported that the city “defies trends” when it comes to new housing construction and market rate/luxury housing development in particular, having added 2,539 new rental units to the local housing stock during the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009.¹⁰ Although some of this development occurred outside of the formally designated urban core, much of the growth has occurred in one of the five districts prioritized by the River City Company and its allies (see Illustration 2.2 on the next page).

Moreover, Chattanooga’s renaissance has not been limited to housing. Through a combination of aggressive marketing programs, financial incentives, and cosmopolitan urban amenities, the city has also reclaimed its industrial heritage by attracting high-tech manufacturing firms and creative class entrepreneurs to the city. In 2011 Volkswagen opened its first U.S. manufacturing plant in Chattanooga, having been lured to the city two years earlier by a robust state and local incentive package valued at \$577.4 million. Today, the \$1 billion Volkswagen plant employs 2,415 workers in a variety of high tech manufacturing positions. Economists at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga estimate the total employment created by the plant stands at 12,400 direct and indirect positions. The University of Tennessee’s Center for Business and Economic Research estimated the Volkswagen produces \$643.1 million in annual income, \$31.2 million in annual state tax revenue, and \$22.3 million in annual local tax

¹⁰ Pare, Mike. (2012, September 7). Walnut Commons Project Defies Building Trends? *The Chattanooga Times Free Press*. Retrieved from <http://www.timesfreepress.com>.

revenue.¹¹ In October 2013, Chattanooga’s VW plant contributed to the city’s international reputation for having produced the most fuel efficient and aerodynamic automobile in the world.¹²

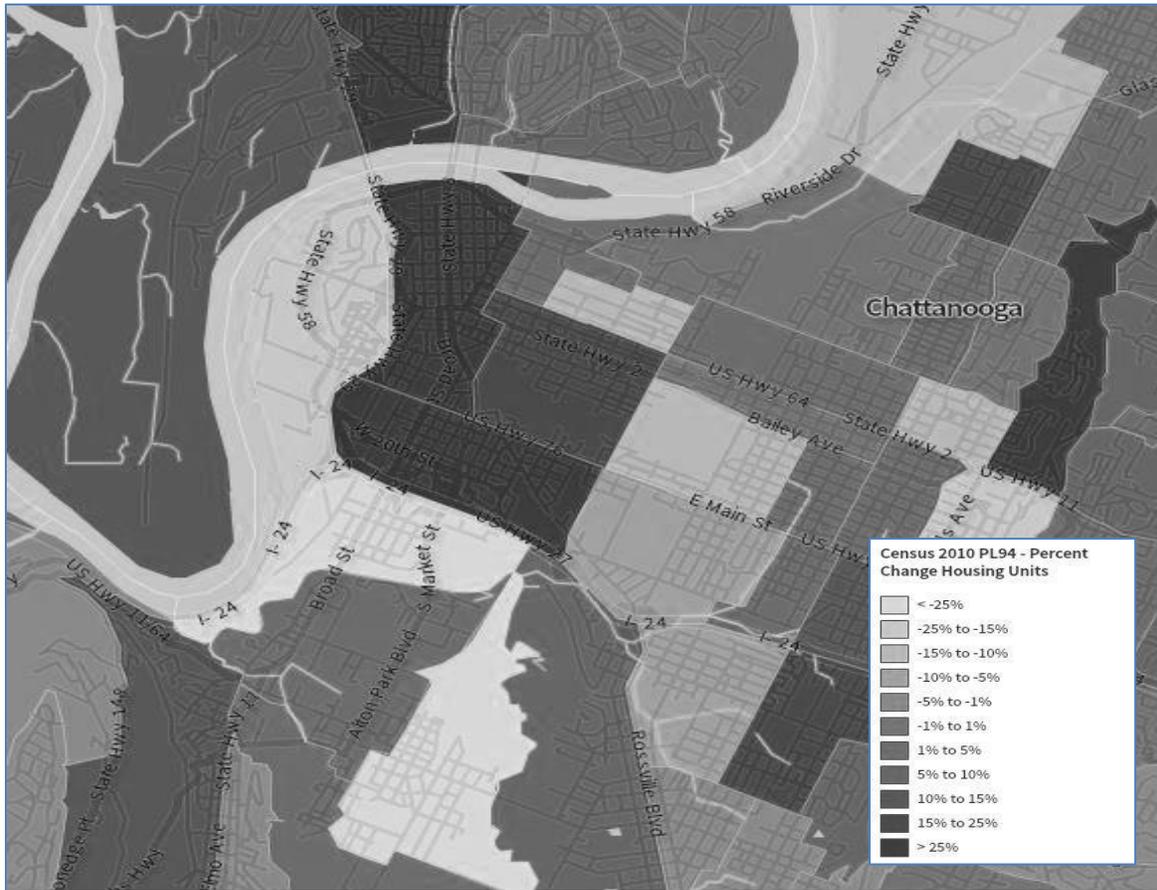


Illustration 2.2: Percent Change in Total Housing Units, 2000-2010

Chattanooga received the nickname “Gig City” in 2010 after it invested in the “fastest digital internet infrastructure in the Western Hemisphere” (1 Gig/Second), a project totaling

¹¹ Pare, Mike (5 June 2013). Study: VW plant's impact on Chattanooga area better than projected. *The Chattanooga Times Free Press*. <http://www.timesfreepress.com>.

¹² Smith, Patrick. (4 October 2013). Volkswagen debuts new XL1 car in Chattanooga. *The Chattanooga Times Free Press*. Retrieved from <http://www.timesfreepress.com>.

\$300 million in investment.¹³ Today, actors driving the local gentrification movement are using this unprecedented internet speed and capacity, (approximately 200 times faster than the national average web speed) to attract web programmers, video game developers, and other high tech creative professionals into the city.

As a result of these advances, sections of the downtown are rapidly transforming into a “playground for pioneers” and entrepreneurs in high tech, creative industries.¹⁴ A program co-sponsored by the Lyndhurst Foundation and Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise,¹⁵ for example, offered \$11,250 in mortgage forgiveness and relocation costs to ten high tech professionals through a competitive “GeekMove” program.¹⁶ The program limits the neighborhoods where homes can be purchased to those places either already undergoing or on the verge of experiencing massive gentrification, including the historically African American, working class neighborhood of Bushtown, and the ethnically and economically diverse communities of Orchard Knob and Highland Park (see Illustration 2.3 on the next page).

¹³ This subsidy included a \$220 million bond plus \$111.5 million in Federal Stimulus funds. For more information, see Fung, David. (17 September 2013). How Chattanooga beat Google Fiber by half a decade. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

¹⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.theGigCity.com> (2013).

¹⁵ Since 1985, Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise has been the primary nonprofit housing developer in Chattanooga. Initially established to eradicate substandard housing across the city, for the past decade CNE’s main focus has been on rehabilitating and constructing market rate housing across the urban core.

¹⁶ Smith, Ellis. (19 January 2012). Group pays geeks to move downtown. *The Times Free Press*, Retrieved from <http://www.timesfreepress.com>.



Illustration 2.3: Neighborhoods Targeted for GeekMove Homebuyers Program, 2012 (Source: Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise)

Urban Cosmopolitanism and Reconciliation

More so than ever before, Chattanooga’s urban exceptionalism rests in its unique breed of 21st century cosmopolitanism. The city is well known for its commitments to the arts and cultural development; most downtown residents celebrate cultural diversity; and it is politically and socially liberal compared to many other parts of the state and region. For over a century, Chattanooga has had a reputation as being a “cosmopolitan” place: a meeting ground for different cultures, socioeconomic classes and political persuasions, and a place where the economic success of the city depended exactly on folks’ abilities to reconcile personal differences for the sake of common economic ideals.

One of the most compelling aspects of Chattanooga’s ongoing revitalization is that it is filled with examples of local placemakers engaging in cultural recognition and historical

reconciliation work. Not only are the arts and cultural development crucial foci of the city's renaissance, but placemaking initiatives have written historically erased and marginalized cultures and histories back into the local urban physical and social landscapes of the city through public art, cultural development and urban design.

Narratives of Insecurity

To be sure, certain segments of the population have benefited greatly from downtown revitalization initiatives over the past thirty years. For them, urban regeneration has led to better, higher paying jobs, a range of social and cultural opportunities and amenities, the preservation of historic neighborhoods, and access to luxury housing along the riverfront. But while the mainstream story of urban change in downtown Chattanooga is progressive and optimistic, other more critical interpretations have evolved alongside it. For the majority of Chattanooga residents living in the urban core, who cannot afford to access the privileged economic and social spaces produced by gentrification, the experiences of the city's renaissance have been characterized by increasing housing costs that outpace the growth of incomes, cultural marginalization and/or co-optation, and the stripping of historic community assets and infrastructure.

The story of urban change described here is hardly progressive. On the contrary, the positive effects of downtown revitalization have rarely been felt in the poor and working class, primarily African American neighborhoods across the urban core. To most residents, Chattanooga's renaissance has been, at best, marginally beneficial, and at worst, a curse, because unregulated gentrification has produced a local economic climate where fewer and fewer residents can afford to call the city their home. Figure 2.1 on the next page illustrates changes in the racial composition of Chattanooga's urban core between 1950 and 2010. Historically, most

residents living in downtown Chattanooga identified as either white or Black/African American, though the relative proportions of each population have changed dramatically since the middle of the twentieth century. In 1950, for example, white residents comprised more than two-thirds of urban core dwellers (68.6%), while African Americans comprised just under one third (31.4%). Over the next forty years, the white population decreased by nearly three-quarters (-74.1%), dropping from 86,145 in 1950 to 22,260 in 1990. The local African American population, in contrast, remained more or less constant during the same time period. In 1950, there were 39,460 African American residents living in the urban core. Ten years later the population had increased slightly (+8.2%) to 42,727 residents. Between 1960 and 1980, however, the African American population decreased by 4,204 residents (-9.8%).

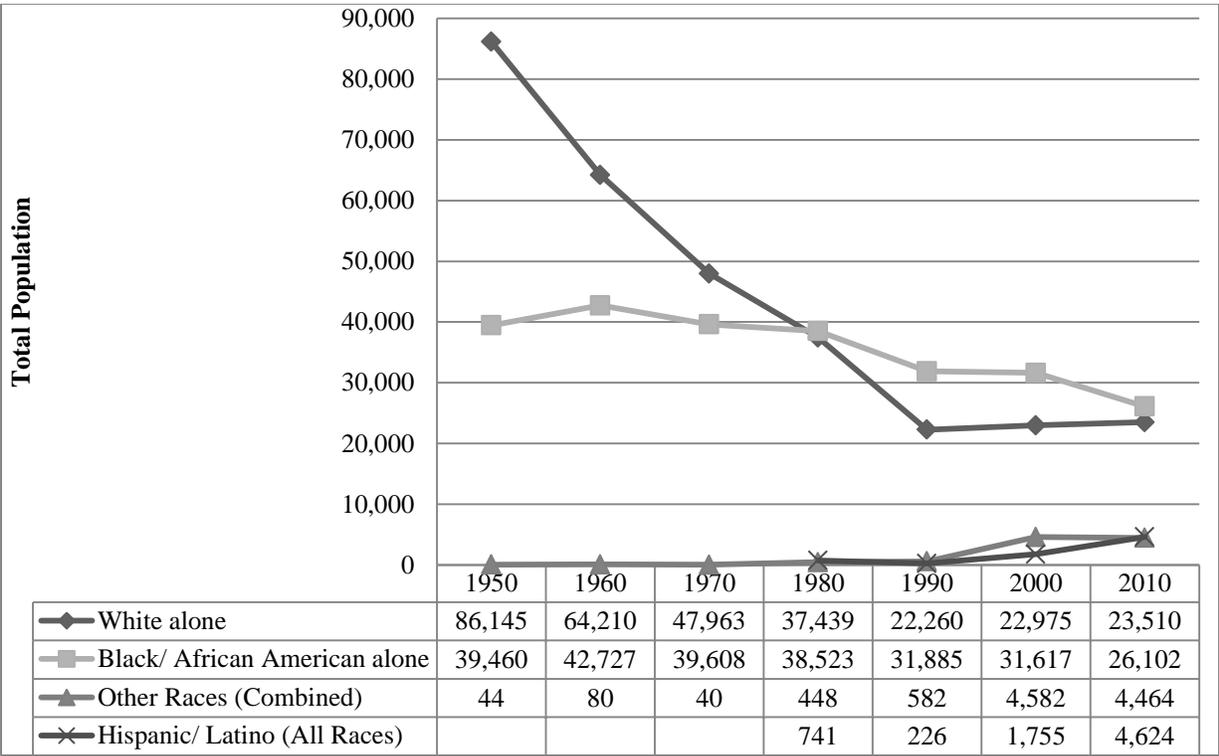


Figure 2.1: Changes in Racial Composition of Chattanooga’s Historic Urban Core, 1950- 2010

Although white population loss stabilized by 1990 and numbers have increased steadily since then, the local African American population has continued to shrink over the past three

decades. In 2010, the total Black population living in downtown Chattanooga (N=26,102) was at a century's low, having dropped nearly one-third from 38,523 residents in 1980 to 26,102 in 2010 (N= -12,421 or -32.2%). Although African American residents still comprised a slight majority of urban core residents in 2010, this proportion is shrinking steadily. Importantly, populations from minority racial categories (including multiracial and self-ascribed "other" categories) increased substantially (667%) over the past twenty years. The local Hispanic/Latino (of all races) population living in the urban core also increased dramatically: between 1980 and 2010, the Hispanic/Latino population grew by more than five hundred percent (524%), from 741 to 4,624 individuals.

Mapping demographic changes reveals that most new housing development in downtown Chattanooga over the past twenty five years has catered predominantly to white, middle class households who can afford market rate and luxury housing units. In 2000, the majority of whites living in Chattanooga resided outside of the urban core—although sections of Bluffview/ UTC, North Chattanooga and Orchard Knob in East Chattanooga had begun to transition.

Ten years later, white residents comprised the vast majority of residents in new housing located along the riverfront, city center, and the Main Street area of the Southside neighborhood. In 2000, for example, the census block group containing the riverfront and Market Street corridor (Tract 31, block group 1) had 588 occupied housing units and a total population of 1,346 residents (63.3% white and 34.2% African American). Ten years later, these numbers had increased to 772 occupied units and 1,708 residents (62.3% white and 35.7% African American). This change represents growth rates of 31.3% in occupied housing units and 26.9% in total population.

Changes on Chattanooga's Southside (Tract 20, block group 1) were even more dramatic. Between 2000 and 2010, the total population of this area increased from 735 to 886 residents (20.5%) while the number of occupied housing units increased from 257 to 409 units (59.1%). Examining the racial demographics of these changes reveals a neighborhood undergoing a rapid transformation. In 2000, African Americans comprised more than three quarters (N=560 or 76.2%) of the total population, while whites comprised ten percent (N=77 or 10.5%). Ten years later, white residents comprised nearly sixty percent of the total population (N=531 or 59.9%), while African Americans had decreased by more than one-half (N=271 or 30.6%).

Illustrations 2.4 and 2.5 on the next page compare white residents as a percentage of total population by Census block in 2000 and 2010, respectively. It is obvious from these maps that the areas prioritized for revitalization by the city and local institutional players have directly benefited middle and upper income white residents. In the blocks immediately surrounding the aquarium and Bluffview Arts district, for example, more than 90% of the total population identified as "white alone" in the 2010 Census. Similarly, blocks on the Southside that were almost exclusively African American in 2000 had become predominantly white by 2010. Other neighborhoods undergoing significant racial changes include the East Martin Luther King Street/UTC area, St. Elmo in South Chattanooga, Hill City and North Chattanooga (re-coined "the North Shore" by housing and economic development planners), and Highland Park in East Chattanooga.

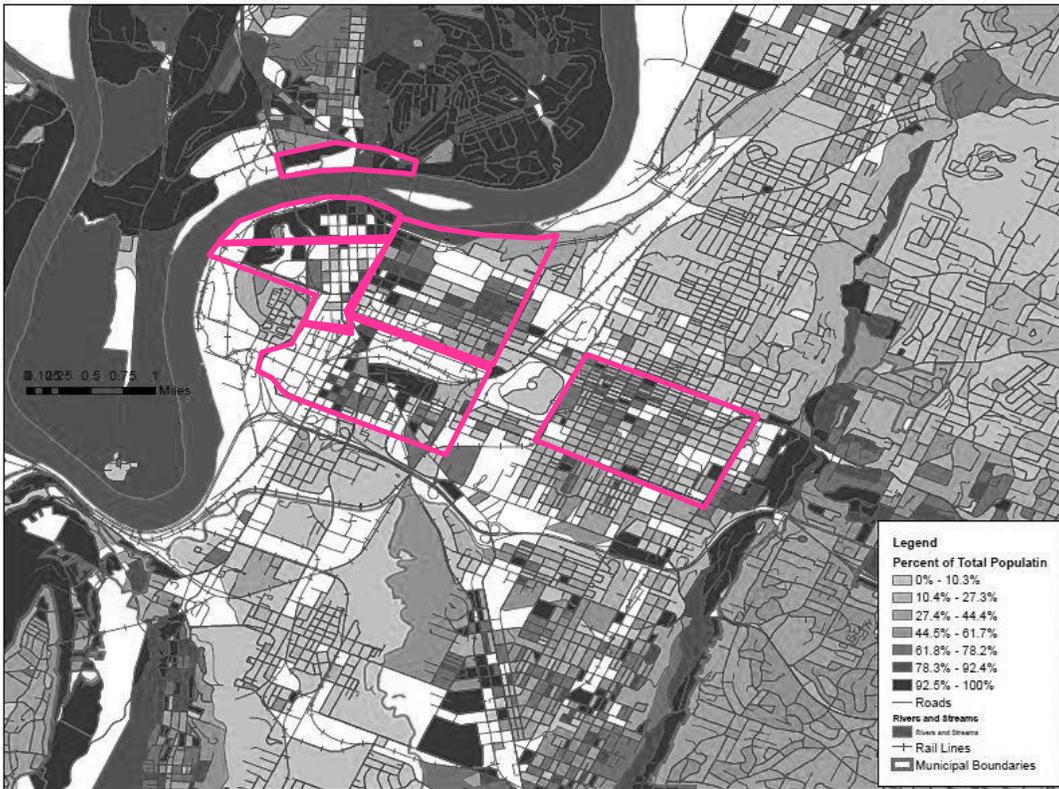
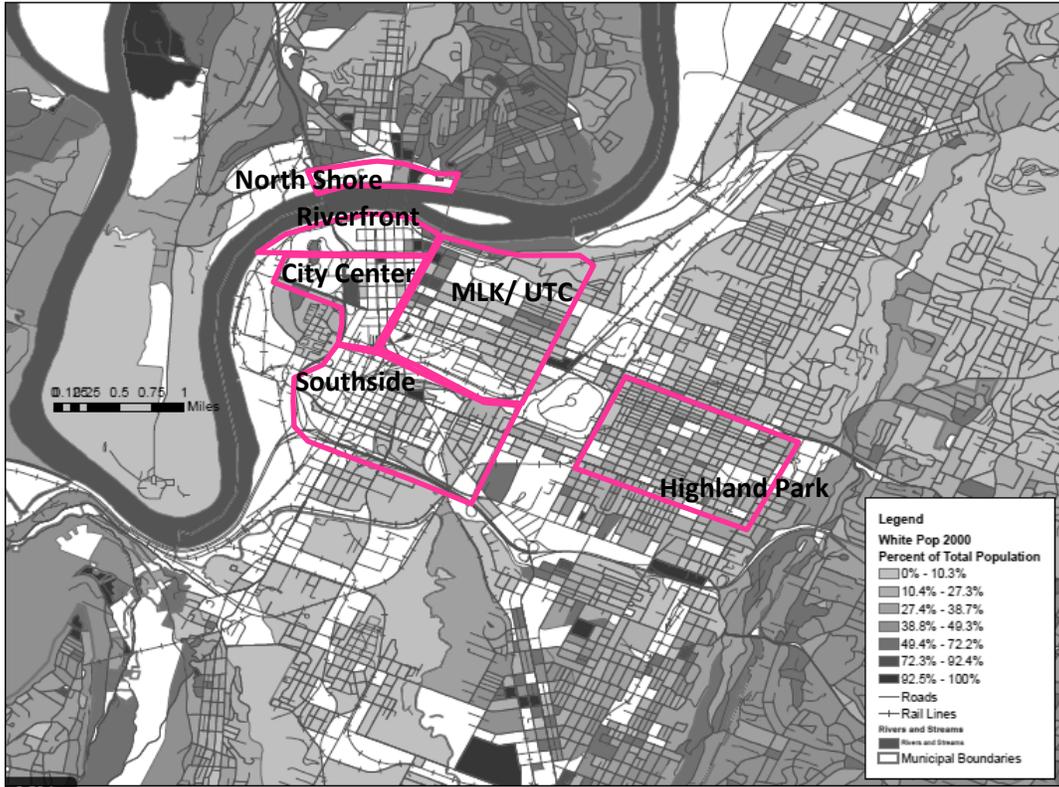


Illustration 2.4 and 2.5: White Residents as a Percentage of Total Population by Block (2000 and 2010) (Map Source: Courtney Knapp)

Income Inequality

The racial composition of neighborhoods across Chattanooga’s urban core has not been the only demographic shift in the city. Table 2.2 below compares changes in median¹⁷ household income by race for residents living in Chattanooga’s urban core versus the citywide rates. Between 1990 and 2000, the median household income for all urban core census tracts combined decreased slightly (-1.7%). However, the change in median household incomes among inner city white and Black/African American residents increased by 1.9% and 7.2%, respectively. Over the next ten years, these changes began to shift course and accelerate: the median household income of white, non-Hispanic/Latino residents living in the urban core increased by nearly one half (\$12,644 or 45.5%) while the median household incomes of Black/African Americans increased marginally (\$613 or 4%).

Table 2.2: Changes in Median Household Income by Race, 1990-2012 (Est.)

	1990*	2000	2008-2012 Est.
Median household income	\$20,709	\$20,351	\$23,325
White Alone Householder	\$27,460	\$27,973	\$38,535
Black or African American Alone Householder	\$14,326	\$15,350	\$15,963
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone Householder	**	\$14,073	\$16,731
Asian Alone	\$33,662	\$36,241	\$23,125
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone Householder	**	\$55,000	\$32,500
Some Other Race Alone Householder	\$25,833	\$18,331	\$25,000
Two or More Races Householder	**	\$25,675	\$21,500
Hispanic or Latino Householder	**	\$23,583	\$25,652
White Alone Householder, not Hispanic or Latino	**	\$27,784	\$40,428

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1990-2012 (Est.). Population Statistics SF1. Accessed via www.socialexplorer.com.

¹⁷ The 1990 Decennial Census compiled a distribution of “Average Household Income” but not “Median Household Income.” For this reason, Table 1.1 does not represent a precise comparison between 1990 and 2000.

Over the course of twenty years, the number of low and moderate income households living in the urban core has shrunk while the number of middle and upper income households has dramatically increased. Table 2.3 on the next page shows changes in the distribution of household incomes for urban core households during the twenty year period between 1990 and 2012. In 1990, more than half of all households earned less than \$15,000 per year (N=12,481 or 54.8%) and fewer than ten percent earned more than \$50,000 per year (N=1,484 or 6.6%). Ten years later, the number of very low income households (<\$15,000) had decreased by nearly one-third and comprised less than forty percent of all urban core households (N= 8,444 or 39.3%). The number of households earning more than \$50,000 per year, in contrast, increased by more than two-fold (255.6%), The number of upper income households (\$100,000 < per year) alone more than doubled (N=951 or 111.8%) between 1990 and 2000.

The Census Bureau's most recent five year population estimates suggest that income gaps between households in downtown Chattanooga have continued to widen. Just over one-third of all households are estimated to earn less than \$15,000 per year and the number of households earning less than \$10,000 has dropped to 4,535 (22%). Households earning more than \$50,000 per year have increased to more than one-quarter, with nearly ten percent of all households earning more than \$100,000 per year (N=1,855 or 8.9%) in 2012.

While some of the changes in income growth and distribution can be attributed to increased social mobility, assessing the figures in light of the changes in median household income by race suggests that most changes are the result of low and moderate income households being priced out of the urban core while middle and upper income households migrate in.

Table 2.3: Change in Income Distribution among Urban Core Households, 1990-2012 (2008-2012 Est.)

	1990		2000		2008-2012 Est.	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Households:	22,751		21,527		20,642	
Less than \$10,000	9,291	40.8%	5,957	27.7%	4,536	22.0%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	3,190	14.0%	2,487	11.6%	2,649	12.8%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	2,747	12.1%	2,163	10.1%	1,981	9.6%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	2,429	7.6%	1,848	8.6%	1,637	7.9%
\$25,000 to \$29,999	1,508	6.7%	1,513	7.0%	1,317	6.4%
\$30,000 to \$34,999	1,117	5.0%	1,183	5.5%	1,241	6.0%
\$35,000 to \$39,999	864	3.8%	1,089	5.1%	638	3.1%
\$40,000 to \$44,999	523	2.3%	798	3.7%	686	3.3%
\$45,000 to \$49,999	292	1.3%	696	3.2%	739	3.6%
\$50,000 to \$59,999	511	2.3%	1,098	5.1%	998	4.8%
\$60,000 to \$74,999	355	1.6%	1,091	5.1%	1,011	4.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	179	0.8%	653	3.0%	1,354	6.6%
\$100,000 to \$124,999	140	0.6%	252	1.2%	708	3.4%
\$125,000 to \$149,999	97	0.4%	214	1.0%	355	1.7%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	212*	0.9%	133	0.6%	316	1.5%
\$200,000 or More			352	1.6%	476	2.3%

Source: US Census Bureau 100% SF Reports, 1990-2000; 5-Year Population Estimates (2008-2012)

Rising Rents, Rising Incomes?

An important indicator of uneven geographic development is change in income relative to change in housing prices. Figure 2.2 on the next page compares rates of change in median household income and median gross rent for each of the nineteen census tracts included in the urban core over a ten year period. The comparison reveals several contradictory trends underway across downtown Chattanooga. In three census tracts (tracts 7 and 8 in North Chattanooga and tract 31 in the downtown business district), income growth greatly exceeded median rent increases. This unevenness suggests that these areas have been undergoing the initial stages of gentrification, when middle and upper income residents move into and purchase properties in anticipation of rising home values. In one tract in North Chattanooga, for example

(tract 7), median household income increased by 84.3% between 2000 and 2010, while median gross rent increased by 34.1%.

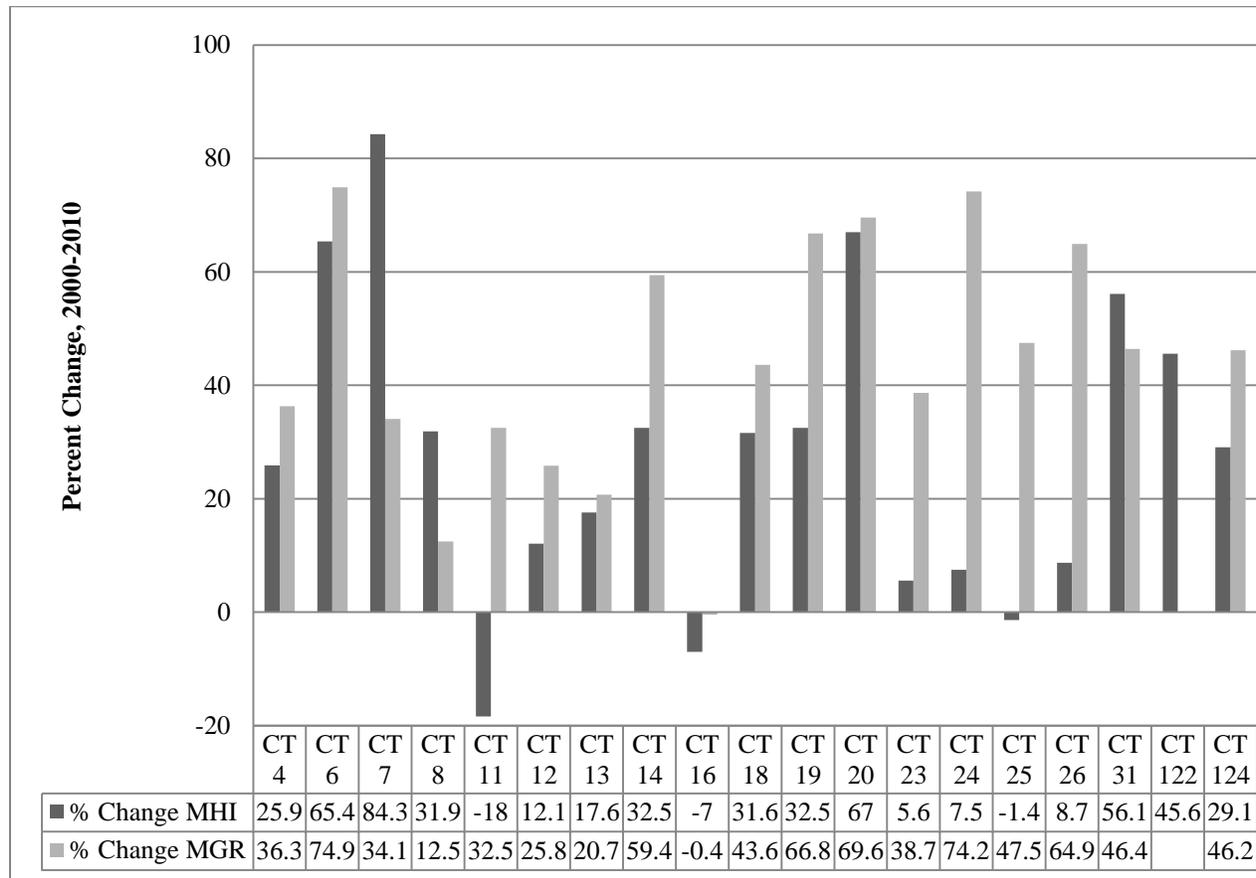


Figure 2.2: Comparison of Percentage Changes in Median Household Income (MHI) and Median Gross Rent (MGR) in the Urban Core, 2000-2010 (ACS 2006-2010 Estimates)

In most parts of the urban core, housing prices outpaced income growth during the first decade of the twenty-first century.¹⁸ In one South Chattanooga district (census tract 24), median household income increased by 5.6% while median gross rents increased by nearly three-quarters (74.2%) during the same ten year period; in another (tract 26), median household income increased by 8.7% while median gross rents increased by nearly two-thirds (64.9%).

¹⁸ Twelve of the nineteen urban core tracts experienced rising housing costs that outpaced income growth between 2000 and 2010 (2006-2010 Est.).

In two census tracts, median household income decreased between 2000 and 2010 while rents rose in two of them by 31.9% and 47.5%, respectively. In Highland Park (tract 11) the median household income decreased from \$20,776 to \$16,344 (-18.4%) per year between 2000 and 2010, while median gross rent increased from \$422 to \$559 per month (32.5%). In other words, at the same time that households are becoming poorer, rents are rising. Finally, Chattanooga's Westside (tract 16) experienced decreases in both median household income (-7%) and median gross rent (-0.4%) during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Low Income Asset Stripping in the Renaissance City

While market and luxury rate housing development and coordinated efforts to attract higher income residents into the city have exacerbated Chattanooga's growing housing affordability crisis, uneven geographic development is not fueled entirely by private and nonprofit developers. Chattanooga's housing crisis is also the result of public policies and plans which actively remove public and subsidized housing opportunities from across the urban core with virtually no means or mechanisms to replace them.

Six public housing sites have been demolished in Chattanooga over the past fifteen years. Prior to 2000, the Chattanooga Housing Authority (CHA) owned and managed 3,692 public housing units. As of October 2012, the CHA's public housing portfolio had decreased by twenty percent (N=-750 or -20.3%) to 2,942 units. Most recently (2012), CHA closed the Harriett Tubman public housing site in East Chattanooga (440 units) due to a lack of maintenance funds,¹⁹ removing approximately three hundred families from the site. The severe undersupply

¹⁹ The 38 acre, 440 unit site was constructed in 1952 and was originally known as the Boone-Hysinger Homes. The property was constructed as an African American-only public housing project for low income residents displaced

of public housing is reflected in the CHA's closed waiting list.²⁰ In 2012, the agency reported that "the waiting list for public housing is equal to 81 percent of the current occupied number of units."²¹

The local subsidized housing crisis is not limited to public housing owned and managed directly by the CHA. It also extends to the Section 8 voucher market. More than five thousand individuals sit on a waiting list for Section 8 vouchers. Wait times sometimes take years, and fewer landlords are willing to take vouchers.²² Despite the apparent low and moderate income housing crisis in downtown Chattanooga, the city's two oldest and largest remaining public housing sites are listed on the CHA's demolition/disposition lists. The loss of College Hill and East Lake Courts would force another nine hundred very low income families into a rapidly gentrifying, voucher oversaturated housing market. With virtually no political will from local planners and policymakers to adopt inclusionary housing legislation and mixed reactions from residents to such a policy, virtually no safeguards are in place to ensure that housing supplies meets the dramatic and growing need for affordable units.

from the Westside by the Golden Gateway Urban Renewal Project. In 2011, the Chattanooga Housing Authority estimated that \$35 million was needed to repair the Harriett Tubman development. The CHA shuttered the sixty year old development in late 2011 and in spring 2014, the City of Chattanooga purchased the property from CHA for \$2.6million. Presently, there is a struggle going on between local residents who want to see the site redeveloped into affordable housing and those who want to see it used for economic development and/or industrial expansion.

²⁰ The Chattanooga Housing Authority's 2012 Annual Plan states that 1,477 applicants had been blocked out of their closed waiting list. For more information, see Chattanooga Housing Authority (2012). *Agency Plan*.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²² The Westside Community Association reported in October 2012 that 125 families with vouchers could not find landlords to accept them as Section 8 tenants.



Illustration 2.6 and 2.7: Luxury Riverfront Housing and the Former Harriet Tubman Public Housing Development in East Chattanooga, Courtney Knapp 2013

Given the current trends in uneven geographic development described in this chapter, the forecast is dim: downtown Chattanooga is rapidly transforming into a cosmopolitan playground for the economically privileged—and a place with virtually no safeguards to prevent the displacement of low-income residents from their homes and neighborhoods. Except in communities of color undergoing white-driven gentrification, most of the urban core and first ring suburban neighborhoods remain highly racially segregated; economic, social and most cultural opportunities are not equally resourced, accessed or distributed.

As a consequence, historically rooted communities of color are getting priced out of their historic neighborhoods. A city built on the backs of the economically and racially oppressed—which openly acknowledges Cherokee removal and African American slavery as parts of its complex, multicultural heritage and writes those stories into its tourism agenda—is completing the historic dispossession of working class communities of color by inducing the city builders’ descendants to peripheral, disinvested spaces, disconnected from families, jobs, urban services, public amenities, and historic connections to place. As unmitigated gentrification mounts around the urban core, the continued displacement of working class communities of color from their historic communities seems probable if not imminent.

Narratives of Resistance

The acknowledgement of historical urban violence as an important symbolic gesture can hardly be considered substantive reconciliation with the five hundred year legacy of racialized exploitation and injustice in downtown Chattanooga. Janelle Jackson and Ash Lee Woodward Henderson, organizers with the anti-racism/ police brutality organization Concerned Citizens for Justice (CCJ) stressed the need to reverse the equation as it currently stands: “We’re for

reconciliation, but it comes at the end of a process. Before reconciliation there must be truth, then justice.”²³ During an interview for this project, thirty year veteran community activist Maxine Cousins, who helped found Concerned Citizens for Justice described the limits of existing efforts in Chattanooga. She challenged local policymakers to dig deeper to understand how historic injustice plays out and affects urban life today. She reflected:

When I think about reconciliation, I think about the people who were hurt getting together with the people who did the hurting, and telling them how and why it hurts and what it would take from them to heal... You can't just pat yourself on the back and build a monument... and say that you've done what you're supposed to do.²⁴

For Cousins and her colleagues, community control and self-determination are essential requirements of any substantive reconciliation. To facilitate this reckoning, safer spaces must be constructed intentionally so that directly impacted people can share experiences, voice concerns, identify key issues, and collaboratively explore place-based solutions.

Rather than attempt to control the process or its outcomes, those who have played oppressive and exploitative roles, whether intentionally or unintentionally, must be participants in a collective reckoning. First and foremost, they must commit to the hard work of listening deeply and acknowledging uncomfortable truths about their own privileges, habits, and social lives. Reconciliation and, by association, reparation require commitments to truth, healing, and forging a more equitable city in the future.

²³ Jackson, Janelle, personal communication, October 5, 2012.

²⁴ Cousins, Maxine, personal communication October 29, 2012.

CHAPTER 3:
SETTLING CHATTANOOGA:
RACE, PROPERTY AND CHEROKEE DISPOSSESSION

Most residents of and visitors to downtown Chattanooga readily acknowledge the history of Cherokee removal that occurred in the city during the first four decades of the nineteenth century. For many people, regardless of their race or cultural heritage, local Native American history is a source for both pride and repentance. This chapter charts historically the relationship between Native dispossession and early city planning and development in downtown Chattanooga to understand the complex relationship that contemporary Chattanoogaans have to the legacies of Cherokee dispossession that took place within its borders. I argue that a paternalistic, colonial yet quasi-reverent and nostalgic framing of Native culture and removal has profoundly impacted how people today relate to and represent Chattanooga's early history. By tracing the genealogy of race, property, and Native removal in the context of early city-building, I prepare the ground for a discussion of contemporary Native American placemaking activities along the Tennessee Riverfront in Chapter 5.

Reconstructing Pre-Cherokee Social Life

For several thousand years, the unique geography and rich natural resources made the banks of the Tennessee River where Lookout Mountain faces Stringer's Ridge a cradle for human civilization. Native American artifacts discovered in sites across from present-day

downtown Chattanooga date back to at least 0-499 A.C.E.¹ A *Chattanooga City Guide* published by the Tennessee chapter of the Federal Writer's Project described artifacts discovered at several local sites to paint a picture of pre-Cherokee social life in the Lookout Mountain/ Tennessee River valley region:

Long before the white pioneers planted corn in the Tennessee Valley, long before the hostile Cherokee built their stockade village along the Chickamauga Creek, prehistoric Indians were planting corn and building towns in the vicinity of present Chattanooga. Their village sites, featured by earthen mounds, by heaps of decaying mussel shells, by ashes and hidden pits, by pottery fragments and by implements of stone and bone, were located all along the winding Tennessee. Moccasin Bend was the site of teeming villages, surrounded by extensive maize fields, "Ball Play" grounds and "Chunky" yards, where the game of Chunky was played with stone disks. Williams Island was well populated in prehistoric times. The great Citico Mound... supported a huge ceremonial or town house, large enough to hold several hundred people. In this huge clay-wattled structure the chiefs held councils, the priests performed religious ceremonies, and the warriors and the women danced on the hard-packed earthen floor to the music of drums and rattles.²

Though clearly editorialized, this description sheds some light on the socio-spatial structure of the Mississippian-era inhabitants of Chattanooga and its environs. In contrast to the "hostile Cherokee" who fortified the region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Chattanooga's riverfront was described as a peaceful and thriving seat of Mississippian-era culture and social life.

Cherokee Arrival and Resistance

The modern settlement of Tennessee River valley is attributed to the Cherokee (Gʷʷ/ Tsalagi or *Dh̄b̄ōc̄ōt̄*/ Aniyunwiya/ "Principal People"), who some historians argue established

¹ McCollough, M. C. R., Bass, Q. R., Breitburg, E., & Chattanooga Regional Anthropological Association. (1983). *Moccasin Bend, the pride of Chattanooga: Investigation of the value of its archaeological and historical contents as a public resource ; preliminary investigations, seasons, 1-3*. Chattanooga, Tenn.: Chattanooga Regional Anthropological Association.

² Federal Writers' Project. Tennessee. (1900). *Chattanooga city guide*. S.l: s.n., Page 15.

permanent settlements and towns along the Tennessee River in the Chattanooga vicinity as early as the 13th century A.C.E.³ A firm Cherokee presence was recorded in the 16th century travel logs of Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto, who in 1540, discussed encountering “*Guasili*” people while traversing the southeastern interior in search of gold.⁴

Traditionally, Cherokee society was matrilineal and organized into a set of seven clans that were more or less geographically determined. Although Cherokee men typically migrated as they hunted, Cherokee women were often skilled farmers who helped plant permanent settlements throughout the Ohio, Tennessee and Chattahoochee River valleys. These towns were managed by a system of decentralized chiefs and community elders.

By the dawn of the American Revolution, white colonial settlers had seriously encroached into Cherokee hunting and agricultural territories. In the early nineteenth century, the Cherokee formally aligned themselves with the British, who promised to respect Native sovereignty and existing land claims. Although their alignment dissolved in battle during the French and Indian War (1754-1763) precisely because British settlers ignored the moratorium on encroachment,⁵ it nevertheless created distrust between Cherokee and U.S. colonial powers which carried forward into the nineteenth century.

Some Native American leaders encouraged white settlement and others resigned themselves to its inevitability, but others chose to fight back. Tsiyu Gansini (ᏅᏍᏏᏁᏂ or “Dragging Canoe”) (1738-1792) was an Overhill Cherokee warrior and outspoken critic of white

³Brown, J. P. (1938). *Old Frontiers. The story of the Cherokee Indians from earliest times to the date of their removal to the West*, 1838. [With plates and maps.]. Kingsport: Southern Publishers.

⁴Govan, G. E., & Livingood, J. W. (1977). *The Chattanooga country, 1540-1976: From tomahawks to TVA*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

⁵The Anglo-Cherokee War (1758–1761) (in the Cherokee language: the "war with those in the red coats" or "War with the English"), was also known from the Anglo-European perspective as: the Cherokee War, the Cherokee Uprising, or the Cherokee Rebellion.

encroachment during the early period of Southeastern frontier expansion.⁶ The son of Great Island Town Chief Attakullakulla ("Little Carpenter"), Dragging Canoe rose to prominence during the Anglo-Cherokee War. During a skirmish between British and American soldiers, Dragging Canoe led assaults against the colonists—a tactic that resulted in militia troops destroying several Cherokee Middle (Hill), Valley, and Lower Towns in retaliation.

Although his father Attakullakulla and fellow Chief Oconostota wanted to sue the U.S. government for peace, Dragging Canoe rejected the assimilationist stances of his elders. He justified his resistance in a famous speech to his father and other regional chiefs:

The white man makes treaties only to break them. He is not satisfied with the land beyond the mountains, or the land beside the Watauga, or the land along the Nolichucky. Now he wants still more. And what we do not give him, he will take anyway until our whole Nation is gone from this earth. Old men make paper talks; young men fight for what is theirs. I will not lose these lands without a fight.⁷

Despite his son's pleas, Attakullakulla chose to negotiate another treaty with the United States. In protest, Dragging Canoe broke off from the Overhill community and in 1777 led a group of separatist allies south to establish a set of eleven new towns ("Lower Cherokee Towns") in the vicinity of present-day Chattanooga. Over the next fifteen years, Dragging Canoe waged a series of armed struggles against white encroachers from his military headquarters at Old Chickamaugah Town and Running Water.⁸

⁶ Although Dragging Canoe is widely cited as one of the premiere leaders of early Native colonial resistance, there are few things written about him. For the most comprehensive biography, see: Brent Yanusdi Cox, *Heart of the Eagle: Dragging Canoe & the Emergence of the Chickamauga Confederacy*, 1999.

⁷ Dragging Canoe's famous statement foretold the subsequent forced removal of the Southeastern Lands to territories west of the Mississippi River. Quoted in Rozema, V. (1995). *Footsteps of the Cherokees: A guide to the Eastern homelands of the Cherokee Nation*. Winston-Salem, N.C: John F. Blair.

⁸ In 1782, U.S. soldiers pillaged and burned the Lower Cherokee Towns, including Old Chickamaugah Town. In response, Dragging Canoe and his allies established five towns several miles further South down the Tennessee River, in the shadow of Lookout Mountain. Dragging Canoe is widely accepted as one of the first Native American warriors and political actors to organize a united front against Native removal from the Southeastern frontier. His actions inspired many subsequent pan-Indian leaders, including Tecumseh (Shawnee), who joined Cherokee forces during the Chickamauga Wars and went on to organize the largest tribal confederacy against the United States.

Ross's Landing: Crossroads of the Frontier

The earliest effort to develop modern urban infrastructure in present-day downtown Chattanooga is attributed to mixed-race brothers John and Lewis Ross. In 1813, fifteen years before he was elected as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation (1828-1866), John Ross and his brother established a boat landing and ferry crossing on the south bank of the Tennessee River at the foot of what is today Broad Street. Lewis Ross also constructed a commercial warehouse at the site. Known first colloquially and later officially as Ross's Landing, this river crossing was strategically located on the boundary between Hamilton County and the State of Tennessee to the north of the river, and sovereign Cherokee territory to the south.

Ross's Landing became even more of a focal point following the Treaty of 1817, which ceded most of the remaining Cherokee landholdings located to the north of the Tennessee River to the United States in exchange for territory to the west of the Mississippi River. Illustration 3.1 below is a section of C.C. Royce's famous 1884 map detailing the Cherokee land cessions prior to their forced removal to Oklahoma in 1838. The lands ceded during the Treaty of 1817 are listed as cessions 24 and 28 in the map below.⁹

⁹Royce, C. C., & Smithsonian Institution. (1884). *Map of the former territorial limits of the Cherokee "Nation of" Indians: Exhibiting the boundaries of the various cessions of land made by them to the Colonies and to the United States by treaty stipulations, from the beginning of their relations with the whites to the date of their removal west of the Mississippi River*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution - Bureau of Ethnology., Accessed via the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov>.

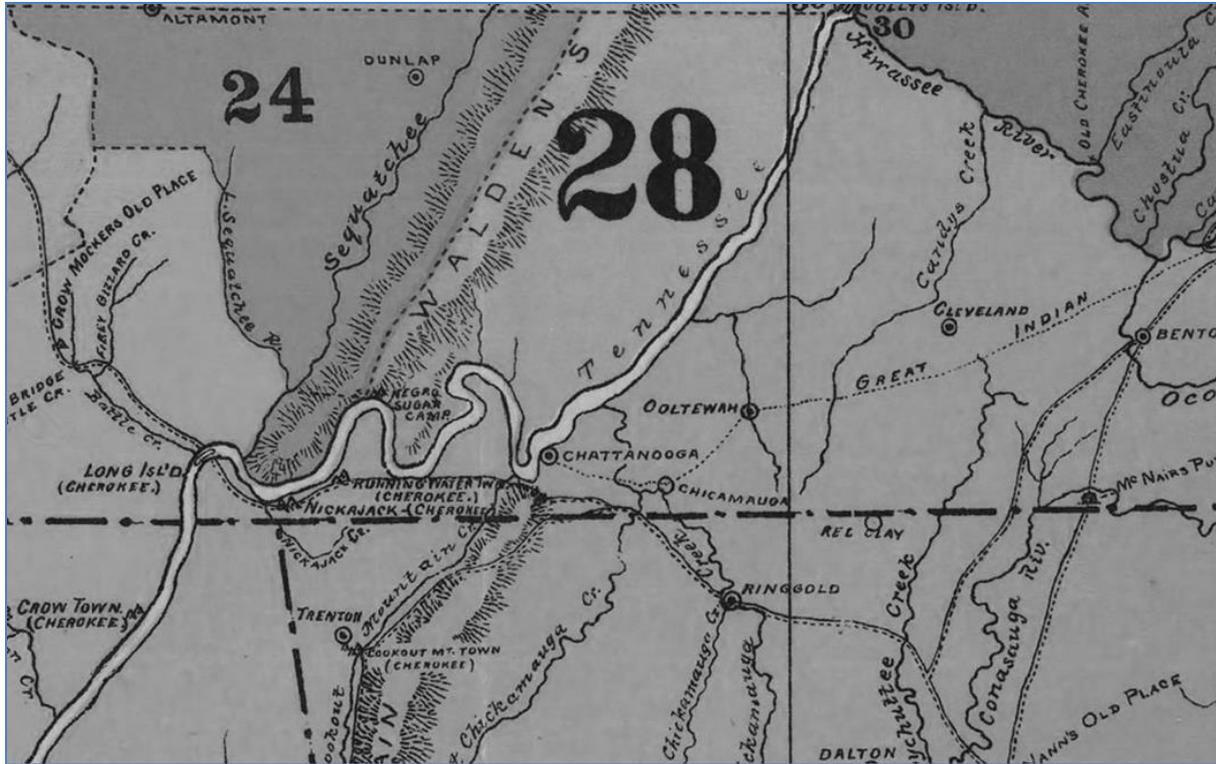


Illustration 3.1: Location of Ross's Landing (Chattanooga) Relative to Lands Ceded during the Treaty of 1817 (Cessions 24 + 28)

Racialized Paternalism in Urban Policy and Planning: A Longer View

By the early nineteenth century, white settlers had been slowly moving into sovereign Cherokee areas for more than a century. However, these efforts were largely uncoordinated, individual pursuits; many white frontiersmen had married Cherokee women and assumed typical Cherokee lifestyles and cultural mores.¹⁰ While the Treaty of 1817 had signaled a turning point

¹⁰This trend of white assimilation into Native American society began to change dramatically after 1810, when the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (AMCFM) was established by a group of Williams College graduates in Western Massachusetts with the goal to spread Christianity around the ‘uncivilized’ world. Incorporated by an act of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1812 and charged with “propagating the Gospel in heathen lands” (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1812), the American Legion immediately began assigning missionaries to foreign territories, including sovereign tribal territories within the Southeast United States. Between 1812 and 1840, the AMCFM sent religious convoys to the following places: British India, Tennessee (to interact with the Cherokee), the Bombay area of India, northern Ceylon (present day Sri Lanka), the Sandwich Islands (present day Hawaii), East Asia (China, Singapore and Siam/ Thailand), the Middle East (Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Syria, the Holy Land and Persia/Iran, and western and southern Africa. For more information, see Maxfield, Charles A. (1995). "The Formation and Early History of the American Board of Commissioners For Foreign Missions". *The 'Reflex Influence' of Missions: The Domestic Operations of the American Board of Commissioners*

in Native-white territorial relations, a year prior, a group of American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions (AMCFM) missionaries had also identified a site on the Chickamauga Creek in present day Chattanooga as a center for social and cultural transformation. A letter written to Dr. Samuel Worcester, Secretary of the AMCFM, on November 25, 1816, is instructive. Reverend Cyrus Kingsbury, a southeastern tribal missionary scout, described the farm that would be redeveloped into the Chickamaugah Mission (later renamed the Brainerd Mission) less than six months later:

With reference to such a plan, I sought a place. In doing which, I found a plantation which had been occupied several years by an old Scotch gentleman, who had married into the Nation. As he wishes to remove to another place, he offered me his buildings and improvements, which included about twenty-five acres of cleared land, for five hundred dollars. There are all the necessary buildings to commence, except a school house, and perhaps a dwelling house. I did not hesitate to bargain for the place, as it is situated in a neighborhood where I can immediately commence preaching to a small congregation; convenient to a mill and water course, for obtaining supplies from the settlements. If the Society will furnish the means, I hope with the leave of Providence to begin the school in February. If the plan should not meet the approbation of the Society, it will be occasion for great regret.¹¹

Over the next several months, a small group of missionaries relocated to the old McDonald farm and established a school and mission house on the site.¹² Located directly across the creek from the Cherokee Overhill town of Old Chickamaugah, the Chickamaugah Mission almost immediately lived up to Kingsbury's promise.

for Foreign Missions, 1810–1850. See also Govan and Livingood (1977), Maxfield (1985), Perdue and Green (1996), and Miles (2005).

¹¹ Cyrus Kingsbury (1816) quoted (pgs. 23-24) in Walker, R. S. (1931). *Torchlights to the Cherokees: The Brainerd Mission.* New York: The Macmillan Company.

¹² Dragging Canoe headquartered his anticolonial resistance at Old Chickamaugah Town forty years prior before it was ransacked by the United States military in 1782. Today, the Eastgate Town Center resides on the site of the Brainerd Mission. A one-acre piece of the Mission's cemetery, as well as the earthen levee constructed to protect the site from high creek waters, is all that remains of the original property.

Acculturation and Community Control

A daily journal recorded by AMCFM missionaries residing at the mission reveals that religious services and literacy training began almost immediately. In an entry dated March 9, 1817, just one month after arriving by boat to the property, a mission worker recorded that Brother Kingsbury had preached to a congregation of more than forty Cherokee and Black disciples.¹³ The missionaries focused on educating Cherokee youth and civilizing them, along with adult family members and African American (mostly slave) neighbors through Christian indoctrination. A Sabbath entry dated April 20th confirmed this imperative, stating “about sixty persons attended Brother K’s preaching. Nine blacks and three others attended our Sunday school. We hope these poor ignorant souls may be benefitted by our instruction.”¹⁴

Unlike many late nineteenth and early twentieth century mission schools who used religious education and acculturation as strategies for effectively robbing Native Americans of their land and political sovereignty, the Brainerd missionaries believed that training “poor ignorant souls” to establish western political and cultural institutions would help them secure and maintain territorial sovereignty political and self-determination in the face of white encroachment. This impulse is evident from the earliest Brainerd Mission Journal entries and ramped up significantly following the Treaties of 1817 and 1819. “It has been said and thought by many that it is not in our power to instruct them,” proclaimed one entry penned on January 25, 1820. “There is now demonstrated to be incorrect. They are willing to be taught—they ask for instruction—and if we do not teach them, their blood may justly be required at our hands.”¹⁵

¹³For a full account of the daily activities that occurred at the Chickamaugah/ Brainerd Mission during the first six years of its operation, see Phillips, J. B., & Phillips, P. G. (1998). *The Brainerd journal: A mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1823*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

¹⁴*Ibid.* page 67.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, page 195.

Another entry proudly discussed the Cherokees' cultural progress after only three years of the mission's operation:

They have...divided their country into eight districts or counties, laid a tax on the people to build a courthouse in each of the counties and appointed four circuit judges. The Cherokees are rapidly adopting the laws and manners of whites. They appear to advance in civilization just in proportion to their knowledge of the gospel. It therefore becomes all who desire the civilization of the Indians to do what they can to send the gospel among them.¹⁶

Despite the liberal and altruistic rhetoric of the Brainerd missionaries, the means by which these educators achieved their ends reveal less benevolent projects of acculturation. Kingsbury advocated for a "great missionary family" that would supplant the traditional, matrilineal Cherokee social structure and transform younger generations of Native Americans into planters, industrialists, and political diplomats. AMFCM administrators insisted that for the Cherokee to become "useful citizens and pious Christians", the missionaries should build a residential school facility in order for "the children... [to] be removed as much as possible from the society of the natives, and placed where they would have the influence of example, as well as precept."¹⁷

While the Brainerd missionaries saw their work as critical to the self-determination of the Cherokee during the period of southeastern frontier expansion, these sentiments were undergirded by a racialized and deeply paternalistic view of Native and African American cultural production. "These dear Cherokee and African converts, you will not, you cannot forget," professed one missionary writing during the winter of 1821. "They are your treasure. They will be your crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus"¹⁸.

¹⁶ Ibid. Entry dated Nov 1, 1820, pg. 195.

¹⁷ Cyrus Kingsbury (1816) quoted (page 23) in Walker, R. S. (1931). *Torchlights to the Cherokees: The Brainerd Mission*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

¹⁸ Quoted (page 209) in Phillips, J. B., & Phillips, P. G. (1998). *The Brainerd journal: A mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1823*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

In other words, Native and African Americans were understood not as people possessing humanity *a priori*. Rather, they were considered malleable objects; possessions (“treasures”) with the potential to develop humanity-- assuming proper indoctrination and religious conversion would take place. This statement also reveals a selfish and arguably more fundamental motivation: by converting “red” and “black” “heathens” to Christianity, Anglo Christians secured their own places in Heaven.

Contesting the Means and Ends of Cherokee Sovereignty

Having battled against and lost thousands of people and millions of acres of land to colonial powers between the late 17th and early 19th centuries, many Cherokee leaders, especially the wealthier, western-educated ones, agreed that Christian education and the adoption of formal political institutions would be key to Native resistance against white encroachment. As more youth graduated from the Brainerd Mission School and assumed leadership ranks within the rapidly transforming Cherokee society, these sentiments became louder. This elite group eagerly negotiated with white leaders on behalf of the Cherokee people—although it’s important to remember that mission- educated pupils were often self-appointed and lacked the support of the Cherokee Nation at large. The vast majority of Cherokee continued to practice traditional lifestyles and were vehemently opposed to land secession and the adoption of white political and economic institutions.¹⁹

By 1819, the Cherokee had begun holding national council meetings at New Town, near present day Calhoun, Georgia. In 1825, the town was renamed New Echota and established as the political and administrative capital of the Cherokee Nation. Two years later, the Nation

¹⁹This popular resistance to political and cultural assimilation has been well documented by social historians. See Perdue, T., & Green, M. D. (1995). *The Cherokee removal: A brief history with documents*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press and Miles, T. (2005). *Ties that bind: The story of an Afro-Cherokee family in slavery and freedom*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

adopted a Constitution that laid out executive, legislative and judicial branches modeled on its American neighbors. The national constitution profoundly altered traditional social structures in Cherokee society. Historically, family lineages were matrilineal, with women holding leadership positions and inheriting property; African Americans could also own and inherit land and property. After the adoption of the constitution, Cherokee men became the designated political leaders and holders of Cherokee assets.²⁰

Despite efforts to exercise tribal self-determination by adopting “civilized” western institutions, white frontiersmen and public policymakers persistently ignored and delegitimized Cherokee sovereignty claims. After several years of Christian instruction at Brainerd and nearby missions in north Georgia (the “Springplace” Monrovia Mission), white encroachment had escalated across the Chattanooga region. These trends prompted the National Committee and Council of the Cherokee Nation to pass a series of laws meant to seriously limit whites’ access and settlement on lands located within the rapidly diminishing sovereign territory. On October 25, 1820, the National Council adopted a law that required permits for single white men who wished to work as clerks in Native-owned stores and businesses. The law also outlined severe

²⁰Over the past decade, several collections and a handful of monographs have been published on the topic of Black-Native interconnections in the Southeast, Northeast, and Western (“Indian Territory” or present day Arkansas and Oklahoma) regions of the United States. These stories complement a more substantial canon of Black-indigenous cultural history in Latin America and the Caribbean and represent a growing field focused on the sociospatial interactions between multiple and overlapping diasporas. Tiya Miles (2005), for example, traced a Cherokee-African American family (the “Shoebots”) over the critical one hundred year-long period between Cherokee national formation and their forced removal to Oklahoma, arguing that “The existence of diverse African diasporic experiences in the Americas, the processes and impact of colonialism on Native societies, the myriad cycles of enslavement and resistance in the United States, the competing currents of cultural transformation and retention among American Indian groups, and the relationship between nationalism and racial formation all emerge in the Shoe Boots family drama” (3). In part, this project examines the deep and complex history of diasporic placemaking to establish a foundation for considering a set of conceptual questions with real world policy and planning implications. See also Tayac, G. (2009). *IndiVisible: African-Native American lives in the Americas*. Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in association with the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service.

financial and physical penalties for Cherokee citizens who ignored the regulation.²¹ One year later, the National Committee and Council passed even stricter legislation that prohibited Cherokee citizens from allowing white ferrymen to occupy or lease land within the Cherokee National boundaries.

While educators and graduates of the Brainerd Mission School considered themselves deeply committed to Cherokee political sovereignty, the influence of the missionaries' sociocultural values over their students was consequential. The missionaries viewed themselves as helping to enable Cherokee self-determination. After the silversmith Sequoyah (ᏍᏏᏉᏯ *Ssiquoya*) developed the Cherokee alphabet and syllabary in 1821, for example, Brainerd Mission leader Reverend Samuel Worcester had the alphabet typecast to facilitate the printing of Cherokee language documents.

But the frameworks for autonomy and self-determination promulgated by the missionaries and their converts were steeped with a deeply racialized and paternalistic view of Cherokee culture. The realization of an autonomous, modern Cherokee state required the forfeiture of traditional Cherokee social, political and economic arrangements in exchange for westernized ones. Among the hundreds of Cherokee graduates of the school were included Elias Boudinot, who went on to found the first Native American, bilingual newspaper *The Cherokee Phoenix* (ᏌᏌᏉᏰᏉᏰᏉ, *Tsalagi Tsulehisanvhi*, 1828-1834), and John Ridge, the son of a

²¹ The law stated that “single white men are hereby admitted to be employed as clerks to any of the stores belonging to natives, which may be established in this Nation, on conditions, that the employer obtains a permit and becomes responsible for the good behavior of such clerks, and it is also resolved, that any person or persons, whatsoever, who shall bring into the Cherokee Nation, without permission from the National Committee and Council, a white family, and rent lands to the same, and proofs being authenticated before any of the judges in the district Councils, for such offences they shall forfeit and pay the sum of five hundred dollars, and one hundred stripes on the bare back.” For a full text version of this law and others that came after it, see the Cherokee Advocate Office’s (1852). *Laws of the Cherokee Nation: Adopted by the Council at Various Periods*. Retrieved from the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/american-indian-consts/PDF/28014183.pdf>.

wealthy Cherokee plantation and slave owner.²² These men and their colleagues were formative in transforming the Cherokee socio-spatial structure from a traditional matrilineal, collectivist order into one managed and led by men, and based on the principles of republicanism and individual property rights.²³

The Georgia Gold Rush (1828-1829) and Gold Lottery of 1832

While the presence of gold within interior Cherokee lands had been rumored among colonial explorers since the 16th century, the discovery of two large gold deposits in 1828 in the foothills of what is today northern Georgia near the Tennessee border, exacerbated the rate at which white settlers entered Cherokee territory and willfully violated the laws established by the National Committee and Council intended to preserve autonomy and political sovereignty.

Prior to the forced removal of the Cherokee to Oklahoma during the summer of 1838, the Tennessee River marked the legal boundary between the Cherokee Nation and the State of Tennessee. White land grabbers lined up eagerly along the border in what is today downtown Chattanooga, waiting for the opportunity to seize Cherokee homesteads and plantations. The Cherokee population had adopted many western cultural values and practices, but their unwillingness to cede additional land frustrated speculators and government officials who were eager to gain access to the Nation's fertile farmland and newly discovered gold deposits. These speculators began to vigorously lobby the State of Georgia and the federal Congress, demanding that policymakers devise a permanent solution to the problem of Cherokee sovereignty, which was limiting their access to gold and fertile farmland in the northern Georgia hills.

²² Ultimately, Boudinot and Ridge both became members of the five person Treaty party that was responsible for negotiating the Treaty of New Echota (1835), which enabled the forced removal of the Cherokee to Oklahoma following the passage of President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act. Considered traitors by the majority of the Cherokee and forced to relocate, both were violently murdered in Oklahoma following the Trail of Tears.

²³Perdue (1979), Perdue and Green (1995), Miles (2005).

These frontier speculators found an eager ally in newly elected President Andrew Jackson, a former army general and Tennessee frontiersman who had led American troops to victory against the Creek Indians and British during the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (1814) and Battle of New Orleans (1815). These sentiments reached their nadir on May 28, 1830 when President Jackson authorized the Indian Removal Act.

The Act “extinguished Indian claims” to the lands held by the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, Choctaw and Seminole) to the east of the Mississippi River. It also gave the President of the United States power to parcel out unincorporated lands located to the west of the Mississippi River, and it demanded that members of the relocated tribes accept these allotments as just compensation for their ancestral territories across the Southeast. Finally, the Act proclaimed that the President of the United States would assume “superintendence” over the tribes following their relocation, granting the U.S. federal government the power to assume legal control over any western Indian territories in the case of Native “abandonment” or “extinction.” While the Act designated funds to assist with relocation, it did not explicitly state how they should be distributed or managed to avoid corruption and fraudulence by local contractors and politicians.

President Jackson emphasized the Louisiana Purchase (1803) as his rationale for relocating tribal communities west of the Mississippi River. The Purchase had declared that legal property titles could be conferred through the physical improvement of wasted (i.e. undeveloped and/or underutilized) land. Supporters of Native American removal and relocation argued that removal would benefit the United States in two ways. First, relocation would open up previously inaccessible natural resources in the southeast. Second, it would facilitate and help

to promote economic development in the vast western territories secured through the Louisiana Purchase.

These sentiments were clearly expressed by Jackson during his Second Annual Message to Congress on December 6, 1830. During his speech, the president insisted that the removal of the southeastern tribes was in the best interest of both white and Native communities:

What good man would prefer a country covered with forests, and ranged by a few thousand savages, to our extensive republic, studded with cities, towns and prosperous farms, embellished with all the improvements which art can devise, or industry execute; occupied by more than twelve millions of happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization and religion!

The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change, by a milder process. The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated, or have melted away, to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the Westward; and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West, by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to a land where their existence may be prolonged, and perhaps be made perpetual...

And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children? Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.²⁴

Cloaked in the language of public generosity and altruistic paternalism, Jackson's remarks signified his unwillingness to acknowledge or accept as legitimate any alternative to a worldview based on private property and speculative economic development. He positioned this epistemological frame as morally and politically superior to the Cherokees' unenlightened

²⁴ Jackson, Andrew (6 December 1830). *Indian Removal Speech to Congress*. Accessed via the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov>.

practices of collective, subsistence-based living. These sentiments were further codified by two Supreme Court cases: the Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831) and Worcester v. Georgia (1832).²⁵

Native Dispossession and *unna daul Isunyi* (The Trail Where They Cried)

During the quarter century between the establishment of Ross's Landing in 1813 and the forced removal of the Cherokee in 1838, Cherokee "entrepreneurs" transformed the small trading post into an "economic force of the frontier."²⁶ By 1830, Ross's Landing had become the entry point for a small but bustling commercial center oriented around the banks of the Tennessee River. John Ross, the owner of the ferry crossing, had been elected as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation in 1828 (a position he assumed until his death in 1866). Ross's anti-removal stance had made him popular among the Cherokee people, who viewed the small faction of pro-

²⁵ Two years prior to the passage of the Indian Removal Act, the State of Georgia had passed a series of laws stripping the Cherokee of their land and resource rights. Having adopted a national Constitution in 1827 which clearly delineated private property laws, the Cherokee became the first tribal nation to test their legal sovereignty in the U.S. court system. Tribal representatives invoked Article VI (the Supremacy Clause) and filed against the State of Georgia as a foreign nation. The case made it to the Federal Supreme court, whereupon Chief Justice John Marshall set a paradoxical precedent for defining Native sovereignty. On the one hand, Chief Justice Marshall granted the Cherokee Nation effective autonomy, declaring that the Federation was capable to "manage its own affairs and govern itself" (30 U.S. (5 Pet.) 1 (1831)). On the other, he concluded that the Cherokee Nation related to the United States as "domestic dependent nations" existing "in a state of pupilage. Their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian." The ruling mandated that Native communities defer to the United States in legal and economic decision-making matters and negated the Cherokee's power to assert land claims against the federal and state governments. Chief Justice Marshall drew a clear distinction between occupancy rights and fee simple (absolute) rights to land, declaring that Native Americans' land claims "occupy a territory to which we assert a title independence of their will." With his ruling, the Cherokee people were rendered squatters in both their ancestral homelands and the the new territories reserved for them to the west of the Mississippi River. The precedent established by this ruling was complicated a year later, when the same Federal judge ruled in Worcester v. Georgia (1832) that Georgia could not impose laws in Cherokee territory, since only the national government — not state governments — had authority in Indian affairs. In his majority opinion, Chief Justice Marshall declared that the Indian nations were "distinct, independent political communities retaining their original natural rights" (31 U.S. (6 Pet.) 515 (1832)). Native American policy and legal scholars Jill Norgren and Nanda (1996) argued that these three legal actions—the Indian Removal Act (May 28, 1830), Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831), and Cherokee v. Worcester (1832)—are crucial because of different precedents they set about the legal relationship between tribal nations and the United States government. Each appeared to preserve Native American rights, framing the relationship between the two nations in terms of mutuality and respect. But in reality, the federal government and courts codified a legal structure rendering tribal sovereignty relative at best. Norgren and Nanda contended that this paradoxical legal relationship has been the driving force behind all subsequent U.S.— Native American law and public policy over the past one and half centuries. For more information, see Norgren, J., & Nanda, S. (1988). *American cultural pluralism and law*. New York: Praeger.

²⁶ Eastern Band of Cherokee Principal Chief Michele Hicks quoted during the opening ceremony of The Passage in downtown Chattanooga (in Coulter 2005).

removal Cherokees (including Ross's brother Andrew Ross, *Cherokee Phoenix* editor and publisher Elias Boudinot, planter John Ridge and his father, Major Ridge, and other economic and political elites) as traitors of the "principal people" and their ancestral homeland. Although he was only one-eighth Cherokee, John Ross became a tireless anti-removal advocate in the years leading up to the Indian Removal Act, as well as the several years between its passage and the military round up of his people in 1838.

For the first few years following the passage of the Indian Removal Act, removal was slow moving, partially because the Cherokee were contesting the law in the courts, but largely because there was a strong will among traditionalists to remain in their ancestral homeland despite having had their rights to the land "extinguished" by the American federal government. During this time, the U.S. government focused on the removal of the four other "Civilized Tribes," including the Choctaw (1831), Seminole (1832), Creek (1834), and Chickasaw (1837).²⁷

This changed on December 29, 1835, when five self-appointed pro-removal delegates who claimed to represent the Cherokee Nation (including Boudinot and the Ridges) negotiated a treaty with the State of Georgia to concede the total relocation of the Cherokee Nation to the newly opened western frontier. The agreement, known as the Treaty of New Echota, was perceived as illegitimate by the majority of Cherokee citizens. Nevertheless, despite protests from the Cherokee National Council and the fact that the treaty lacked the signature of Principal Chief Ross, the United States Senate adopted and ratified the contract in March 1836.

In protest against the Treaty of New Echota, Chief Ross wrote a letter to the United States Congress. He used his statement as the basis for a citizen petition that was endorsed by more than fifteen thousand of Cherokee citizens. Ross laid out the case legal, political and moral

²⁷Perdue, T., & Green, M. D. (1995). *The Cherokee removal: A brief history with documents*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press.

arguments against the Treaty of New Echota, arguing that it was illegitimately conceived and authorized and enforceable only through military coercion. Furthermore, Ross claimed that the treaty stripped the Cherokee of their property, livelihoods and very humanity:

By the stipulations of this instrument, we are despoiled of our private possessions, the indefeasible property of individuals. We are stripped of every attribute of freedom and eligibility for legal self-defense. Our property may be plundered before our eyes; violence may be committed on our persons; ever our lives may be taken away, and there is none to regard our complaints. We are denationalized; we are disfranchised. We are deprived of membership in the human family! We have neither land nor home, nor resting place that can be called our own... We are overwhelmed! Our hearts are sickened, our utterance paralyzed, when we reflect on the condition in which we are placed, by the audacious practices of unprincipled men...in the face of our earnest, solemn, and reiterated protestations.²⁸

With letter and signatures in hand, Ross travelled to Washington D.C. to personally deliver his declaration to the U.S. Congress. Despite the support of the vast majority of the Cherokee people, Ross's plea was rejected and the United States government ramped up their efforts to forcibly remove the Cherokee from their territorial stronghold in the northern Georgia hills.

Ross's Landing was located at the legal boundary between the United States and the Cherokee Nation, and this geography prompted pro-removal enthusiasts to turn their attention to the settlement as planning for roundup and deportation began. Ross's Landing was a centrally located port town with both water and land access to the western frontier. In 1835, the Landing was chosen by the United States Army as one of four locations across the region for an internment camp. Over the next two years (1836-1838), the United States Army fortified the town in anticipation of removal.

Henry Wiltse's unpublished manuscript, *History of Chattanooga*, has some of the only detailed descriptions of the Cherokee removal that occurred at Ross's Landing. Wiltse, a native Chattanooga, worked on the manuscript for several decades during the late nineteenth and early

²⁸ Principal Chief John Ross to the United States Congress (1836) quoted in Ross, J., & Moulton, G. E. (1985). *The papers of Chief John Ross*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

twentieth centuries. As part of his research, he interviewed retired soldiers (1900-1901) who had participated in the Cherokee roundup and removal campaign headquartered at Ross's Landing. Several veterans recalled how the soldiers' camp had been constructed on farm property owned by the affluent, slaveholding Gardenhire family approximately two miles northeast of the Landing, "There, after clearing the land they built a fort made of split trees, sharpened and set into the ground, picket fashion," recalled army veteran William Jones to Wiltse. "At about the space of every third picket was a porthole, from which a gun could be projected and given wide sweep."²⁹

The troops remained in this camp through the winter of 1836-1837, during which time they responded to reports of Native disturbances and constructed the crude stockades that would eventually be used to warehouse Cherokee prior to their deportation. After fortifying the town, troops began their campaign to uproot the Cherokee from their homesteads and farms across southeast Tennessee and northern Georgia. These efforts were preempted with a public address to the Cherokee Nation by commanding General Winfield Scott, who on May 10, 1838, recommended that the Cherokee people avoid military imprisonment by voluntarily assembling at Ross's Landing or one of the other three deportation sites constructed by the army.

Promising fair treatment, Winfield declared:

Do not, I invite you, even wait for the close approach of the troops; but make such preparations for emigration as you can and hasten to this place, to Ross's Landing or to Gunter's Landing, where you all will be received in kindness by officers selected for the purpose. You will find food for all and clothing for the destitute at either of those places, and thence at your ease and in comfort be transported to your new homes, according to the terms of the treaty.

²⁹ Jones quoted in Wiltse, H. M. (n.d.). *History of Chattanooga*. S.l: s.n. Page 31.

This is the address of a warrior to warriors. May his entreaties be kindly received and may the God of both prosper the Americans and Cherokees and preserve them long in peace and friendship with each other!³⁰

Despite his air of benevolent paternalism, virtually no Cherokee citizens willingly abandoned their homes. In response, the troops were ordered to root them out, capture them, and march them to the holding pen located just north of the river crossing at Ross’s Landing. U.S. Army veteran Moses Wells recalled his participation in these efforts: “[We] found Indians hidden in treetops, in bushes, in hollow logs and all sorts of places.”³¹

In total, approximately 2,200 federal troops and 740 militiamen from Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina and Alabama were involved in the Cherokee roundup. Table 3.1 on the next page shows the number of Cherokee prisoners interned in the stockade near Ross’s Landing over an eleven day period (May 30 - June 9 1838). In total, 3,636 prisoners from the middle military district were imprisoned at the landing; more than one thousand (N=1,079) arrived on June 6th alone.

Table 3.1: Total Cherokee Population Assembled at Ross's Landing, May 30- June 9, 1838

Date	Daily Total	Cumulative Total
May 30	198	198
May 31	109	307
June 1	133	440
June 2	152	592
June 4	469	1,061
June 5	122/ 225*	1,408
June 6	950/ 129 *	2,487
June 7	447	2,934
June 9	223/ 479	3,636

Source: Duane King (1996)

When the first convoys arrived at the landing, the army proceeded with immediate deportation.

Three detachments were deployed from the landing by flatboat between June 6th and 16th.

³⁰Scott, Winfield, & Wirth, W. J. (n.d.). *Orders No. 25, 1838 May 17, Eastern Division*, Cherokee Agency, Tennessee. Accessed via the Library of Congress online: <http://www.loc.gov>.

³¹ Wells quoted in Wiltse, H. M. (n.d.). *History of Chattanooga*. S.I: s.n. Page 29.

A witness to these events described the violent scene to a journalist with the *Niles Register*, who published the anecdote on August 18, 1838. He wrote:

Then came the whipping off to the west. The agent endeavored to induce them to go into the boats voluntarily; but none would agree to go. The agent then struck a line through the camp; the soldiers rushed in and drove the devoted victims into the boats, regardless of the cries and agonies of the poor helpless sufferers. In this cruel work, the most painful separation of families occurred—children were sent off and parents left, and so of other relations.³²

The first detachment successfully navigated a water route and arrived in Oklahoma after two weeks with no reported deaths. The detachments deployed on June 12 and 16 were both forced to abandon their boats due to low water levels, and complete their journeys by foot. These two groups took significantly longer to arrive and suffered more than two hundred combined casualties.

Over the course of removal, more than three thousand Native and “Black Cherokee” (later called the Cherokee Freedmen) were held captive in crude open air stockades at Ross’s Landing. Lacking protection from natural elements, sanitation and adequate food supplies, historians estimate that hundreds perished from malnutrition and disease in these hot, muddy prisons during their final summer in the southeast.³³ Among those who survived roundup and internment, more than sixteen thousand Native and Black Cherokees, along with a handful of white missionary allies,³⁴ were forced to march the twelve hundred mile journey from southeastern Tennessee into “Indian Territory” in what is today northeastern Oklahoma. Not counting the hundreds who died from illness and malnutrition while held in the stockades, more

³² *Niles Register* (1838) quoted in Wiltse, H. M. (n.d.). *History of Chattanooga*. S.1: s.n. Page 35.

³³ Duane King (1996). Report to the Friends of Moccasin Bend on the Cherokee Removal in the Chattanooga Area. See also Tiya Miles (2005).

³⁴ Beyond the three June 1838 detachments, a 600-member Treaty Party detachment travelled through Ross’s Landing in October 1838. One month later, Samuel Worcester and several Brainerd missionaries migrated to Indian Territory with a convoy of several hundred remaining Cherokee as a way to show their solidarity with the uprooted Cherokee people. For more information, see Phillips, J. B., & Phillips, P. G. (1998). *The Brainerd journal: A mission to the Cherokees, 1817-1823*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

than 4,000 individuals perished over the course of their arduous march west.³⁵ The journey came to be known in the Cherokee language as “*unna daul Isunyi*”—“the Trail Where They Cried.” Today, the forced removal is popularly known as the Trail of Tears. Social historian Jack Forbes (1993) referred to the forced relocation of the Cherokee as a critical juncture in the making of a modern “American diaspora.”³⁶

Ross’s Landing: From Crossing to Crossroads

At the time of removal, Ross’s Landing had been transformed into a military camp, with hungry land grabbers moving in to claim property in the wake of Cherokee dispossession. George W. Fetherstonaugh, an English traveler and geographer, recounted his initial impression of the ramshackle community at Ross’s Landing during a visit to the town in 1837. Fetherstonaugh came ashore at a “beach where there was no appearance of a settlement,” and quickly discovered “a small village hastily built, without regard to order or streets, everyone selecting his own site and relying upon the legislature of Tennessee to pass a law for the permanent arrangement of their occupations.”³⁷

Louis Parham was an entrepreneur whose family owned the local slave market.³⁸ In his historical account of the Chattanooga and Hamilton County, Parham (1876) described the town’s rapid settlement during the months following removal. In a tone reminiscent of the racist paternalism which had driven encroachment and dispossession over the past century, he recalled

³⁵ Duane King (1996), Perdue (1979), Miles (2005).

³⁶ Forbes, J. D., & Forbes, J. D. (1993). *Africans and Native Americans: The language of race and the evolution of Red-Black peoples*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

³⁷ Fetherstonaugh quoted Federal Writers' Project. Tennessee (1900). *Chattanooga city guide*. S.l: s.n. Page 20.

³⁸ Although the precise location of the slave market has been debated, it is known to have been located near the intersection of Market and Ninth Street, close to the Union Passenger Terminal. One can find colorful descriptions of pre-Civil war Market Street in several recent books. See, for example, Evans, E. R. (2003). *Contributions by United States Colored Troops (USCT) of Chattanooga & North Georgia during the American Civil War, Reconstruction and formation of Chattanooga*. Chickamauga, Ga: B.C.M. Foster; Hubbard, R. L. (2007). *African Americans of Chattanooga: A history of unsung heroes*. Charleston, SC: History Press; Scott, M. R. (2008). *Blues empress in black Chattanooga: Bessie Smith and the emerging urban South*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

how white families arrived at Ross's Landing on wooden flatboats, which they disassembled and used as lumber to construct dwelling units on land. Within weeks of removal,

The town was laid off into lots... and sold off in April, 1839. About 250 acres constituted the limits of the new town, which was built near the river, owing to the trade there. In 1841 the name "Chattanooga," was given to the place... The whites began coming in quite freely this year, and the red man was induced to move on toward the setting of the sun.

Now, were it possible for those who in the earlier days of Chattanooga left, ne'er to return, unless in the spirit, to stand upon some eminence and look down upon the scenes presented to the view, what a magic change would they note ! The wooded wilds of their native heath has become, lo! a busy, industrious city, with beautiful, wide streets, handsome residences and substantial business houses; its quiet is disturbed by the hum of business. The tall oaks and pines have been felled, and converted into uses of agriculture and manufacture. A town has risen up, as if by enchantment, presenting to their view the evidences of wealth, of commerce, of learning, and the arts.³⁹

Parham's representation of Chattanooga's early settlement underscores the arrogance and cultural superiority that whites cultivated to justify forced removal. To these early city builders the Cherokee removal hardly amounted to cultural genocide. To the contrary, they believed relocation was necessary to transform the wasted region from "wooded wilds of native heath" into a center of "commerce, learning and the arts." Parham's account also highlights the roots of a romanticized mischaracterization of Native Americans as the keepers of the unspoiled natural world. Arguably, this racialized mythology has deeply influenced the cultural prism through which non-Native Americans relate to some of the bloodiest periods of United States history.

³⁹Parham, L. L. (1876). *Chattanooga, Tennessee; Hamilton County, and Lookout Mountain: An epitome of Chattanooga from her early days down to the present; Hamilton County, its soil, climate, area, population, wealth, etc. Lookout Mountain, its battlefields, beauties, climate, and other attractions*. Chattanooga. Pages 5-6.

Conclusion: Post-Removal Native American Placemaking in downtown Chattanooga

After removal, Cherokee and other Native American populations who fought to remain in the area were pushed underground. A group of approximately four hundred who had actively resisted relocation retreated into the isolated Smoky Mountains in nearby western North Carolina. This group was eventually recognized by the State of North Carolina (1866) and the United States government (1868) and granted reservation land along the Qualla boundary; today they are known as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) (ᑄᑄᑄᑄ ᑄᑄᑄᑄ or *Tsalagiyi Detsadanilvgi*).⁴⁰ For the past century and a half, lands occupied by the Eastern Band of Cherokee have remained the center of Cherokee culture east of the Mississippi River.

Despite having practically eliminated the Cherokee presence in the region, powerful white residents have spent the past one hundred eighty years romanticizing Cherokee history and culture and appropriating Cherokee language in efforts to distinguish Chattanooga as a cosmopolitan and historically unique urban center. Street and business names, team mascots, and the name “Chattanooga” itself harken to the population who had previously occupied the lands comprising downtown Chattanooga. In many cases, particularly since the 1990’s, these efforts to appropriate Cherokee culture have been met with resistance from Native communities living in the city and region.

Native American political resistance in Chattanooga reappeared in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, after the Chattanooga Intertribal Association (CITA) was established in 1994 with the goal of expanding “Native activism” in the city and surrounding region. William Boyd Nix, a Cherokee man who was born and raised in downtown Chattanooga, described the motivations

⁴⁰Finger, J. R. (1984). *The Eastern Band of Cherokees, 1819-1900*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

for joining CITA, which operated until 2011, when its main organizer fell ill and eventually passed away. He recalled:

Native Americans were joining from all over the place. At one time, we had an Alaskan Native, we had Creek, Cherokee, Iroquois, and some Seminoles. It was an intertribal association, and several Native Americans moved to Chattanooga just to get involved with the protests; to become part of the community.⁴¹

At the heart of the CITA movement was a desire to recognize and counteract whites' impulses to simultaneously destroy and appropriate Cherokee history and culture. For example, the group organized a successful campaign against the University of Tennessee—Chattanooga's fictional school mascot, "Chief Moccanoogie," eventually compelling the university to rebrand their teams, known as "The Mocs" with the logo of a mockingbird.

The organization also campaigned to keep Moccasin Bend, a largely undeveloped tract of land within the urban core from being turned into a state park. Moccasin Bend contains the remnants of several Mississippian-era native settlements and burial mound and since the early 1980's has been eyed by the city and other mainstream institutions as an asset with enormous tourism development potential, Nix described CITA's rationale for protesting the efforts to turn this sacred and historic ground over to researchers, artifact speculators, and the local tourism industry:

We protested turning Moccasin Bend into a state park, because we believed that if it got turned into a state park they would destroy it. We wanted it to be left in as natural a state as possible. We kept them from building a museum over there, and I was at the very first ceremony over there after it was legal to perform Native rituals [without fear of retribution]. This was in the 1990's. I went to the first religious service where Native Americans could not be arrested. Up until the Native American Religious Freedoms, Native Americans could be arrested for having religious ceremonies at Moccasin Bend. Prior to that Native Americans were underground.

⁴¹ William Nix, personal communication, November 12, 2012.

We also protested the Anthropology classes that were taking students over to Moccasin Bend... There's a professor at UTC. He and I have had a long discourse over the years. I was [hospitalized] in Moccasin Bend and I heard they were having a class over there. I actually left the building and walked over to where the class was and protested them digging. I basically told the class that if you want to look at artifacts, why not go over to the National Cemetery and start looking over there. It's the same thing. There are so many holes over there at Moccasin Bend from pot diggers. At one time, before the economy crashed, a little clay pot from Moccasin Bend could go for several thousand dollars. If you do an aerial view of the land over there, you can see one hole after another.⁴²

Today, few physical remnants representing the pre-colonial period remain intact. The Citico Mound was maintained as a convalescent retreat for Union soldiers by the US Colored Troops during the Civil War, but fell to bulldozers during the construction of Riverside Drive in 1917. The Chickamauga Mound is the oldest human-made structure standing in Chattanooga, having been constructed as a burial mound sometime during the Woodland Period (1000 BCE–1000 CE) sometime between 600 and 900 CE.

In 1984, Chickamauga Mound was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the “Woodland Mound Archeological District.” Today, the mound is located on a private industrial property (see Illustration 3.2 on the next page). The site was restored by members of the Chattanooga Intertribal Association in the early 2000's, and is visible from portions of the 10 mile long Riverwalk Park which stretches between Ross's Landing and the Chickamauga Dam. Additionally, archaeological districts have been established at Moccasin Bend and the Williams Island. These regulations prohibit and establish punishment guidelines for unauthorized digging and the potential further looting of artifacts.

⁴² William Nix, personal communication, November 12, 2012.



Illustration 3.1: Chickamauga Mound is a Mississippian era burial mound dating to 600-900 A.C.E. The mound is located on a private industrial site and was restored by the Chattanooga Intertribal Association in the early 2000's (Photo Source: Courtney Knapp July 2012).

While the preservation and conservation of remaining historic Native American sites and artifacts is a critical piece of Native diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga, Nix emphasizes that it is equally important to think about how to restore Native claims to every day sites that had been seized and re-appropriated nearly two centuries earlier.

Scrappy Moore field is where the [UTC] football players practice. That was the holding pen area for the Cherokee during the forced removal. I can look out my dining room window and see the holding pen area where they started the Trail of Tears. They actually started the Trail of Tears right next to my house, on the hill where the power station is now located. The stockade was where the field is at, but the hill is where they took them out to start the march. The tourism industry tries to act like the Trail of Tears started down there at Ross's Landing, but it did no such thing. There is an electrical substation where they started the Trail of Tears... At one point I was planning to move from where I live at, but now I've accepted where I live. And unless something extreme happens, when I die, if I outlive my mother, I am going to donate my house to the Eastern Band of Cherokees. I am

going to give them that land, because it is basically the midpoint between Scrappy Moore field and the substation where they began the Trail of Tears.⁴³

Nix's perspective offers powerful counterclaims to the narratives of Native American belonging and placemaking espoused by city boosters. Having grown up in a city incorporated on the backs of his ancestors, in a place that builds the Trail of Tears into its tourism agenda while paving over, redeveloping, and disrupting legitimate sites of Native history and culture, Nix feels these actions are at best, hypocritical, and at worst, co-optative. Although his perspective represents a minority within the city, Nix's interpretation underscores how cultural autonomy and self-determination are intimately tied up with questions of ownership and control: the control of historical narratives, to be certain, but most fundamentally, the control of social and physical urban space.

⁴³ William Nix, personal communication, November 12, 2012.

CHAPTER 4: ROOTING A BLACK DIASPORA IN DOWNTOWN CHATTANOOGA

While downtown Chattanooga was a point of departure for Native Americans forced to migrate west in the mid- 19th century, it has been a point of entry and arrival for members of the global Black diaspora for nearly five centuries. African American labor and creative placemaking have been central to urbanization and economic expansion in Chattanooga since before the modern arrival of white settlers, and have undergirded urban growth before, during, and after the abolition of slavery in the United States. Despite their substantial contributions, African American city building has never been treated with the same level of admiration as exhibited toward the Cherokee. Nor have the centuries-long legacies of exploitation and cultural marginalization been treated with the same levels of remorse or repentance.

This chapter explores the politics of African American diasporic placemaking in downtown Chattanooga over the past three centuries to provide historical context to contemporary trends in uneven geographic development and cultural-based revitalization underway across the urban core. By showing how mainstream discourses of urban progress have been racially coded and organized such that Black urban placemaking and community development have been treated as antitheses to progressive urban cosmopolitanism, I reveal a critical double standard at play in both historic and present day city planning and cultural development.

Early Encounters

An African American presence in the Chattanooga area has been dated back to the mid sixteenth century, when Hernando De Soto and his expedition team, which is known to have included African slaves, navigated the Tennessee River in 1541 in search of gold within the southern interior.¹ Between the 16th and early 19th centuries, encounters between European explorers, enslaved Africans, and indigenous communities across the Southeast increased. By the early nineteenth century, four of the largest Southeastern Native tribes-- the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Creek-- had adopted western customs and socio-political institutions in efforts to secure political sovereignty and ward off encroaching white settlers. Referred to by whites as the “Five Civilized Tribes” these four nations also adopted the “civilizing” institution of African American chattel slavery.

Tiya Miles (2005) argued that although some examples of Cherokee slaveholding was based on a large-scale, colonial plantation model, traditional Cherokee interpretations of community, kinship, and property created fundamentally different relationships between master and slave on southeastern Cherokee homesteads.² Intermarriage and family-building between Native Americans and African Americans, for example, were common. Prior to the adoption of

¹ The early encounters between the Cherokee, Spanish, and African Americans has been documented by Govan and Livingood (1977), Hubbard (2007), and Miles (2005), among others.

² Tiya Miles (2005) traced the migration of one Cherokee-African American family from northern Georgia (less than 20 miles from present-day Chattanooga) during the period between Cherokee national formation and their forced removal to Oklahoma in 1838. The Shoe Boots’ family saga sheds light on the long, deep entwinement of Native American and African American sociospatial histories—both in the Southeast and later west of the Mississippi River. Recent moves to create cultural and political discourses around Native American-African American ontological “indivisibility,” for instance, are two examples of re-imagining new ontologies of cultural belonging and togetherness in the context of multiple and overlapping diasporas. Narratives of creolization and multiracial solidarity can be traced back to all regionalized spaces of colonial encounters (Forbes 1998, Brooks 2002), it is only recently that critical scholarship has turned to the deeply intertwined cultural, political, and socio-spatial histories of indigenous and African American people living in the United States and its antecedent colonies (Miles and Holland 2006, Miles 2008, Tayac 2009). These narratives complement a more substantial canon of Black-indigenous cultural history in Latin America and the Caribbean, and represent a growing interdisciplinary field focused on cultural rootedness and relational belonging in sites of multiple and overlapping diasporas.

the Cherokee Constitution in 1827, both free Blacks (known as “tribal Freedmen”) and slaves living within the boundaries of the Cherokee Nation could inherit and own land.³ Additionally, historical records documented Cherokee efforts to hide and protect escaped slaves who had fled U.S. territory and entered sovereign Cherokee land. African Americans were also recorded protecting Native Americans who attempted to avoid western relocation following the passage of President Jackson’s Indian Removal Act.⁴ In some cases, African Americans were taught to read and write by missionary instructors, including those stationed at the Brainerd Mission in present-day Chattanooga. Historical maps and treaties charting the pre-removal territory depict a free Black settlement in the vicinity of downtown Chattanooga (“Sugar Negro Camp” at the base of Walden’s Ridge) at the time of the passage of the Treaty of 1817.⁵

Slavery and Early Urban Development in Chattanooga

On October 25, 1819, Hamilton County was established by an action from the State of Tennessee. At that time, there were sixteen free African Americans and thirty nine slaves living within the new county’s boundaries. These numbers do not reflect the actual African American presence in the vicinity as the census did not include Blacks living in territories held by the Cherokee to the south of the Tennessee River.

Table 4.1 on the next page shows Hamilton County’s population growth by race between 1820 and 1860. In the ten year period after Hamilton County’s incorporation, the local population nearly tripled: by 1830, there were 2,136 whites, 25 free Blacks, and 115 slaves living in the county. The first substantial in-migration of African Americans occurred immediately

³ Brooks (2002), Miles (2005 and 2008).

⁴ Miles and Holland (2006), Miles (2008), Tayac (2009).

⁵Treaty with the Cherokee (1817). Compiled and edited by Charles J. Kappler. (1904) Washington : Government Printing Office.

after the forced removal of the Cherokee in 1838. Within one year of removal, the city of Chattanooga was incorporated.⁶ Over the next several decades, Hamilton County and the town of Chattanooga were rapidly settled by white farmers and industrialists-- many of whom brought African Americans with them as slaves. By 1840 Hamilton County's population had more than tripled to 7,498 whites, 584 slaves, and 93 free Blacks.

Table 4.1: Total Population in Hamilton County by Race and Slavery Status, 1820 – 1860

Year	Total Population	Whites	Free Blacks	Slaves
1820	821	766	16	39
1830	2,276	2,136	25	115
1840	8,175	7,498	93	584
1850	10,075	9,216	187	672
1860	13,252	11,641	192	1,419

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *Population Statistics, 1820-1860*. Accessed via www.socialexplorer.com.

During the early years of the town's development, slave labor was used for most large-scale infrastructure projects, including road building, brick masonry and building construction. Slaves were also the primary source of labor supplying rail companies when they began to lay tracks in Chattanooga in 1840.

Although few early place guides outwardly acknowledged the presence of slavery in the Tennessee River valley, Henry Wiltse's unpublished *History of Chattanooga* (approx. 1920) illustrated the prevalence of slave labor in mid-nineteenth century city building activities. Thomas Crutchfield, for example, was a prominent citizen in Chattanooga during the decades between Cherokee removal and the U.S. Civil War. Crutchfield owned the first local brickyard, which manufactured most of the bricks for the town's earliest modern structures. The Crutchfields also owned a large hotel at West Ninth and Market Streets across the street from the

⁶⁶Govan and Livingood (1977) and Coulter (2006).

passenger train depot.

According to the 1860 Slave Schedule for Hamilton County, the Crutchfields owned thirty-nine slaves-- many of whom worked at their hotel and brickyard.⁷ During an interview for Wiltse's project, a longtime resident recalled how "the brickyard was down on the river between Market Street and River Transportation Warehouse. The foremen of the yard were Yellow Bill and Mills Crutchfield, negroes. Mills was the champion moulder."⁸

Michelle R. Scott (2008) argued that unlike other areas of the Deep South that were rural and based on plantation-scale agriculture, Chattanooga's early economy was organized around subsistence farming and industrial development. In several nearby counties, African Americans greatly outnumbered whites. For example, in Madison County, Alabama, slaves comprised more than half of the total population (N= 14,573 or 55%); in Franklin County, Tennessee, they comprised more than one-quarter of the total population (N=3,551 or 26.6%). In Chattanooga, slaves comprised ten percent (N=1,419 or 10.7%) of the total population at the eve of the Civil War. More than one quarter (N=78 or 27.2%) of the 287 slaveholding households in Hamilton County in 1860 owned one slave and nearly three-quarters (N=202 or 70.4%) owned five or fewer. At the other end of the spectrum, ten households (2.9%) owned twenty or more slaves and only one family owned more slaves than the Crutchfields.⁹

Scott argued that with no clear divide between "house" and "field" slave, African

⁷ United States Census Bureau (1860) Slavery Schedule for Hamilton County. Accessed at: http://www.hctgs.org/Census/1860%20Slave%20Schedule/1860_slave_index.htm.

⁸ Henry Wiltse compiled his manuscript in the early 20th century. He likely conducted these interviews in 1900/1901.

⁹ Although these numbers are relatively low, several local historians have argued that they do not accurately reflect the prevalence of slavery in antebellum Chattanooga. The 1860 Slave schedule offers a total count for slaves owned by households residing in Hamilton County, but does not factor in slaves who were frequently leased from property owners in the surrounding rural counties and exploited in industrial work and infrastructure expansion. For more information, see Hubbard 2007 and Evans (2004, 2007). United States Census Bureau (1860) Slavery Schedule for Hamilton County. Accessed at: http://www.hctgs.org/Census/1860%20Slave%20Schedule/1860_slave_index.htm.

Americans living in antebellum Chattanooga were afforded certain benefits and rights not typically granted in other parts of the South. Literacy rates, for instance, were higher among enslaved Chattanoogaans than among people confined to rural plantations in other parts of Tennessee and across the border in Georgia.¹⁰

But these freedoms were relative at best. Black bodies were subject to strict regulations and were routinely exploited by local businessmen for industrial profits. Chattanooga's first City Charter was granted by the Tennessee legislature in an act passed on November 5, 1851. In his historical account of the city, Wiltse recorded that the "first ordinance of general character passed in pursuance of this charter" was a law entitled "An Ordinance to Regulate Slaves, Free Blacks, and Mulattoes within the City of Chattanooga." The ordinance mandated that all free persons of color and mixed race must present documentation proving their legal freedom within three months of the law's enactment. Additionally, any free person of color migrating into the city had one month to provide sufficient evidence of their freedom. "If such persons were found in the city without proper evidence of freedom," Wiltse continued, "they were deemed to be slaves and dealt with as such."¹¹

The ordinance also established sundown laws which forbade slaves not residing in the city from remaining "inside after sunset, weekdays, and not at all Sundays without permission from owners or employers." African Americans found in violation of these rules would be charged five dollars per day in fines. Finally, the ordinance prevented the congregation of African Americans in public spaces and severely restricted cultural and community building activities.

Wiltse recalled:

¹⁰ Miles (2005), Scott (2008).

¹¹ Chattanooga City Charter (November 5, 1851) quoted in Wiltse, *The History of Chattanooga*. unpublished manuscript (circa 1920), v.2:3.

Any collection of slaves within the city for dancing, or any other purpose except public worship, was proscribed. Worship was made subject to regulation by the council. The “City Watch and Patrol” were required to disburse all collections of slaves and to inflict punishment of not less than five and no more than ten lashes.¹²

Thus, while the relatively small slave population living in Hamilton County was distinct from its rural plantation-dominated neighbors in so far that African Americans comprised a minority population, local policymakers were far from the racially tolerant liberals that they held themselves to be (and marketed themselves to northern investors as). To the contrary, white leaders quickly enacted laws meant to control African American physical and social mobility and enforce their subordination at the bottom of the local social hierarchy.

African Americans in Chattanooga during the U.S. Civil War

Three major military battles took place in Chattanooga during the U.S. Civil War.¹³ Over the course of six days of fighting, the Union and Confederate armies suffered nearly thirteen thousand (N=12,591) combined casualties. Unsurprisingly, African Americans were central to all aspects of military fortification. They levelled forests for lumber and firewood, dug ditches, and constructed earthworks in the months leading up to the Union siege on the city.

Camp Contraband and the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.)

The 16th regiment of the United States Colored Troops was assembled in Nashville and deployed to Chattanooga to fortify the city and prepare it to become the major supply depot for

¹² *Ibid.*, v.2:3.

¹³ The First Battle of Chattanooga, (June 7–8, 1862) involved a minor artillery bombardment by Union Brigadier General James S. Negley against Confederate Maj. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith. During the Second Battle of Chattanooga (August 21, 1863), a Union artillery bombardment convinced General Braxton Bragg to evacuate the city. The Chattanooga Campaign or the “Battles for Chattanooga” (November 23–25, 1863) is often cited as the battle that secured the Union’s victory. Major General Ulysses S. Grant defeated Confederate General Braxton Bragg and continued the Union campaign to Atlanta and the “March to the Sea.” For more information, see Wiltse (circa 1920), Govan and Livingood (1977), or Evans (2003).

an expected invasion into Georgia the following spring.¹⁴ During the winter of 1863-1864, Chattanooga was transformed into the center for Union military activity across the western frontier.¹⁵ Many affluent white residents had fled the city earlier that summer, abandoning their slaves and property as they sought refuge from impending federal troops. Over the next several months, Chattanooga's free Black and former slave populations were joined by hundreds of African American refugees from rural counties in Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia.

A prominent Quaker abolitionist farmer named Joshua Beck owned most of the property on the north side of the Tennessee River in what is today North Chattanooga/ Hill City. His farm had been an important stop on the Underground Railroad during the antebellum period. Following the defeat of General Bragg at the Battle of Chattanooga, Beck donated a portion of his farm to African American refugees who migrated into the city to seek political asylum from the federal government.¹⁶

African American refugees were referred to as "contraband" by the Federal troops and the site where they resided came to be known as "Camp Contraband."¹⁷ Although it lacked basic infrastructure improvements and its residents lived in tents and makeshift houses that barely protected them from the natural elements, visitors to the site noted the pride that its residents exhibited when describing the settlement. By November 26, 1864, more than 3,893 refugees lived in the Camp, while "hundreds more poured in each day."¹⁸ Immediately after seizing Chattanooga, Union officers began enlisting Camp Contraband residents into the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.).

¹⁴Evans, E. R. (2003). *Contributions by United States Colored Troops (USCT) of Chattanooga & North Georgia during the American Civil War, Reconstruction and formation of Chattanooga*. Chickamauga, Ga: B.C.M. Foster.

¹⁵ Govan and Livingood 1976, Evans 2003.

¹⁶ Hubbard (2007), Scott (2008), Evans (2003 + 2012).

¹⁷ Following the U.S. Civil War, Camp Contraband evolved into an autonomous Black township named Hill City.

¹⁸ Scott (2008), page 12.



Illustration 4.1: View of Camp Contraband Facing Lookout Mountain (1864) (Image Source: Evans (2003))

Colonel Thomas J. Morgan led the 14th U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment into Chattanooga on February 24, 1864. The regiment constructed a camp (“Camp Whipple”) on the eastern slope of Cameron Hill overlooking downtown Chattanooga. Colonel Morgan argued that the 14th U.S.C.T. troops played a formative role in shaping public opinions about the value of African American soldiers. The regiment’s seriousness and integrity were on constant public display from their base at Camp Whipple. Colonel Morgan recalled:

Our camp was laid out with great regularity; our quarters were substantial, comfortable and well kept. The regiment numbered a thousand men, with a full complement of field, staff, line and non-commissioned officers. We had a good drum corps, and a band provided with a set of expensive silver instruments. We were also fully equipped; the men were armed with rifled muskets, and well clothed. They were well drilled in the manual of arms, and took great pride in appearing on parade with arms burnished, belts polished, shoes blackened, clothes brushed, in full regulation uniform, including white gloves. On every pleasant day our parades were witnessed by officers, soldiers and citizens from the North, and it was not uncommon to have two thousand spectators. Some came to make sport,

some from curiosity, some because it was the fashion, and others from a genuine desire to see for themselves what sort of looking soldiers Negroes would make... Our evening parades converted thousands to a belief in colored troops. It was almost a daily experience to hear the remark from visitors, 'Men who can handle their arms as these do, will fight.' General Thomas paid the regiment the compliment of saying that he 'never saw a regiment go through the manual as well as this one.' We remained in "Camp Whipple" from February 1864 until August 1865, a period of eighteen months, and during the large part of that time the regiment was an object lesson to the army, and helped to revolutionize public opinion on the subject of colored soldiers.¹⁹

Over the course of their eighteen month stay in Chattanooga, members of the 14th Regiment U.S.C.T. were responsible for defortifying and restoring the city in the aftermath of the Battles for Chattanooga. Typically, African American troops had to perform the hardest, least desirable manual labor. They disassembled stockades, filled ditches, collected unused explosives, repaired roads and railway tracks, and collected and buried the dead. When Major General George Henry Thomas ordered the construction of the Chattanooga National Cemetery as a place to inter Union soldiers who fell in combat during the Battle of Chattanooga, U.S.C.T. troops prepared the 75-acre site, dug the graves, and buried the fallen soldiers. By 1870 more than 12,000 interments had been made, most of whom were unknown. Many nearby battlefield burials were also reinterred in Chattanooga, including nearly 1,500 burials from the Battle of Chickamauga.²⁰

Race and Place in New South Chattanooga

African American placemaking and citybuilding efforts before and during the Civil War set a precedent for Black activism and community engagement during the postwar Reconstruction period. In the decades that followed the fall of the Confederacy, Chattanooga underwent rapid economic and industrial expansion. The number of manufacturing

¹⁹Morgan quoted in Evans (2003), page 52.

²⁰*Ibid*, page 75.

establishments more than doubled between 1860 and 1870, from 22 to 58 establishments, respectively.

In her historical account of community building in New South Chattanooga, Scott (2008) noted that businessman and former mayor John T. Wilder had described the city as “the freest town on the map.”²¹ For decades, the city had had a reputation as a liberal bastion where African Americans could access certain economic and social opportunities not afforded elsewhere in the Deep South. This perception of freedom, coupled with the massive expansion of Black settlements across the city during the mid-1860’s, made Chattanooga a highly desirable destination for African Americans seeking urban alternatives to sharecropping in the aftermath of the war.

Figure 4.1 on the next page shows population growth by race in Hamilton County between 1860 and 1940. By 1870, African Americans comprised nearly one-quarter (N=4,133 or 24.3%) of the county population. Ten years later Hamilton County’s total population had grown to 23,642, and African Americans comprised nearly one in three residents (N=7,399 or 31.3%). During the same period, the total number of individuals employed in manufacturing quadrupled, rising from 541 to 2,133. A period of massive industrial expansion began in the 1880’s. By 1890, more than six thousand workers (N=6,368) were employed at one of the county’s three hundred thirty six manufacturing businesses. Another way to assess Chattanooga’s economic growth during this period is to compare manufacturing investments and output values: between 1860 and 1890, total investments increased from \$209,300 to \$8,133,499, (+3786%) while output values increased from \$395,380 to \$11,264,969 (+2749%).²²

²¹ Scott (2008), page 35.

²² U.S. Census Bureau (1860-1900). Population and manufacturing statistics. Accessed online via <http://www.sociaexplorer.com>.

Although African Americans historically comprised less than one-third of the county’s population, they were the majority population living in the urban core. Thousands of families moved to the city looking for work in its rapidly industrializing west and south sides. In the thirty year period between 1860 and 1890, Hamilton County’s African American community grew by nearly 1000%, from 1,611 to 17,717 individuals.

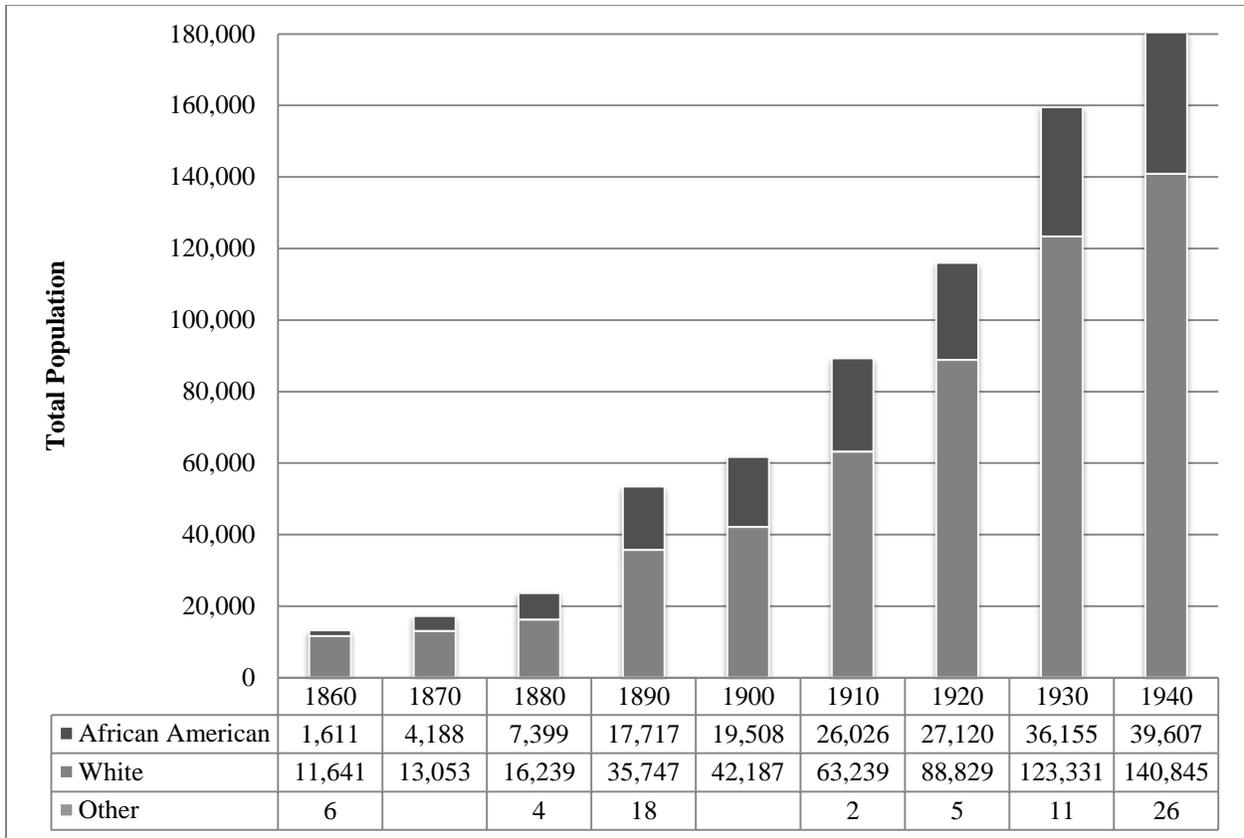


Figure 4.1: Population in Hamilton County by Race, 1860—1940 (Sources: US Census Bureau, Social Explorer)

Diasporic Placemaking in the Dynamo of Dixie

Almost immediately, Black Chattanooga established churches, schools, banks, health care practices and other social services to serve their community.²³ In 1865, E.O. Tade of the Freedmen’s Bureau established the Howard School as a public high school for African

²³ Hubbard (2007), Scott (2008).

Americans. The Howard School was the first free public school in Chattanooga and one of the first public education institutions for Blacks in the postwar South. Initially, the school inhabited a former Confederate hospital building on Broad Street, but it soon relocated to the burgeoning Black cultural center on East Ninth Street.²⁴ By 1877, Chattanooga's public school system had 1,538 white and 883 "colored" pupils attending classes.²⁵

An unauthored newspaper article from the late 1860's captured the enthusiasm with which African Americans worked to save money and carve out places of material security across postwar Chattanooga, contending that the Black community was "thriving" and would inevitably share in the comforts of middle class life:

One of the surest tests of the thrift and unthrift of a class of men is had be observing their use or non-use of the Savings Bank. This test it is very easy to apply to the colored people lately made free to manage their own concerns. Here, in Chattanooga, a branch of the National Freedman's Saving and Trust Company was established about thirteen months ago. The freedmen themselves knew nothing of such things, and all the whites that despise or that hate the blacks made themselves very active in creating distrust of the bank and its manager. But in spite of all this, the business of the Chattanooga branch has grown, and is now growing faster than ever before. Last week the Cashier went down the Alabama and Chattanooga Railway, among the colored laborers below Gadsden, and in three days' time received on deposit from them very near \$5.000. If there are any white laborers and mechanics near Chattanooga that are putting away as much cash as these freedmen, we should be glad to make it known. The short of it is, the Freedmen are earning and saving and are investing a great deal of money; and the time is not very far ahead when they will be extremely comfortable and well to-do class.²⁶

African Americans business and civic leaders were eager to gain positions as elected officials and public sector employees, which they understood to be crucial to the empowerment and fair representation of Black communities in city and county politics. A total of five African

²⁴ For more information about the Howard School and the work of the Freedmen's Bureau's E.O. Tade, see Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

²⁵ Hubbard (2007).

²⁶ Retrieved from the Chattanooga Public Library's Local History archive on African American-related news clippings. Chattanooga, TN.

American men were elected as aldermen in the city during the Reconstruction period: George Sewell (1871-1872), Robert Marsh (1873-1874), D. Medlow (1875-1876), W.C. Hodge (1878-1879) and W.B. Kennedy (1878-1879) (Wright 1999, Hubbard 2008). Additionally, two African Americans were appointed to replace white officers in the Chattanooga Police Commission in October 1880: W.A. Henderson, who represented the 2nd Ward, and A.F. Thompson, who represented the 2nd and 4th Wards, respectively.²⁷

Dismantling Reconstruction

Unfortunately, the institutionalized political gains won during the Reconstruction Period proved to be short lived. Almost immediately, white Republican leaders came to see growing Black political power as a threat to their own relatively privileged social positions and began to actively conspire against Black voters.²⁸

Faced with the reality of African Americans being allowed to move freely about the city, and having no legal right to expropriate their labor for manual city-building activities, the Chattanooga's Board of Aldermen passed laws establishing a municipal "chain gang" (1871)²⁹ and a county workhouse (1878), charging that "work-house convicts, when not confined in the city prison, shall be under the control and management of the boss of the street force, who shall work the same under the direction of the City Engineer and Street Committee, upon the streets, alleys, etc. of the city."³⁰ Although these forced labor regulations did not formally target African Americans, local historians agree that Black residents (especially working age Black men) were

²⁷ *Chattanooga Times*, October 27, 1880, p.2.

²⁸ For the most detailed account of the rise and fall of Black elected political power during the Reconstruction period, see DuBois, W. E. B., & Lewis, D. L. (1998). *Black reconstruction in America*. New York: Free Press.

²⁹ Chattanooga City Ordinance No. 84, January 24, 1871.

³⁰ Chattanooga City Ordinances 132-134, May 29, 1878.

disproportionately arrested on vagrancy charges and other nonviolent misdemeanors. As such, they comprised the majority of prisoners confined to the chain gang and county workhouse.³¹

A *Chattanooga Times* editorial published one week after the appointments of W.A. Henderson and A.F. Thompson to the Police Commission in 1880 illuminated the racist paternalism undergirding white Republicans' sentiments towards Blacks during this critical period of social transition. The editorialists argued that stacking municipal committees with "wholly unfit" individuals "simply in order to keep the negroes solid for the Republican ticket" was a violation of the "rights and interests of the great body of taxpayers."

The authors cloaked their prejudice in a thinly veiled discourse of political/ civic rationality. They claimed that it was not the appointment of African Americans to public office in and of itself that was the problem. Rather, they argued that affirmative action policies replaced qualified candidates, the majority of whom happened to be white, with unskilled laymen ill-prepared for the "delicate and onerous duties of a peace officer."³²

Regulating Race in Private Space

At the same time that white Republicans were mobilizing against African American gains in the local municipal structure, a series of anti-miscegenation campaigns were setting the grounds for the rise of Jim Crow segregation laws across the city. The City had for decades enforced Sundown laws which severely restricted the ability of African Americans to congregate and move freely around the city. Although formal housing segregation laws would not

³¹ Evans (2003).

³² The editorial continued: "We have no objection to the negro in any station that he is fit to fill. Not one in five hundred of them is at all capable of discharging the delicate and onerous duties of a peace officer. Very few of them have the judgment and discretion required for such a place. A good officer must be a man of superior coolness, courage, independence and honesty. Few white men obtainable for such service, more than half fill the bill" (*Chattanooga Times*, October 28, 1880).

developer until the first decade of the twentieth century, informal campaigns against the comingling of whites and Blacks were in practice on the eve of the Reconstruction period.

A *Chattanooga Times* article published on February 21, 1885, called public attention to “Tadetown,” a neighborhood in present day Fort Wood wherein a “low class of both races and all sexes [had] been living indiscriminately.” The reporter lambasted the “wholesale intermarriage of whites and blacks” and went on to describe the “startling sensation” encountered in Tadetown at a church where a rogue minister had been illegally marrying interracial couples. After mocking the minister and his congregation, the reporter assured readers that “the officers of the law have the matter in hand and the mind will be spring in a day or two.”³³

A newspaper article published five months later described the arrest of another interracial couple in downtown Chattanooga. The author mocked Frank and Mary Peacock’s skin tones as well as her inability to determine her racial heritage. “The woman is to all appearance a full blooded white,” the reporter gossiped. “She knows nothing of her parents, except her mother was very dark, but is unable to say whether she was a mulatto or white woman. Frank Peacock, her husband, is as black as tar. The couple has one child.”³⁴

³³ The reporter described the encounter at Tadetown as follows: “The arrest of James and Nancy Robinson on the charge of miscegenation has developed a most startling sensation, and one which is now receiving the attention of the authorities. For some months rumors have been afloat that a colored minister named Susine was openly advocating intermarriage of whites and blacks from the pulpit, and was sowing seeds which soon begun to bear fruit. He argued that there was no reason why a negro should be prohibited from marrying a white person, and that the law was a relic of barbarism, and a heritage of slavery... His church had a very large congregation, and when his ideas became known a degraded class of whites and blacks flocked to his church and seemed greatly gratified over his views. It is stated that a low class of both races and all sexes have been living indiscriminately in the vicinity of Tadetown, and soon plucked up enough courage, backed by the arguments of the preacher, to join their fortunes in marriage. In procuring their marriage license, of course, the color of the contracting parties was not truthfully given. Armed with the license, the preacher made short work of the ceremony. It is reported that this practice has been in progress among the denizens of that locality for some months, until now there are a score of more of whites and blacks who live together as man and wife. The officers of the law have the matter in hand and the mind will be spring in a day or two” (*Chattanooga Times*, February 21, 1885, p.6).

³⁴ *Chattanooga Times*, July 22, 1885.

Maintaining the Color Line

Chattanooga capitalists and policymakers relied heavily on low-paying African American labor to expand urban infrastructure and financial profits during the city's ascendance to the "Dynamo of Dixie" in the late nineteenth century. Importantly, the narrative of racial harmony came back into play as Chattanooga was pitched to Northern businessmen as a connected, cosmopolitan city with plentiful natural resources and inexhaustible cheap labor.³⁵ On one level, these positions opened up new economic opportunities for African Americans, providing employment and lifestyle alternatives to rural sharecropping.

These depictions of Chattanooga as a tolerant city free from racial antipathy did not accurately reflect the realities of daily life for most African Americans living in downtown Chattanooga. The majority of African American households lived in substandard rental housing, three African American men were brutally lynched by white mobs between 1885 and 1906, and the Klan, though perhaps not as active as they were in some of deeper southern cities, had an irrefutable presence in Chattanooga and Hamilton County.³⁶

Moreover, low paying industrial 'opportunities' were not afforded because business owners felt morally obligated to freedmen or remorseful about historical injustices suffered by

³⁵ The *Chattanooga City Guide* was published in 1900 as a marketing device to attract northern industrial investors into the city. The boosters who authored it declared that "Chattanooga is one of the least southern of the South's great cities. Before, during and for a long time after the War Between the States, the stragglng community and region round were of definite Union inclinations. There people are from every section of the country, and the city is remarkably cosmopolitan. The sectionalism that was found in many parts of the South never existed in Chattanooga. The speech is neither northern nor southern, but a definite blending of the two. The Republican Party has been the dominant political force and until recent years polled a sizeable and occasionally conclusive vote" (*Chattanooga City Guide* 1900, page 10).

³⁶ The first individual lynched in Chattanooga was Charlie Williams on September 6, 1885. Additionally, Alfred Blount and Ed Johnson were dragged from the city jail and lynched from the Walnut Street Bridge on February 14, 1893 and March 19, 1906, respectively. Both men were accused of raping white women, and both maintained their own innocence even as they were brutally and publicly murdered. The Walnut Street Bridge was completed in 1901 and was the first bridge connecting the historically Black town of Hill City to downtown Chattanooga. Several local historians claim that the local Ku Klux Klan chapter publicly vowed to lynch an African American from every one of the bridge's 100-plus iron trusses as a threat to keep Blacks from crossing the river and entering the city (Chris Brooks, personal communication , 15 December 2012).

African Americans in the southeast. To the contrary, as more African Americans migrated into Chattanooga searching for honest work, business owners took them on primarily as unskilled laborers. At the same time, the newly formed Chamber of Commerce coordinated an agenda to further consolidate political and economic power into the hands of white property owners.

In December 1887, the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce adopted its first set of bylaws. The Chamber charged themselves with “promoting and fostering the commercial, mineral, manufacturing and other material interests of, and the architectural and other improvements of the City of Chattanooga and its vicinity...also to encourage immigration.”³⁷

The immigration agenda articulated by the Chamber was a direct response to demands from the local African American community to have elected representation in municipal and county affairs. Rather than acknowledge past racial injustices and attempt to build more equitable economic and social structures moving forward, local leaders opted to further dilute local African American political and social power by attracting large numbers of low wage, European immigrants’ labor to the city, which would render Black labor and votes obsolete.

What is most interesting about these late nineteenth and early twentieth century promotional materials is how the constructions of urban citizenship and cosmopolitanism were positioned in direct contrast to the community building and placemaking activities of African Americans. Local leaders preferred the southward migration of white northerners and foreign born immigrants to the region over the influx of newly emancipated African Americans, many of whom had been living in the region for generations. In a dystopian vision of a post-Black Chattanooga, one prominent citizen published a *Historical Guide to Chattanooga and Lookout Mountain* (1889) wherein he assured visitors and potential investors that Chattanooga’s

³⁷ Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce (1890). *Report of the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce*, page 82.

intelligent citizens would solve the “negro problem” by encouraging European immigration so as to edge African Americans out of employment opportunities:

The negro problem is creating some anxiety among thoughtful citizens, but the influx of Americans from the North, and of foreigners from Germany and Ireland, will solve that problem. The writer will not live to see the pressing southward of that unfortunate race by this invasion from the north and from beyond seas. But the negro has been pressed southward from New England, and his destiny is as assuredly southward as was the Indian's destiny westward... Within fifty years the Negro will be as infrequent in the valleys of Chattanooga and Lookout as he now is in the valley of the Genuessee in New York. Chattanooga is thoroughly cosmopolitan. All good people who desire to make an honest living are sought after. The gates of the city swing inward to welcome all such, for the commingling of the blood of northerner and southerner will produce the most vigorous race known to the annals of humanity. Such a race will have but one Law, one Union, one God.³⁸

In Connor’s view, the “commingling of blood” between white ethnic groups guaranteed the evolution of the most vigorous and cosmopolitan society in human history, whereas African Americans, in contrast, were depicted as lacking culture and the antithesis of all “good people who desire to make an honest living.”³⁹

Dividing and Conquering

The substantial in-migration of African Americans during Chattanooga’s rise as a New South industrial city was seen at once as a blessing and a curse. For capitalists and industrial business owners, incoming Blacks were perceived as a major laboring class who could be paid

³⁸ Connor, G. C. (1889). *Historical guide to Chattanooga and Lookout Mountain: With descriptions of the battles, battle-fields, climate, industries, minerals, timber, etc.* Chattanooga: T.H. Payne Co..Page 16.

³⁹ The desire to replace African American labor with European immigrant labor extended to both private residence and factory. The 1890 annual report of the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, for example, proclaimed that European immigrant recruitment policies would be a boon to the city: “Chattanooga is a good field for the introduction of efficient house servants. Good white gardeners would be demanded also, and this would grow if there was any supply. The man or company who should settle a colony of Germans, Swedes, Irish, on some of the cheap and fertile lands within easy reach of Chattanooga will be a benefactor of the immigrants and confer a signal benefit on the people at large. An infusion of this kind would stimulate our home workers to closer attention in their contracts, and work much improvement in the present methods of small farming, trucking, fruit raising, and give those who are able and willing to pay liberally for the best domestic service a chance to protect themselves from the unreliability and efficiency of the average negro house servant” (1890, 22).

unskilled wages. But to white laborers, particularly those lacking advanced manufacturing skills, an African American presence on work sites were perceived as a threat to white economic gains.

Local capitalists took advantage of this tension to further divide and conquer their labor pools. The *Chattanooga Times* reported on February 28, 1885, that the Chattanooga Stove Works had forced between 75 and 80 white laborers to train their African American replacements prior to being let go from their positions.⁴⁰ Two years later, the “color line [was] drawn” when thirty white women and girls working in a canning factory were fired and replaced with African American workers after they went on strike to protest the hiring of Black women to assist with peeling and canning a large tomato shipment.⁴¹ On April 30, 1889, the *Chattanooga Times* reported that the Lookout Iron Mill dismissed an “entire force of 150 [white, unionized] hands” and replaced them with nonunionized, African American workers imported from Richmond, Virginia. The newspaper concluded that “a small squad of police were detailed to guard the Johnson boarding house, where the new Negro workmen are stopping... [because] It was suspected that some of the ex-mill hands might make a night raid.”⁴²

Although no violent raid occurred against the Richmond Iron workers, the perceived threat against white labor was met with the same racist violence and murder characteristic of other Southern cities in the post-Reconstruction period. Despite these threats to person and property, leaders in Chattanooga’s African American community organized relentlessly to secure elected positions in the city.⁴³ Unsurprisingly, their efforts to demand rights and practice self-

⁴⁰*Chattanooga Times*, February 28, 1885, p.6.

⁴¹*Chattanooga Times*, August 3, 1887.

⁴²*Chattanooga Times*, April 30, 1889.

⁴³A *Chattanooga Times* article published in May 1886 details one of these efforts: “Sixty seven colored men, denominated as the kickers, met in the circuit court room of the Court House last night to bear the report of a committee of fifteen appointed at a previous meeting to select which of the county offices they would demand of the white Republicans... W.A. Manning...denounced the white Republicans for their treatment of the colored men and said if the “niggers” did not scramble for themselves they would never receive office... W.C. Hodge took the floor

determination were often met with mocking ridicule from the press and other white institutions in the city, who misrepresented their campaigns to reinforce stereotypes about African Americans as ungrateful, unruly and prone to interracial violence. These stereotypes reinforced the moral and cultural superiority that most whites felt over African Americans and made them feel justified in their actions to exploit African American labor for the sake of personal gains via urban development and economic expansion.

Communal Separatism in the Eastern Flats

A growing autonomous Black community called Hill City had evolved on the north bank of the Tennessee River at the site of Camp Contraband. However, the lack of a bridge connecting the north and south shores made it difficult for Hill City residents to interact with African American neighborhoods in the historic core.⁴⁴ Faced with ongoing physical and emotional violence and physical dislocation, a group of African Americans from the south shore decided to form their own autonomous municipality in the unincorporated flats that comprise present-day East Chattanooga.

With development pressures mounting across south shore urban core, a *Chattanooga Times* article published on December 5, 1887, reported that Hamilton County was going to become home to the first independent “negro city on American soil.” Named “Bushtown” by its founders, the article confirmed that:

Hamilton County has an anomaly in the form of a town composed entirely of negroes. Some months ago the advance in real estate in the city forced a large number of negroes

and spoke in favor of adopting the [manifesto] report. He thought it was time for the colored men to assert themselves. He was tired of voting for white men and heaping honors on them and receiving nothing in return for the colored race. The colored men composed a majority of the Republican party in Hamilton County and were going to have an office and some of the “boodle.” If the white Republicans did not like the steps being taken by the colored man they would have to eat crow. H.N. Hutchins denounced the white Republicans for their treachery and said the colored people would have to help themselves or get left” (*Chattanooga Times*, May 8, 1886, 5).

⁴⁴ Scott (2008), Evans (2012).

from the valuable hill tops, and they decided to locate on a strip of ground... in a natural grove. They were soon joined by others of the race, and a building boom ensued. Houses followed in rapid succession, and at one time thirty were in course of erection at the same time. There are now about 110 houses in the settlement, and the population numbers about 800. Streets have been laid out and the Belt railroad comes within a short distance of the town. A church and school house have been erected, also four stores and a number of two story dwellings have been built... The best class of colored people are moving there, the class who own their own homes and are regularly employed. Of the 800 persons now residing there, all are colored except one family and they live at the outskirts of the town... Steps will be taken in the spring to incorporate the town and it will be the first negro city on American soil. Of course, the mayor and all the city functionaries, teachers, ministers, store keepers will be of the colored race. The progress of the community will be watched with great interest, as it will demonstrate the fact whether or not negroes can successfully administer the affairs of a large community without the assistance of the whites.⁴⁵

Despite ridicule, paternalism, and occasionally violence from whites living in Chattanooga, the story of Bushtown's settlement illustrates how African Americans in the city persisted in carving out spaces of material security and cultural belonging.

Cosmopolitanism as Concealment

As previously mentioned, these diasporic placemaking successes were often emphasized by the city's white business leaders, who wanted to attract Northern industrialists to the city under the guise that the city was liberal and racially tolerant. The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce's annual report from 1890, for example, described the success of African Americans in unskilled laboring positions, and emphasized that "in the skilled employments they yearly become more numerous."⁴⁶ A City Guide published in 1900 meant to attract capital into the "Dynamo of Dixie" similarly stressed the economic, social and cultural opportunities available for African Americans. The authors bragged that:

Chattanooga Negroes are on every economic level. Some are on relief, many work in factories or foundries, and others monopolize domestic service. Chattanooga has been and

⁴⁵ *Chattanooga Times*, December 5, 1887, 6.

⁴⁶ Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce (1890). *Report of the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce*, page 22.

remains nearly free from racial maladjustment. The politicians have found a place for Negroes in the political machines, a procedure simplified by the highly reasonable attitude taken by leaders of both, operating through an inter-racial committee. Most picturesque are the all-day-and-night dances on the southwest side, the rummage sales at Five Points, and the policy marts of Ninth Street. There are colored lodges of the Masons and Knights of Pythias, a local chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, local YMCA and YWCA, and numerous churches of many denominations.⁴⁷

Although the successes highlighted above are impressive, one must keep in mind that the gains experienced by African Americans living and working in downtown Chattanooga during the New South period were entirely of their own making. Often, their successes were earned despite, and/ or in spite of, coordinated efforts by liberal whites to keep Black residents in their place.

Powerful, white-led institutions like the Chamber of Commerce appropriated these gains, claiming they were indicative of a sophisticated urban center “nearly free from racial maladjustment.”⁴⁸ Public marketing documents like the *Chattanooga City Guide* also had the effect of naturalizing uneven geographic development and environmental inequity in place. As discussed in the case of Bushtown, African Americans, regardless of their economic class, were dislocated from the lands they occupied as real estate and land redevelopment pressures mounted across the city. Poor and working class communities of color in particular were vulnerable to these forced and induced evictions, as the majority of households were renters or squatters who resided near the industrial plants and factories where they worked.

Instead of acknowledging how low income communities had been forced into unsafe, unsanitary geographic lowlands, urban boosters juxtaposed overcrowded, polluted living

⁴⁷ Federal Writers' Project. Tennessee. (1900). *Chattanooga city guide*. S.I: s.n., page 8-9.

⁴⁸ In Chapter 5 of this dissertation, I will argue that cultural appropriation and the construction of an institution-driven narrative of racial harmony and reconciliation continue to drive economic development in the post-industrial, cultural tourism-driven economy of 21st century Chattanooga.

conditions against the “stable...above average conditions” of more affluent Black neighborhoods.⁴⁹

But the uncritical optimism from city boosters was often contradicted by African American residents who had personally experienced discrimination and exclusion from emerging economic and social opportunity structures on the basis of their skin tones. The *Biography and Achievements of the Colored Citizens of Chattanooga* (1904) described a hopelessness felt by the majority of local African American citizens residing in the city. Many had migrated to Chattanooga under the auspices of its liberalism and relative racial tolerance. These families arrived eager to work hard and expecting to find legitimate economic opportunities in return. Instead, many Black Chattanoogans encountered racist stereotypes and low wage, hard labor jobs.⁵⁰

Despite the de facto belief “Thus far shalt thou go,” the booklet highlighted the political, economic and cultural successes of nearly one hundred prominent African American

⁴⁹ The *Guide* continued: “Nearly one-third of Chattanooga’s population is made up of Negroes, who tend to live close to their work—either domestic service or industrial. They usually occupy the depressions and bases of higher elevations, and sometimes the entire areas, where smoke and dirt are bad. There is a racial gradient, especially noticeable on Cameron Hill, Bluff View, and Fort Wood Hill, where Negroes live in the hollows and on the low banks of hills, while the white residents occupy the upper slopes and crests... The main Negro residential areas are Churchville, College Hill, Tannery Flats, Bushtown and Fort Choatham. Houses range from well-kept homes, seen in some sections of College Hill and on East 8th Street, to the barest possible shelters of South Chattanooga and Tannery Flats. In Churchville, regarded as the most stable Negro community, living conditions are above the average. The residents occupy neat single, duplex and small tenement houses. The contrast is the situation in the College Hill area where the industrial menace of smoke and smell has driven out previous dwellers, and where there are seven or eight Negro families to the house” Federal Writers' Project. Tennessee. (1900). *Chattanooga city guide*. S.l.: s.n., page 8.

⁵⁰The authors of the volume described the discrimination encountered as thus: “Of those who, in a climate where nigh al the labor they are called upon to perform, is so arduous as to keep those who most readily make this charge, at a distance. It is said with much reason however, that as a worker he is careless, irresponsible and therefore unskillful. While we ourselves have seen no convincing evidence that the negro is below others here, we should be much surprised if conditions such as confront him, fail to produce the above named characteristics. We believe too little has been said when considering this charge, of the correlation of good wages and good work. But aside from wages there is another and even greater inventive to good work, of which the negro is generally deprived. The laborer, who would be most worthy of his hire, is the one that has ever before him a reasonable hope of advancement. But the negro knows such hope, for at every turn in the great field of labor he is met with the energy crushing “Thus far shalt thou go.” The men who would bring Southern labor to par in skill with that of other sections must first enlarge the field of opportunity” (1904, page 1).

entrepreneurs, educators, ministers, politicians, doctors, lawyers and philanthropists living in downtown Chattanooga and Hill City. This document also revealed the sense of collective unity and mutual aid driving diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga's African American communities. The report highlighted several benevolent societies, mutual aid associations, ministries, schools, colleges and cooperative businesses. The Rising Sun Manufacturing Company, for example, was an industrial workers' cooperative and foundry located on Harrison Avenue (now East Third Street) near Lincoln Park. The foundry manufactured a variety of iron specialty products and was lauded as "the only enterprise of its kind owned and controlled by Negroes in this section."⁵¹

The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow

Eager to prevent the comingling of whites and Blacks in the rapidly expanding city, local policymakers began to implement "Jim Crow" laws in Chattanooga and across the Southeast. Public schools had been segregated since before the Civil War, but the State of Tennessee is credited for having enacted the first postwar "Jim Crow" law when it mandated racial segregation on passenger trains in 1881.⁵² The first municipal Jim Crow ordinances specific to Chattanooga involved the separation of whites and Blacks on streetcars (1905) followed by a housing segregation law passed in North Chattanooga (1915), an almost exclusively white, affluent community that bordered Hill City.

Worried that integrated blocks would depreciate the value of their modernized real estate, white residents persuaded the Commission to adopt 'progressive' separate-but-equal housing legislation that outlawed both Blacks and whites from moving into homes on streets that were

⁵¹ *Ibid*, page 83.

⁵² Most scholars locate the origins of Jim Crow laws in the 1881 Tennessee passenger train code, although some legal historians argue Chapter 130 (1876), which permitted race-based discrimination in public and private establishments across the state, set the first legal precedent. For more information, see the State of Tennessee (2013). *Jim Crow and Disfranchisement of Southern Blacks*. Accessed online at: <http://www.tn.gov/tsla/exhibits/blackhistory/jimcrow.htm>

populated primarily by members of the opposite race. The regulations were rooted in the same racist paternalism which that had characterized local urban policy since before Cherokee removal (1838). Proponents claimed the law avoided the racist tropes characteristic of Jim Crow housing laws in other Southern cities because it similarly restricted whites *and* blacks from residing beside one another. In this sense, the ordinance did not unduly target one race and was perceived as being adopted in the best interest of all citizens.⁵³

Resisting the Color Line

The formal adoption of Jim Crow policies in Chattanooga was met with ongoing resistance from African American residents who saw through the “separate but equal” rationales used to segregate the races. Randolph Miller, an ex-slave who had moved to the city during the Union occupation and worked as a pressman for several white-owned newspapers before launching his paper to serve Chattanooga’s Black community, *The Chattanooga Blade*, worked with several prominent African American businessmen to launch a streetcar strike in July 1905. Outraged that local policymakers were relegating African Americans to substandard transit accommodations despite their ability to pay for first class services, the group proposed a Black owned and managed transit company so that local African Americans could “be transported with dignity and respect” around the city.⁵⁴ Between July and early October, Miller and his collaborators organized and ran a three route, horse drawn streetcar “hack line” system that connected outlying Black communities to employment centers and the central business district.

⁵³ The journalist reported with enthusiasm that “The ordinance was carefully written, based on similar ordinances in other cities, but with all the objectionable or unconstitutional features eliminated. It places restriction on one race as much as it does the other, the one that happens to be in the majority receiving the chief benefit. Mayor Voigt has received many compliments on his segregation ordinance. The North Chattanooga seem to feel proud of the fact they not only are to soon have a complete sewerage system, but they are also the only exclusively white city of its size in the state” (*Chattanooga Daily Times*, November 10, 1915).

⁵⁴ Hubbard (2007), page 65.

The service began on July 16, 1905, and at five cents per ride, quickly reached ridership capacity. Immediately, influential white leaders called for an end to the hack lines, arguing that they promoted a “spirit of resentment” between the races.⁵⁵

Despite these protests, Miller’s horse-powered, three-train streetcar program serviced Chattanooga’s Black community for the next four months. Ultimately, it was shut down by municipal officials. Miller turned the misfortune into an opportunity to publicly speak out against de facto and de jure racism in the city. In an October 1905 issue of *The Chattanooga Blade*, Miller issued the following outcry against local urban injustice: “they have taken our part of the library; they have moved our school to the frog pond; they have passed the Jim Crow law; they have knocked us out of the jury box; they have played the devil generally, and what in thunder more will they do no one knows.”⁵⁶

Although Miller’s streetcar system was dismantled, the 1906 streetcar boycotts inspired many individual acts of protest in the subsequent decades. Their work inspired the development of underground “jitney” taxi companies which have served Chattanooga’s Black communities since 1921.⁵⁷ In one action that predated the famous 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott by more than three decades, “Minerva Dethrody violated the “Jim Crow” law—she got on the North Chattanooga streetcar, seated herself in a section “across the line,” and refused to move. The car was held up five minutes until the police could arrive and then she got a “free ride” to headquarters.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Chattanooga Times* (1905) quoted in Hubbard (2007), page 65.

⁵⁶ Randolph Miller (October 1905). *The Chattanooga Blade*. Quoted in Hubbard (2007), page 65.

⁵⁷ Steinberg, D. H. (1975). *And to think, it only cost a nickell!: The development of public transportation in the Chattanooga area*. Chattanooga, Tenn.

⁵⁸ *The Chattanooga Daily Times* (May 17, 1921) quoted in Steinberg, D. H. (1975). *And to think, it only cost a nickell!: The development of public transportation in the Chattanooga area*. Chattanooga, Tenn. Page 2.

Sweeping Out 'No Jim Crow' Zones

By 1910, Hamilton County's population had soared to 89,267 people. Nearly all twenty six thousand (N=26,026) African American residents resided within the historic urban core. As industrial development expanded on the west and south sides of town, poor and working class residents of both races resided in substandard housing that lacked basic infrastructure. In response to these deplorable conditions, a civic group called "the Women's Club" set out to diagnose and improve the city's urban ills. The women described themselves as "patriotic, energetic, practical and self-denying ladies, inspired by an impulse to do those things for the city which politicians and ordinary men have left undone."⁵⁹

While the urban housekeeping associated with early slum improvement initiatives emphasized physical and social issues such as sanitation, plumbing and fire safety, they were also highly motivated to sweep out personal lifestyles and social activities deemed obscene and inappropriate by upstanding, moral citizens. Activities targeted by the crusaders included living in darkness, alcoholism and substance abuse, gambling, prostitution and presumed idleness.

Arguably, the greatest threat that slum areas posed to social and moral order were their potential to be havens for miscegenation and racial integration. By 1930, African Americans living in Chattanooga had been subject to strict and paternalistic Jim Crow laws for decades. In the sociocultural and political context of Jim Crow-era Chattanooga, racial integration, whether

⁵⁹Reflecting on one particularly abhorrent section of town known as "Cocaine Alley," the reporter recalled how "The little back streetlet, just off from Ninth, where according to tradition, the denizens are wont to apply portions of cocaine to their systems... presumably to alleviate pain, but ostensibly...to harden their sensibilities against the open-faced vileness of their locality... An entire community in this alley depends upon a system of closets that would disgrace the worst environs of the filthiest city in the United States...A distinguished citizen draws rental from these shacks, right in the heart of Chattanooga, and seems to defy the police in their efforts to enforce regulations for the protection of public health. In one section of this block are a series of huts built in the shape of an upper deck of a steamer, and known among the Negroes as "The Boat." If any filthier scene can be imagined than the men of the party witnessed there, it would be a revelation indeed. A prominent real estate man who has the rental of "The Boat" will be seen with reference to the sanitation of the craft, and if something is not done there will be some scuttling" (*Chattanooga Times*, May 16, 1911).

intentional or the unintended consequence of concentrated, racialized poverty, stood in direct defiance to municipal and state laws. During an inspection of an abandoned school located two blocks from City Hall, officials discovered with horror that “No Jim Crow” applied in “Hoboes’ Paradise.” “Men not only sleep there,” the reporter marveled. “A few live there. Whites and Negroes together.”⁶⁰ Several years later, another group described scenes of interracial co-habitation that read like “sordid fiction.” A reporter who accompanied the group described the offense to her readers in an expose article about the tour:

Mr. and Mrs. Average Chattanooga, who live in a clean house, raise clean children and eat decent food, would recoil in horror if they were to enter any one of the four houses at 1716, 1800, 1802 and 1804 Citico Avenue. In the heart of a Negro section, these houses, owned by one of the city’s largest holders of slum property, are occupied by white families.⁶¹

Early housing improvement and clean-up campaigns in Chattanooga and industrial cities across urban America were rooted in the City Beautiful movement, a philosophical and architectural tradition that emphasized infrastructure improvements alongside civic engagement, public space development, cultural development and urban beautification. In March of 1936, the women of Wesley Community Center, a service group associated with the missionary department of the Southern Methodist Church, launched an initiative to “rechristen” a notorious section of town known as “Hell’s Half Acre” into “Sunshine Acre.” Determined to spearhead a “physical as well

⁶⁰ The story went on to describe how some of the squatters were employed in local industries, most were desiring work, many were not actually engaged in illicit activities but had nowhere else to sleep, and public officials had been contributing directly to the problem. “The flop quarters of the city and county jails have been cleaned out,” one squatter told the inspection team, “and men who ask for a place to sleep now are directed to the school house.” In other words, municipal and county officials were exacerbating the unlawful living conditions found in Hoboes’ Paradise by treating the building like a de facto “flop” house. Essentially, they fueled a social situation (i.e. racial intermingling and integration) that they also criminalized and insisted on eradicating through slum removal. The headline from the newspaper article published describing the visit captures the gravity of the public offense: “Hoboes’ Paradise, Abandoned Negro School, Den of Filth, Haunt of Liquor-Soaked Bums: Derelicts from Far and Near, Dope-Shattered Whites and Negroes Infest Eleventh Street Refuge” (*Chattanooga Times*, September 13, 1930, p.8).

⁶¹ Shalett, Sidney (March 28, 1937). “Case Histories of Some Dwellers in Slums Read Like Sordid Fiction” in *Chattanooga Times*. Page 6.

as moral clean-up” of the area, the Wesley group declared their intent to sweep out houses, clear refuse, improve vacant lots, and plant a rose bush in the yards of each of the one hundred properties that comprised the Acre.⁶²

Cloaked in the altruistic rhetoric, the group was explicit about the exact boundaries of the “Sunshine drive” area. Although they acknowledged that there were “to begin with, three ‘Hell’s Half Acres’ in Chattanooga,” the missionary group focused exclusively on “a section of squalid shacks inhabited by white persons.” The other two hellish areas, located in the African American sections of Tannery Flats and Moses Street (South Chattanooga), respectively, were disqualified. These examples of racialized exclusion underscore the culture and policy contexts of low income housing politics and development in Chattanooga. Despite the fact that many white sections were overrun with “bootlegging, assault, drunkenness and other petty crimes,” whites were considered capable of moral and social improvement. In fact, faith-based urban reform associations like the Wesley group considered it their spiritual duty to help poor whites improve their conditions in order to participate fully in the modern cosmopolitan city.

African Americans, in contrast, endured generations of dehumanization and paternalism and were systematically excluded from City Beautiful improvement programs on the grounds that financial investments in Black neighborhoods would fail to produce significant social or moral returns. Though volunteers and public officials readily acknowledged that the unsanitary conditions in many African American sections were the fault of negligent slumlords, African American sections fell outside the scope of civic-oriented urban improvement programs. Their neighborhoods were left to deteriorate further-- with virtually no accountability from the

⁶²Shalett, Sidney (March 18, 1936). “Women Want ‘Hell’s Half Acre’ Rechristened as ‘Sunshine Acre’.” *Chattanooga Times*, page 1.

landlords. Through these processes, Black poverty was naturalized and pathologized in mainstream (i.e. white) public discourse and codified through urban planning and policymaking.

Jim Crow Moves into Public Housing

Slum clearance efforts in Chattanooga ramped up on October 21, 1938 after the United States Housing Authority (the precursor to the Department of Housing and Urban Development) approved loans in eleven cities across the country for inner city slum eradication and low cost housing development.⁶³ The Chattanooga Housing Authority (CHA) was approved for a \$2.262 million loan to cover 90% of redevelopment costs. The CHA was charged with clearing slums and providing low-rent “dwellings for Negroes in the area bounded by Main Street to the South, Grove Street on the West, West Twelfth Street on the north and Poplar Street on the east.”⁶⁴

In a letter written to residents who lived in the redevelopment footprint, CHA chairman P.H. Wood confirmed that “the Chattanooga Housing Authority expects to pay reasonable, fair prices for all the property needed.” However, he clearly distinguished that all options would be negotiated directly with property owners. Low income renters who were the primary population living on the Westside would not be eligible for compensation.⁶⁵

Shortly thereafter, the CHA announced a second award of federal funds to construct a public housing project for white households three miles across town in East Chattanooga. The white project was called East Lake Courts and it was constructed on undeveloped farmland. The project was designed to house 437 families, with rents ranging from \$3.10 per week for a one bedroom apartment to \$3.45 per week for a three bedroom home. By June 1940, both College

⁶³ Authorized by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as part of the New Deal/ WPA urban housing program, U.S.H.A allocated \$29.615 million to provide 5,863 low-cost rental units to as many as 23,000 slum dwellers nationwide.

⁶⁴ *Chattanooga Times* (October 22, 1938). “College Hill Housing Work Given President’s Approval.”

⁶⁵ P.H. Wood instructed residents living on the Westside: “You are hereby requested to make no commitments to any on other than the option takers named in this letter and wait until these option takers have had an opportunity to see you” (*Chattanooga Times* (October 22, 1938). “College Hill Housing Work Given President’s Approval.”

Hill Courts (97 units) and East Lake Courts (437 units) had been constructed and several apartments were open for demonstration tours. These state of the art, garden style buildings were constructed with firewalls, had full plumbing and sanitation systems, fenced in yards with space for kitchen gardens, and they contained novel luxuries like electric heaters and hot water heaters. All utility costs were included in weekly rents.

By September, one hundred twenty five African American families had moved into the Westside development.⁶⁶ By the time the College Hill Courts reached full capacity in December 1940, tenants had begun to self-organize and were publishing a monthly newsletter to advertise events and activities hosted by the Housing Authority.⁶⁷ Importantly, these associations mark the genesis of a three-quarters century- long legacy of subsidized housing tenants' organizing on the Westside that continues to this day.

Mid-Twentieth Century Urban Transformations

During the twenty year period between 1950 and 1970, downtown Chattanooga underwent massive structural and social transformations. The anti-blight campaigns launched by urban housekeepers during the first four decades reached their peak in 1955 when the Chattanooga Housing Authority secured a U.S.H.U.D. Urban Renewal grant to plan and redevelop the Westside of town. The 435-acre "Golden Gateway Urban Renewal Area" was drawn over a residential, predominantly low income African American section of the Westside. The project was the 4th largest Urban Renewal project nationwide in terms of scale and the 12th largest in terms of total development costs. Illustration 4.2 below shows the former Black

⁶⁶ *Chattanooga Times* (June 18, 1940) "College Hill Apartments Open," page 29; *Chattanooga Times* (September 15, 1940). "Condemnation Board to Inspect 'Unfit' Chattanooga Dwellings," page 3.

⁶⁷ Whitener, T.E. (October 14, 1941). "Housing Authority Ready to Build if Called on to Do So" in *Chattanooga Evening Times*, page 1.

business district along West Ninth Street after it had been designated as blighted and leveled by city planners.



Illustration 4.2: Demolition of West Ninth Street during the Golden Gateway Urban Renewal Project of 1955-1967 (Source: *Chattanooga Times* April 6, 1959)

Similar to the slum eradication programs of the 1930's, the CHA negotiated property acquisitions directly with landlords, not tenants. Although public officials promised the local African American community that no families would be forced out of their homes without first finding a new residence for them, no records were kept to track those commitments. Local officials suggested that all of the dislocated white families would be absorbed by the private housing market, but that very low income African American households would likely need to have additional public housing projects constructed for them. Over the next decade, more than

three thousand households and over one hundred businesses were purchased and demolished by the Chattanooga Housing Authority. By 1960, all that remained in the Urban Renewal site was the First Presbyterian Church and College Hill Courts.

As Urban Renewal planners were coordinating the demolition of the Westside, local policymakers found themselves in the middle of a local racial desegregation battle. On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court issued their ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education in Topeka* which effectively outlawed de jure segregation in public schools. As leaders of a highly segregated city, Chattanooga's elected officials and civic leaders emphasized the language in the ruling that put the responsibility of integration upon local school boards. Maintaining that liberal altruists in power had always acted in "good faith" when it came to local race relations, one editorialist issued the following declaration assuring nervous citizens that the integration of Chattanooga's public schools would only happen when the community consented it was time to do so:

The Supreme Court placed the responsibility upon the local School Boards. It put no time limit on the integration process but merely asked that the Boards act in good faith. The Chattanooga School Board has proved time and again that it acts in no other way but in good faith... The Board says: "We can decide whether our community should take a little step or a big one or a series of little steps over a period of years. But once the Court decides we are not acting in good faith, the court will tell us what to do."⁶⁸

A series of skirmishes between white and African American youth during the winter of 1956 provided further justification to ignore the Supreme Court's ruling and keep public facilities in Chattanooga segregated. The city made national headlines for a race brawl that erupted on January 31, 1956 in Memorial Auditorium after a white spectator tried to force one of Roy

⁶⁸*Chattanooga Times* (October 14, 1955). "Acting in Good Faith."

Hamilton band's employees from a white section of the audience.⁶⁹ One eyewitness to the event described the following scene:

A bunch of white kids up in the balcony were pouring coke and orangeade and other soft drinks down onto the Negroes dancing. Finally some of the Negroes started throwing whisky bottles up at the boys in the balcony. Some of the bottles didn't make it to the balcony and fell down on the floor and crashed.⁷⁰

Embarrassed by the national attention, local boosters issued a public statements expressing their disbelief that such a disruption would occur in a city as liberal and racially tolerant at Chattanooga. "It is ironical that the city which has done so much to foster peaceful relations between the races would be the first Southern city to witness a mass racial demonstration," they declared. "That the bitterness shown by leaders and groups on both sides of the segregation question had a bearing on the brawl cannot be doubted."⁷¹

Although local white leaders emphasized social tolerance, their actions spoke louder than their words. In response to Black activists who demanded the immediate integration of all public facilities, the Chattanooga Board of Education referred to the civil unrest of the previous months to argue that successful integration would not be possible for at least five more years.⁷² When the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed racial segregation on buses the following year, white

⁶⁹ Following the fight, the public auditorium's manager declared: "I will recommend to the board that it bar whites from entering the auditorium while the colored people are having a dance and colored people from entering when a white dance is being held...Every time we have a Negro dance in the auditorium and admit white spectators, those teenage white children, or many of them, will try to get onto the dance floor and dance, not with the Negroes but with themselves. We have a terrible time often, keeping them off the dance floor. Sometimes we have had to put them out of the auditorium. They also try to go back stage and dance back there. It just won't work and I believe the auditorium board will go along on this recommendation." (*Chattanooga Times* (February 1, 1956). "Preach Against Violence."

⁷⁰ *Chattanooga Times* (February 1, 1956). "City will be Asked to Bar Mixed Crowds at Dances."

⁷¹ *Chattanooga Times* (February 1, 1956). "Preach Against Violence."

⁷² The School Board declared: "Events in the last year have convinced the Chattanooga board of education that the community will not accept any form of integration within the city schools at any time within the near future. We therefore, take this opportunity to report to the community our decision to postpone any change in the public schools for a period of at least a few years—probably five years or more." (Gibson, Springer (March 12, 1958). "Negroes Request Integration Now in City's Schools." *Chattanooga Times*.

supremacists waged a campaign of terror against members of the Chattanooga branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.).⁷³

In June 1958, local attorney and Black civic leader James Mapp petitioned the school Board to have the public schools integrated beginning in 1958-59 academic year⁷⁴. Once again, the Chattanooga Board of Education unanimously refused.⁷⁵ Faced with the reality that local policymakers would never voluntarily desegregate the city's facilities, local African Americans decided to take matters into their own hands. On February 19, 1960, thirty Black students from Howard High School staged Chattanooga's first lunch counter demonstrations at the Woolworths and McLellan Stores on Market Street.⁷⁶ Over the next four months, students organized sit-ins at S.H. Kress, Woolworth's, Miller's and Loveman's department stores.⁷⁷ During one demonstration where more than fifty protesters were arrested and charged with loitering and disorderly conduct, white business owners and the Chattanooga Police Department escalated in their response to the nonviolent sit-ins. Officers armed with hastily-constructed billy clubs formed a line and marched the protestors out of the Central Business District while the fire department used their hoses to force the students back into the Black section of East Ninth Street.

⁷³ The *Chattanooga Times* reported that "The US Supreme Court has ruled segregation on buses is unconstitutional. It was in compliance with that ruling that Southern Coach started without public notice the painting out of the segregation signs. Anderson said that the city's responsibility now involves the quelling of disorder if any should arise. Generally, white persons have continued the practice of sitting toward the front of the buses and Negroes toward the rear. There have been instances of Negroes sitting near the front but these instances have not precipitated any disorderly incidents. Police officers early yesterday removed a dummy hanging from the Walnut Street Bridge. On the dummy was written: "All NAACP bus-riding niggers." In the *Chattanooga Times* (January 8, 1957). "Seating Rule on Buses Off," page 1.

⁷⁴ Gibson, Springer (June 12, 1958). "Negroes Request Integration Now in City's Schools."

⁷⁵ Journalist Springer Gibson reported on the statement. The Board maintained that "Every single decision of the Chattanooga board of education is made with one objective in mind: to provide the best possible education for all of the children in Chattanooga... In our combined judgment it would be extremely unwise to comply with the recent request to integrate our public schools at the beginning of the next school term, and it is our decision that the request be denied." Statement issued and unanimously approved by Board of Education (Gibson, Springer (July 10, 1958). "Negroes' Request for Fall Change in Schools Denied."

⁷⁶ Gibson, Springer (February 20, 1960). "Negro Students Stage Sit-downs." *The Chattanooga Times*, page 9.

⁷⁷ *Chattanooga Times* (May 1, 1960). "Counter Sit In's at 4 City Stores."

At the same time that high school students were taking over lunch counters on Market Street, James Mapp and N.A.A.C.P. President Thurgood Marshall filed a lawsuit against the Board of Education meant to forcibly desegregate Chattanooga's public schools.⁷⁸ The national attention wrought by the struggle over integration fueled white resentments. This antipathy was exacerbated by changing neighborhood demographics wrought by urban renewal on the Westside.⁷⁹ Between July 16th and August 22nd, five homes inhabited by African Americans were fire bombed with Molotov cocktails and homemade explosives. Unable to ignore racial strife in the city the Chattanooga Board of Education released a statement in December 1960 declaring it had a three-tiered desegregation plan that would begin in 1962.⁸⁰

Over the next two years, the Civil Rights movement escalated in Chattanooga and across the South. Local protestors boycotted movie theatres, buses, and commercial businesses. By the time Mayor Ralph Kelley persuaded the City Commission to adopt a resolution declaring Chattanooga an open city (1963) where citizens had full rights and access to all public facilities regardless of race, color or creed, local boosters' claims that Chattanooga was the "freest town on the map" had crumbled around them.

⁷⁸ *Chattanooga Times* (May 4, 1960). "Brief Entered in School Case." The downtown disturbances, plus Mapp's threatened lawsuit against the city schools, attracted considerable national media attention. By early June 1960 there were representatives from CBS, NBC, Newsweek, Life Magazine, The New York Times and the United Press covering the events. See also Casteel, Bill (1993). *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, page C1.

⁷⁹ Journalist Springer Gibson, who covered much of Chattanooga's Civil Rights movement during the 1950's and 1960's, reported that "City officials are becoming firmer in support of the theory that the explosions are the work of an organized group for the purpose of terrorizing Negroes. The bombing cases, officials have said, appear to have some connection in each instance with the shortage of Negro housing in the city, resulting in Negroes moving into sections where white persons reside. This shortage has been created by the urban renewal project on the West Side and by the freeway. The Chattanooga Housing Authority has reported several times in recent months that enough safe, sanitary and decent Negro housing has not been supplied for Negroes." (Gibson, Springer (August 24, 1960). "\$1,000 is Added to Reward Funds for Blast Cases." *Chattanooga Times*.

⁸⁰ *Chattanooga Times* (December 21, 1960). "The School Board's Plan." In reality, the Chattanooga Public Schools were not actually fully integrated until 1969, nearly a decade later.

White leaderships' emphasis on urban cosmopolitanism and racial harmony had been exposed for what it really was: a public relations strategy meant to conceal or at least distract from much more sinister racial attitudes and practices meant to keep African Americans in their place. By emphasizing racial harmony, city boosters detracted public attention away from the persistently racialized and unequal economic, political and social opportunity structures undergirding urban planning and development in the city.

Making sense of this complex denial and historical revisionism is a prerequisite to creating a more equitable and racially just city in the future. African American labor and creative placemaking have been central to urbanization and economic expansion in Chattanooga since before the arrival of white settlers, and have undergirded urban growth before, during, and after the abolition of slavery in the United States. Despite their substantial contributions, African American city building has never been treated with the same level of admiration as exhibited to Native Americans. Nor have the centuries-long legacies of exploitation and cultural marginalization been treated with the same levels of remorse or regret.

This chapter explored the politics of African American diasporic placemaking in downtown Chattanooga over the past three centuries to provide historical context to contemporary trends in uneven geographic development and cultural-based revitalization underway across the urban core. By showing how mainstream discourses of urban progress have been racially coded and organized such that Black urban placemaking and community development were positioned as the antitheses to progressive urban cosmopolitanism, I have meant to illuminate a critical double standard at play in both historic and present day city planning and cultural development.

PART II:
DIASPORIC PLACEMAKING IN THE RENAISSANCE CITY

CHAPTER 5:
CHATTANOOGA HOMECOMING:
TOURISM AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE TENNESSEE RIVERFRONT

In this chapter, I use the thirty year-long physical and cultural return to the Tennessee Riverfront to show how public and civic leaders in Chattanooga have used urban planning and placemaking to acknowledge and, arguably, reconcile, with the city's exploitative colonial past. Additionally, I demonstrate the contestability of the mainstream reconciliation narrative by exploring several grassroots cultural organizations' creative, political claims to the riverfront and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Focusing on the riverfront makes sense given its history and current importance to the city's revitalization agenda.¹ The Tennessee Riverfront and areas immediately surrounding Ross's Landing are historically sites of multiracial diasporic placemaking—spaces where overlapping cultural groups have worked with and against one another to carve out communities of material security and cultural belonging. While these diasporic placemaking efforts have occasionally produced new collaborations and deeper affinities, oftentimes they have also resulted in conflict and contestation over physical space and cultural place in the city. Ross's Landing and the Tennessee riverfront more generally are compelling examples of the complex,

¹Sandercock and Dovey (2002) examined the revitalization of the Yarra Riverfront in Melbourne, Australia, noting that “since the 1980's, large-scale waterfront developments have become increasingly design driven, with an imperative to transform the image of the city—its iconography and phenomenology of place” (153). This chapter contributes to the conversation opened up by Sandercock, Dovey, and others about waterfront redevelopment in gentrifying cities by asking how specifically the Tennessee Riverfront's iconography and phenomenology of place have been racially coded, and how these discursive and sociospatial narratives (re)produce landscapes of both ongoing racial oppression and repentance/ symbolic reconciliation.

oftentimes contradictory, nature of socio-spatial production, having been both crucial ports of entry and critical sites of deportation/ removal over the past two centuries.²

Deportation to Destination: Reinterpreting Ross's Landing

Following the removal of the Cherokee in 1838, Chattanooga's riverfront began to industrialize, and by the turn of the twentieth century, much of the downtown riverfront was populated by heavy, water dependent manufacturing facilities. The properties adjacent to the landing underwent many industrial transformations, serving as a location for goods, grain and cotton warehouses; a wagon and cattle yard; a foundry and machine shop; a maritime navigation company; a traveling shovel tramway; a bus repair shop and parking area; a wholesale liquor distributor; a marine hardware manufacturing factory, a scrap iron yard; and a neon sign manufacturing business. Late nineteenth century-era fire insurance maps of the landing area also reveal the presence of low income African American housing ("negro shanties") on and in direct proximity to the site.³

In 1972, Ross's Landing was added to the National Register of Historic Places because of its significance as a Cherokee settlement and its central role during the Trail of Tears. Three years later, a 3,100-foot strip of the site was dedicated as a park, and a small plaque was added to highlight the historical significance of the site. Despite these efforts, the importance of Ross's Landing to Cherokee history and culture was lost to many of the people who lived in or visited the city.⁴

² Soja (2010) argued that we must actively dismantle historical injustices in the present, for "even after independence, these concretely embedded and imaginatively maintained unjust geographies of underdevelopment and colonial control linger on as stubborn continuities, almost impossible to erase entirely, virtually defining what has come to be called the postcolonial condition...once spatial injustice is inscribed into the built environment, it is difficult to erase" (40-41).

³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company (1885), (1889), (1901), (1917), (1954). *Fire Insurance Maps for Chattanooga, Tennessee*. Sanborn Map Company - Digital Sanborn Maps – Accessed via <http://sanborn.umi.com>.

⁴ Coulter, Ann (2006). *Documentation of the Art at the Passage at Ross's Landing*.

The Urban Design Studio

Although the full blown revitalization of Chattanooga's downtown riverfront began only in the early twenty-first century, public attention began to focus on the river in the early 1980's. The first group to get involved formally with community planning-related activities along the riverfront was the Urban Design Studio, a small collaborative architecture center co-sponsored by the Lyndhurst Foundation and the University of Tennessee—Knoxville (UTK). The studio was founded and coordinated by Stroud Watson, a professor of architecture who had taught internationally before moving to Chattanooga to help launch the community-university-based initiative.

Stroud Watson described the original Urban Design Center as “a little place with a wood stove on Vine Street” and it provided a physical space to convene public meetings and allow residents to drop in and share ideas for the city.⁵ Watson worked with the Architecture Department at UTK to develop undergraduate studio projects so that architects-in-training could have practice with all stages of community planning and collaborative design, from information gathering and visioning to implementation. Out of these workshops came some of the earliest visions for Ross's Landing and the twenty first century public return to downtown Chattanooga and the Tennessee riverfront.⁶

Around the same time that the Urban Design Studio was gaining local political traction, the Hamilton County Planning Commission honed in on an area on the north shore of the river known for centuries as “Moccasin Bend.” The 597-acre Bend, which did house a state mental hospital, golf course and wastewater treatment center, was still largely undeveloped. Watson recalled the serendipity he felt when, at the same time the Urban Design Studio was trying to

⁵ Watson, Stroud. Personal communication. January 29, 2013.

⁶ Rushing, Christian. Personal communication. August 29, 2012.

draw attention to the river, the Planning Commission announced they would fund a study of the land use and development potential of the Bend.

The Planning partnered with the recently formed Urban Land Institute to launch a participation process. The first public meeting was held in November 1981, and attendance was high. As described elsewhere in this dissertation, there had long been a “Chattanooga Sprit” of bi-partisan collaboration in the city, particularly when opportunities for economic development and expansion emerged. The Chattanooga Spirit was in full force during these early visioning and planning sessions. Planning staff noted the typical disagreements about planning open space and public-oriented uses versus expanding the local tax base by using the area for industrial and housing development.⁷

While most public comments focused on the Bend itself, several outspoken civic leaders, including Watson, recommended expanding the study area to include the whole length of the city’s riverfront:

There were some developers from the city who wanted to develop over there... So they brought in [the Urban Land Institute] ULI... They interviewed everybody, including me, and heard from people like me that nothing should be done there, when we've got plenty to take care of in the city. And heard from people who thought what a great open-field development it would be and, boy, would we like to get our hands on it. And then from some historians started showing up talking about the Indian [settlements]. So they said this is a very important study, and what their real recommendation was that they form a joint county-city task force to look at it.

[I was asked] to be an advisor. We met, and the very first meetings I spoke out about one thing in particular... I said we're actually asking the wrong question. We shouldn't really be concerned at the beginning with what to do about Moccasin Bend. We should be more concerned about the river, from the Georgia line to the Chickamauga Dam.⁸

⁷ Urban Land Institute & Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission. (1982). *Moccasin Bend, Chattanooga, Tennessee: An evaluation of land use and development strategies for the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission*, April 25-30, 1982 : a panel study report. Washington: ULI.

⁸ Watson, Stroud. Personal communication. January 29, 2013.



Illustration 5.1: Moccasin Bend Study Site (1981-2) (Source: Urban Land Institute 1982)

Watson pointed out there were only a handful of publicly-accessible spaces located along the riverfront, and argued that this physical disconnect had detrimental social, cultural and economic effects. Socially, the lack of public space kept individuals and communities apart who would otherwise not interact, apart. Culturally, the lack of riverfront access kept Chattanooga's residents, not to mention potential tourists, from experiencing the historical and cultural heart of the city: the Tennessee River. Economically, the prevalence of underutilized industrially zoned land along the banks of the river, combined with an economically depressed, deindustrialized

inner core, kept Chattanooga from realizing its full potential as a twenty first century cosmopolis; a remade “Dynamo of Dixie.”

Their sentiments complemented another initiative underway in the city: the development of a historically-themed riverfront tourist park called “River’s Bend.” The proposal for River’s Bend had been submitted by Landmarks Chattanooga, a local historic preservation group, and it included a section on preserving and renovating the then-defunct Walnut Street Bridge.⁹ Ultimately, Watson’s advice was endorsed by committee Chair and then-Lyndhurst Foundation President Rick Montague. As the larger committee began to get on board with the ideas, Chattanooga’s civic return to the river started to crystalize.

These early planning visionaries understood that place—which is to say, local historical, cultural and geographical context—should form the bedrock of any major revitalization effort in downtown Chattanooga. That sense of place was a popular and relatable idea. Ultimately, it inspired hundreds of citizens to join in the effort. Bruce Clark, current President of the Lyndhurst Foundation, described how their emphasis on the local-- from physical space to the people who loved the city and called it home-- produced an engaged civic spirit (“the Chattanooga Way”) which continues to motivate community planning and urban redevelopment in Chattanooga today:

The people, history, culture, environment--- All of those elements are a huge part of our identity, and I think one of those ah-ha moments was to capitalize on the assets that were here and authentic, and not to be somebody else. That was really the revelation of the Moccasin Bend Task Force and the initial study of Moccasin Bend... Nobody knew really what should be the outcome there. Maybe develop a historic cultural center or what have you. Then the people that were involved in that, including our former director, took a step back and said, “No, what we really need to do is focus on the entire river,

⁹ Urban Land Institute & Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission. (1982). *Moccasin Bend, Chattanooga, Tennessee: An evaluation of land use and development strategies for the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission*, April 25-30, 1982 : a panel study report. Washington: ULI.

from the dam to the gorge. Use that as a fulcrum for economic development, to attract people back downtown...

That was a very significant milestone in this community's history because people from all walks of life were brought together to develop a vision for this place, and they truly had a voice, I think, in the outcome. It was not artificial. It was sincere. To be able to think about your past, present and future, collectively, and do something about it was inspiring and led to so many of the things that happened as a result. Forty-two goals, I think it was. As a result of that process, the nickname for that now is the "Chattanooga Way," people coming together, being exposed to data and imagery and all that sort of thing, but having a forum for conversation and sharing of ideas, and I think that has been a good way to accomplish things.¹⁰

The contract for the planning report was awarded to internationally-renowned firm Carr Lynch Associates. According to its primary architects, the Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan defined "a vision for the future development of the inaccessible or industrial edge of Tennessee River as it passes through Chattanooga" while calling for "the sensitive distribution of new development, nature preserves and public parks and continuous trail system along twenty miles of the river."¹¹ The efforts coordinated by the Task Force culminated in the *Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan*, a proposal for \$750 million in public space and land use upgrades (see Illustration 5.2 on the next page).

Importantly, the "Chattanooga Way" is distinct from other participatory planning processes because, in addition to bringing together large numbers of people from "all walks of life," efforts were made to help citizens to understand technical planning data and to make rational, informed decisions about future land uses and developments rather than rely on visceral reactions or gut instincts. Today, the "Chattanooga Way" continues to be a popular term and for three decades has been used to underscore the exceptionalism and cosmopolitanism associated with progressive, citizen driven urban and community development.

¹⁰ Clark, Bruz. Personal communication. October 24, 2012.

¹¹ Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission., & Carr, Lynch Associates. (1984). *Tennessee Riverpark Master Plan*. Cambridge, Mass: The Associates.

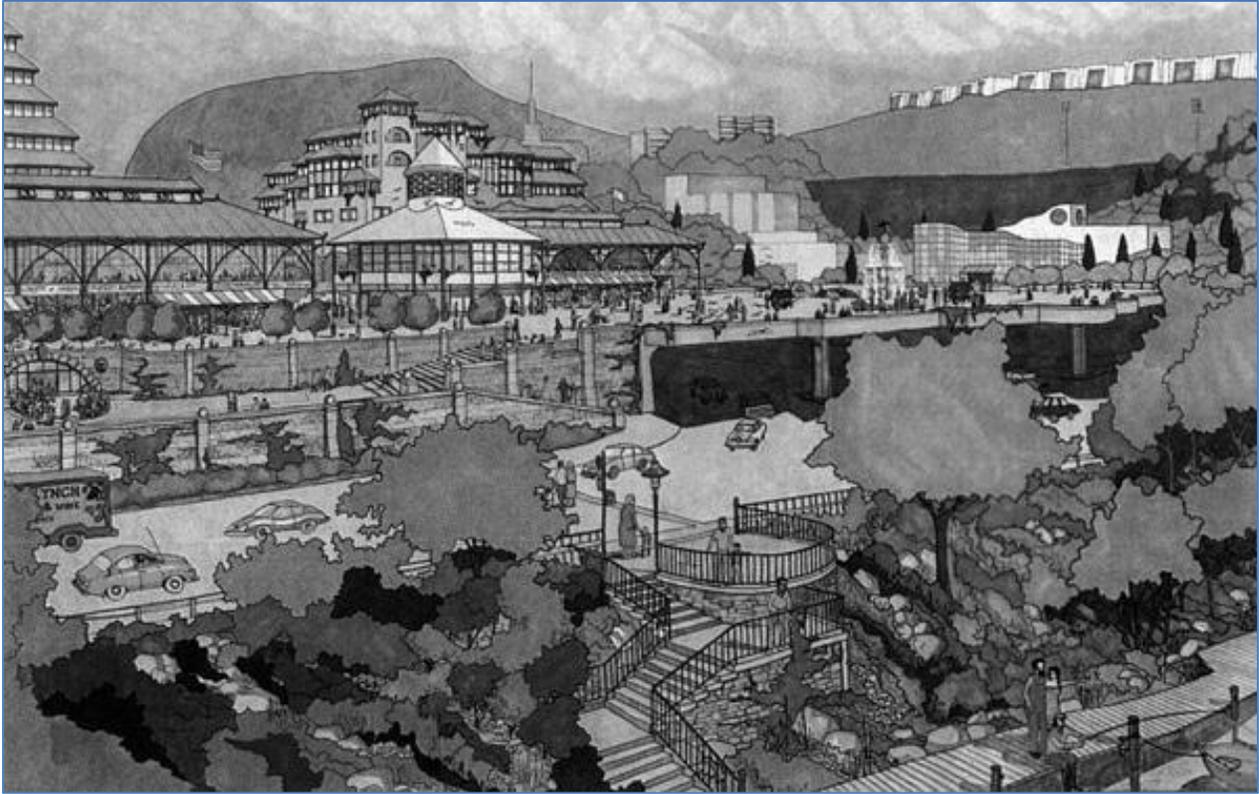


Illustration 5.2: The Tennessee Riverfront Reimagined (Source: Carr Lynch Associates (1984))
Chattanooga Venture and Vision 2000

In early 1984, local planners and civic leaders persuaded the Lyndhurst Foundation to provide a seed operating budget for a new planning initiative. The group hoped to capitalize on the civic momentum produced by the Chattanooga Way by launching an additional citizen-based planning initiative. Dubbed “Chattanooga Venture,” this “self-organized citizens planning group” initiative kicked off its efforts with Vision 2000: a series of thirty-two public meetings organized to “determine community priorities relative to the development and the future of the Chattanooga area.”¹²

Former Chattanooga Mayor Ron Littlefield served as Chattanooga Venture’s Executive Director for its first three years of operation. Littlefield described their motivations for organizing Chattanooga Venture as being rooted in a desire to both illuminate and break down

¹² Chattanooga Venture. *Untitled Pamphlet*. 1986.

historic political economic structures that had controlled planning and development activity in the city for generations:

The reason for that was there was always the underlying feeling, the undercurrent that Chattanooga was being controlled by a nefarious group of very wealthy people... Chattanooga was like that at one time, we had a small group of people who had a lot more money than everybody else and they did pretty much decide what was going on. By the 1980s that had certainly diminished quite a bit and so we decided that the best way for Chattanooga to get its act together and to carve out a future for itself was to tap into everyone's energies.

This sounds very touchy feely kind of stuff but when you asked people to list who they thought were in the power structure, individuals, you found that a lot of the people that the rank and file population, thought that certain people were running things and the people were either dead or they were in Florida. They were no longer really practicing the influencing the city of Chattanooga like we thought they were. We were like children who'd grown up and our parents had either died or moved on and we were still blaming our parents for everything.¹³

In total, sixty individuals from "all walks of life" volunteered on the Venture Board, and more than one thousand citizens from across Chattanooga and Hamilton County participated in at least one of the thirty-two sessions held over the course of the Vision 2000 initiative.

Littlefield recalled with enthusiasm the group's dedication to its motto-- "Chattanooga Venture turns talk into action"¹⁴—when he described the Vision 2000 process. He stated:

We went through a long marathon process of planning and thinking and came out with a small group of projects that we could undertake some related to the riverfront those are the ones that get all the press now but others that were really just more social necessities like a women's violence shelter, places ... things that we had talked about for a long time but never been able to accomplish. We set about checking out the blocks on that short list of projects and when we got through that we just kept moving.¹⁵

The concerns, priorities and goals articulated during these workshops were condensed and compiled into a document entitled the "Chattanooga Venture Commitment Opportunity

¹³Littlefield, Ron. Personal communication. March 14, 2013.

¹⁴ Chattanooga Venture (1987).

¹⁵ Littlefield, Ron. Personal communication. March 14, 2013.

Workbook.” The Board used this report as the basis for its planning and development agendas around the city. The workbook contained brief sketches of thirty four goals and objectives. Each contributed in a unique way to the organization’s strategic mission “to offer an avenue of citizen participation in community problem solving and decision-making and to be an agent for change through projects that require widespread, diverse support.”¹⁶

Shifting Public Perceptions

The need for broad and diverse representation and support were crucial to the success of Vision 2000 as a democratic, citizen-based movement. Given the local histories of nepotism and plutocracy, Venture’s coordinators wanted to consciously organize a Board that would include a range of political, social and economic interests. Littlefield explained their reasoning accordingly:

Chattanooga had a history of being an old industrial union town, [and] in the south unions were considered, like, cancer. There was no compatibility between the Chamber of Commerce and the unions. In Venture we very carefully structured the Board so that we had everyone from the captains of industry to the heads of the unions and the teamsters union-- which was just considered, that was like bringing some wild, dangerous element into a meeting-- but we had them sitting across the table from each other.

The charge was if Chattanooga is going to survive, we’ve got to all work together-- and it worked. They worked together, they found that really there was a lot that they agreed about and as a result of that we were able to move forward and not get hang up on all of this prejudices that had been developed over the years.¹⁷

Faced with ongoing deindustrialization and rising unemployment, a deteriorating inner city housing stock, toxic environmental pollution, civic and neighborhood leaders sought ways to combat the negative image that outsiders had of the city. The negative perception of Chattanooga had reached its apex in April 1969, when Walter Cronkite, during a report

¹⁶ Venture (1987).

¹⁷ Littlefield, Ron. Personal communication. March 14, 2013.

discussing the inaugural Earth Day, referred to Chattanooga as “the dirtiest city in America” on the national CBS evening news.

The desire to set aside political differences and cooperate for the sake of mutual gain (known locally as the “Chattanooga Spirit”) had defined Chattanooga’s economic and business climates for nearly two centuries. The Vision 2000 initiative was an example of the power of public, private and nonprofit collaboration to produce dynamic and progressive results. For these reasons, Chattanooga Venture and Vision 2000 became as much about creating a new positive public image-- particularly to outsiders and/or potential outside capital-- as they were about making physical and social improvements in residents’ everyday lives.

During the opening remarks at Visions ’86, a Venture-sponsored planning and community development conference that attracted more than three hundred attendees from across the city, state and region, Ron Littlefield contested the stereotype of Chattanooga as a “backward” city, pointing to the Vision 2000 process as proof of the city’s progressivism and inevitable comeback. “I still hear comments about Chattanooga describing it as a backward, backwater community,” he told conference participants. “And we are dispelling that view of Chattanooga. [The city is] becoming known throughout the state and throughout the south as a city of the future instead of a city of the past.”¹⁸

The highly publicized Chattanooga Venture and the Vision 2000 initiative served as crucial counter-narratives to the dominant images of inequality and decline associated with the city. The Visions ’86 Conference took this pride of example even further, presenting the “Chattanooga Way” of planning and development as models for other cities around the United States to replicate. According to Venture Associate Director Karen McMahon, the conference

¹⁸ Littlefield, Ron quoted in Mullins, Richard (March 15, 1986). “Chattanooga to Show off for Visions ’86 Conference” in *Chattanooga Times*. Page C2.

was “designed for communities of all sizes, where we can discover the best in ourselves and learn to take advantage of the unusual opportunities facing us.”¹⁹

The connection between place-based social movements and cultural identity was a prominent theme during the Visions ‘86 conference. While previous efforts of the Moccasin Bend Task Force had illuminated the significance of Native American history and culture in Chattanooga-- had incorporated Cherokee sites, artifacts and symbols into Chattanooga’s mainstream cultural identity-- virtually nothing had been done to acknowledge the African American roots of city and community-building in Chattanooga by anyone outside of the local Black community prior to the Vision 2000 initiative.

To this end, Chattanooga Venture and Vision 2000 opened up new spaces for exploring the multiple, overlapping roots of diasporic identity-and- placemaking in the city. The keynote speech at the Visions ’86 Conference was delivered by Alex Haley, a native Tennessean and the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976). Haley discussed his own family’s journey from freedom in Gambia, to slavery in antebellum Maryland, and eventual emancipation and relocation to Henning, Tennessee. He drew explicit connections between historic fights for freedom against the “Southern inheritance” of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, and contemporary struggles for community self-determination and neighborhood revitalization. He understood that self-determination and racial justice were only possible through the cooperation and mutual gain of all races.

The South is really starting to rise again. We’re throwing off all that negative, crippling conflict between the races. It was crippling to everybody because if you hold somebody down, you’ve got to be down there with them. The whole South suffered from the Southern inheritance.²⁰

¹⁹ Miller, David (February 2, 1986). “Visions ’86 to Feature Governor, Rouse” in *News Free Press*. Page A1.

²⁰ Haley quoted in Mitchell, Carolyn (March 18, 1986). “Look Back, Look Ahead” in *Chattanooga Times*. Page A1.

Haley's keynote presentation was important for several reasons. First, it occurred during a popularly attended, mainstream planning function. Haley's emphasis on African American placemaking showed participants the importance of acknowledging and valuing African American contributions to the city and society. But his optimistic narrative of racial reconciliation and equality became further talking points for city boosters eager to "throw off" the city's negative image and market and sell Chattanooga as a 21st century cosmopolis.

Evaluating Success

Despite its potential for political co-optation, the Vision 2000 process should be recognized as one of the earliest and most widespread efforts to formally acknowledge and counteract structural and interpersonal racism in the city. It is highly unlikely that such priorities would have evolved from discussions involving only members of the traditional power structure, who were overwhelmingly male and middle to upper class, and almost exclusively white.

The success of Vision 2000 lay as much in its means as in its ends. Regardless of the outcomes of the visioning initiative, the process of bringing a diverse group of citizen stakeholders together to share ideas and solutions—that process of communicating, relating and empathizing-- produced an end in itself: a sense of common understanding, if not agreement, leading to a "unity of mind." Through the discussions, disparate people and communities temporarily related to one another:

The process of having people come together, having a fair chance to participate-- that alone is really more important than the product. The people leave that meeting with a degree of unity that they did not have when they came in. The unity in their minds is the really important part of a vision process.²¹

²¹ Littlefield quoted in Mullins, Richard (March 19, 1986). "Visions '86 Ends; Speakers Stress Planning." *Chattanooga Times*. Page C1.

While few would disagree that broader engagement and representation created a more democratic process, not everyone in Chattanooga who lent their voice to the Vision 2000 initiative agreed with Littlefield that the means outweighed the ends. Nor did many feel as though tangible outcomes of the initiative had been fairly or equitably distributed.

Prioritizing Development Projects

When Governor Lamar Alexander announced his plan in early 1986 to award Chattanooga Venture \$9 million out of the Homecoming '86 fund to support initiatives outlined in the Commitment Opportunity Workbook—he did so assuming the group could reach consensus about which projects should be funded. In response to his offer, Venture submitted a five project “wish list” to the Governor’s office, which included an aquarium, a riverside walkway, a museum honoring “Empress of the Blues” Bessie Smith, a fishing park, and the restoration of the Tivoli Theater. The Venture Commitment Opportunity Workbook contained thirty-four priorities, ranging from the development of an aquarium along the riverfront to the improvement of the low-income housing stock across the inner core. Although it’s clear from local news reports that this list of priorities was developed using participatory means, it’s not evident how Venture’s Board narrowed their expansive list down to five projects—all of which were concentrated within the inner urban core.

During public meetings related to the allocation, Mayor Gene Roberts reminded state lawmakers that all Venture projects would be managed and overseen by the Greater Chattanooga Partnership, a private corporation established by government and business leaders to encourage economic development. This announcement soothed skeptics and facilitated buy-in among the city’s leading development institutions. The Allied Arts of Chattanooga and the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce quickly endorsed Venture’s wish list, arguing that the organization

had to “start somewhere” and the key to widespread urban revitalization lay in first returning the city to the Tennessee River.

But the priorities established by the wish list frustrated many others who had hoped to see their own visions represented alongside downtown interests. The wish list quickly became a contested agenda. The disagreement compelled Senator Ray Albright, who was helping to administer the Homecoming '86 program, to chide Chattanoogaans for being unable to reach consensus. “Now that Governor Lamar Alexander is supporting \$9 million in state funding for a state-of-the-art aquarium and four other projects here that just might do the trick, in-fighting among area residents is endangering the city’s chances of getting the money,” Albright told an audience of mainly business interests during an open input session where “advance notice of the meeting was sketchy, and few members of the public were present.”²² The five wish list projects were ultimately approved by the state, and Chattanooga Venture received Governor Alexander’s award.

The \$9 million was used to support the five wish list projects, but Chattanooga Venture’s early efforts were not limited to them. An important proposal to emerge from the Venture initiative was the creation of a fifteen member Human Rights and Human Relations Commission to “investigate alleged instances of racial, sexual and other forms of discrimination” in public and civic affairs.²³ Another was the creation of Chattanooga Neighborhoods, Inc, a nonprofit organization formed “to serve as a clearinghouse and work with community groups, the city, businesses, churches and others.”²⁴ The initial \$2 million in funding for CNI (later renamed

²²Frank, Judy (February 21, 1986). “In-Fighting May Endanger Venture Project Albright Says” in *Chattanooga Times*. Page A1.

²³ Frank, Judy (August 29, 1986). “City Studying Venture Plan for Rights Group” in *Chattanooga Times*. Page A1.

²⁴ Miller, David (February 2, 1986). “Visions '86 to Feature Governor, Rouse” in *News Free Press*. Page A1.

Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise, or CNE) was provided by local foundations and an unnamed business.

Over the course of the year, Chattanooga Venture convened seven public meetings, focused on housing, crime, jobs, youth, schools, growth, and city/county governance. During the crime forum, between sixty and seventy residents attended, and participants spoke out about police brutality, the need for improved trust between African American residents and police officers. Out of these meetings came public commitments to provide universal housing and exploring innovative ways rehabilitate the local housing stock while always supporting individual and community empowerment, including youth conservation corps programs. “One of the latter commitments we are making in Chattanooga is that none shall be ill-housed or ill-fed,” Mayor Gene Roberts told a press conference. “That commitment may take a decade or a lifetime to reach, but we are going to do it.”²⁵

Newly appointed Venture Executive Director Dr. James Hassinger outlined the organization’s reasons for taking an empowerment-based approach to urban upgrading during the Housing meeting:

In order for Chattanooga to achieve its goals in housing renovation, we are going to need not only money but also skilled workers who want to make a real difference in the area where they live. A new ‘urban’ conservation corps program could provide us with a way of harnessing the energy of our youth, and skills of their tutors to literally remake decaying areas into livable spaces again.

Chattanooga Venture invited premiere urban designer James Rouse to the city to assess their efforts to date, and several months later a report issued by Rouse’s organization, the Enterprise Foundation, concluded that:

This composite commitment, and the spirit of energy that rise out of mutual cooperation and visible success are the keys to making Chattanooga the first city in American to make

²⁵ *Chattanooga Times* (December 2, 1986), page B1.

all housing fit and livable in a decade. The very act of an entire city making this commitment, putting in the initial funding and beginning programming will be a truly significant model to hold up for the rest of the country.²⁶

Over the next two years, Chattanooga Venture continued to engage residents and community leaders in issue-based task forces relative to the Commitments outlined in its workbook, though without question, the main impetus was behind the redevelopment of the riverfront and central business district. These prioritized were concretized in January 1988, when the organization announced it would hire staff and establish an office in downtown Chattanooga in order to bolster efforts by groups such as the Allied Arts of Greater Chattanooga, River City Company, Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise and the Chamber of Commerce.²⁷

Meanwhile, they continued to host public forums about the state of the city, and racism continued to be a salient topic raised by concerned citizens from the African American community. On May 16, 1989, the Venture Choices Forum sponsored a public discussion on Race and Economic Development. Held at the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, Venture staff who facilitated the meeting articulated that long-cited link between racial harmony and economic development, and voiced their desire to “take advantage of the racial and ethnic diversity within the community to improve the economic conditions for all.”²⁸

But some civic leaders from within the local African American community contested this optimism, contending that deeper cultural and structural issues must be addressed before Chattanooga could rightly call itself a city of equal opportunity. George Key, former local NAACP President, questioned Chattanooga Venture’s liberal multiculturalism rhetoric, stating “I don’t think there’s as much diversity as we like to say. There are some differences, but we play

²⁶ Enterprise Foundation quoted in *News Free Press* (December 1, 1986), page B6.

²⁷ McGee, John (January 1, 1988). “Venture to Open Office Here to Make City’s Assets Visible” in *News Free Press*. Page B1.

²⁸ Chattanooga Venture (1989). *Annual Report*.

up too much on the diversity side.” Moses Freeman, representing Those Interested in Chattanooga’s Economic Progress, called attention to deep-seated forces of racism permeating society and influencing local residents’ understandings of citizenship, civic participation, and community. “We are born, we worship, and we are buried segregated,” Freeman declared. “Some even still feel we will go to a segregated heaven. It is most difficult to merge two societies that have been segregated for years. We must begin to have a sense of community. This city belongs to us all.”²⁹

The skepticism of Chattanooga Venture’s approach to participatory planning and development was harsher in the city’s lowest income communities, who had struggled for generations to preserve their autonomy and practice self-determination in the face of paternalistic policymakers and planners. After Venture’s Annual Meeting featured a presentation by D.C.-based public housing tenant organizer Kimi Gray, the organization proposed a meeting with the City Wide Tenants’ Association, a group composed entirely of representatives from public and subsidized housing developments around the city, to discuss the potential for a “resident manager concept,” which they contended had had positive effects on tenants’ qualities of life in other cities. In response to the invitation, Annie Thomas, Vice President of the Chattanooga City Wide Tenant Association, issued the following statement:

We operate under the auspices of the National Tenant Association and individual tenant associations across the city and we consider any intervention in our association by organizations other than those named above as a deliberate attempt...to stifle our independence and a blatant attempt to control our communities by electing white controlled gatekeepers to leadership positions.³⁰

²⁹ Freeman, Moses quoted in Davis, Michael (May 17, 1989). “Forum Seeks Answers to Racial Relations” in *The Chattanooga Times*.

³⁰ Thomas quoted in Collins, J.B. (December 12, 1990). “Tenants Group Sees Venture Offer as Move to Interfere” in *News Free Press*. Page B4.

Although Chattanooga Venture staff maintained that they were only interested in “exploring” the concept of a resident manager program, the City Wide Tenants’ Council’s response to the invitation reflected a deep sense of betrayal and mistrust toward centralized, formal processes managed by experts from outside the directly impacted communities.

Ultimately, the success of Chattanooga Venture and the Vision 2000 process as democratic, citizen-led local planning movements was and is contested. Despite these disagreements, few would disagree that Chattanooga Venture played a crucial role coordinating processes that led to substantial reinvestments in the downtown. Nearly \$100 million in private capital alone was leveraged to build the aquarium, Creative Discovery Museum, the Imax 3D Theatre, Miller Plaza and the River Center visitor’s facility during the 1990’s. The River City Company estimated that in the period between the construction of the aquarium in 1992 and the beginning of the *21st Century Waterfront Plan* a decade later, five new hotels were constructed, hotel revenues doubled, and overall employment in the downtown area grew by more than 11,000 jobs.³¹

21st Century Waterfront Plan

On February 12, 2002, the City of Chattanooga announced that it had awarded a 90-day, \$250,000 planning contract to Cambridge, MA-based planning and landscape architecture firm Hargreaves Associates to explore the expanded revitalization of the riverfront. The cost of the consulting services were split between the City of Chattanooga and River City Company, and the scope of the 129-acre planning study area chosen included both sides of the downtown riverfront, from Veteran’s Bridge and the Bluffview Arts District to the western terminus of Martin Luther King Street, on the backside of Cameron Hill.

³¹ Gang, Duane and Flessner, Dave (December 15, 2002). “Fund Raising for City Project Nearly Complete” in *Times Free Press*, Page A1.

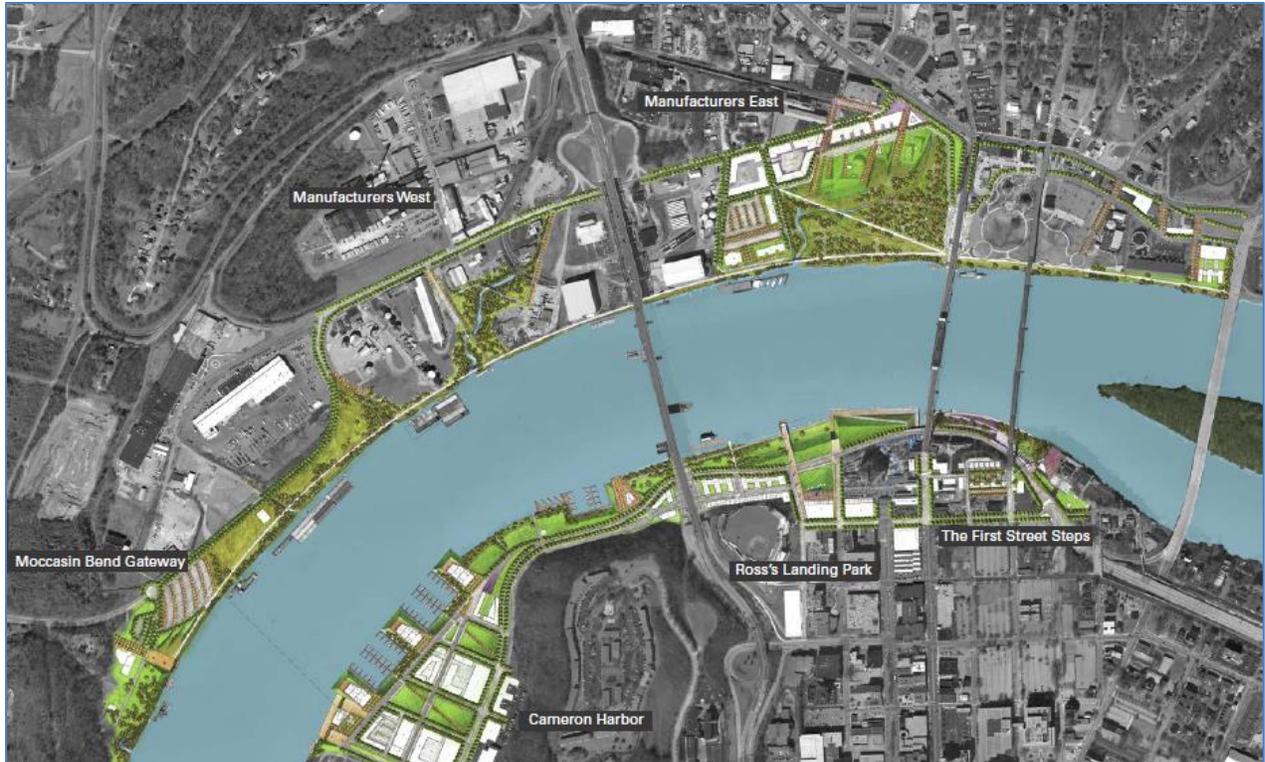


Illustration 5.3: 21st Century Waterfront Plan (Source: Hargreaves Associates, 2005)

During the announcement of the planning study, River City Company President Ken Hayes firmly rooted the initiative in the twenty year-long citizen planning movement that had already transformed targeted sections of the inner urban core: “I want to remind everyone that downtown is everyone’s district. Downtown is everyone’s neighborhood.”³² But while Hayes’s rhetoric described the downtown as belonging to all Chattanoogaans, the planning and development priorities, like in the cases of both the Moccasin Bend Task Force and Vision 2000, focused more on outsiders’ interests (tourists, “back to the city” enthusiasts, and potential industry investors) than everyday poor and working class residents.

The economic rationale for these priorities seemed apparent to civic leaders, who for more than a decade had favored tourism as an antidote to the city’s previous deindustrialization and economic decline. In an editorial published in the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, a

³² Hayes, Ken quoted in Gang (February 2, 2002). *Times Free Press*.

supporter of the contract argued that Chattanooga's proximity to the Smoky Mountains National Park alone justified the city's investment in the Hargreaves planning study. Recalling some of the public space and art proposals first suggested during the earliest Urban Design Studio course projects and the *Tennessee River park Master Plan*, the editorialist contended that:

The creation of the proposed Moccasin Bend National Park, with a unique Trail of Tears interpretive center on the park's north shore riverfront, would present an unprecedented opportunity to showcase the city and attract visitors and broader economic development. Properly executed, the potential exists for the city to capture a substantial portion of the visitorship which, at 10 million a year, makes the Great Smoky Mountains National Park the most visited park in the nation.³³

Over the next month, project managers from Hargreaves worked with the River City Company to facilitate three public input sessions which attracted hundreds of participants. One participant published an editorial in the *Times Free Press* detailing the discussions and commending the organizers for hosting a lively, visionary event.

The broad sense of the discussions, and the compelling range of ideas that emerged in the lively work groups where participants envisioned their hopes for the riverfront, intuitively fixed on central themes: an expanded riverfront; enhanced connectivity and recreational opportunities; festival venues; and respectful residential, retail, and marina development.³⁴

Importantly, this statement reveals much about the interests that were represented during these meetings. Though hundreds participated, their visions for the twenty first century riverfront, at least according to this attendee, were "intuitively fixed" on a handful of generalized, though politically loaded, ideals. Nowhere does the author mention affordable housing, education or workforce development having been discussed during these sessions. Instead, recreation and cultural facilities, more retail, and a marina are emphasized.

Although Venture Chattanooga had set the course for this downtown-oriented, tourism-based development to dominate the city's economic agenda, the group's Commitment

³³ Editorial (February 13, 2002). *Times Free Press*, page B8.

³⁴ Editorial (March 24, 2002). *Times Free Press*, page G4.

Opportunity Workbook had contained several priorities directly related to creating a more equitable city for existing residents (i.e. a commitment to universal housing and racial and gender equity). The *21st Century Waterfront Plan*, in contrast, was almost exclusively focused on exogenous factors such as increasing tourism, making the city attractive to outside investors, and attracting the middle class back to the city.

These values and priorities translated directly into the planning and development recommendations articulated in the planning study. In May 2002, Hargreaves released the culmination of their research and engagement efforts in the *21st Century Waterfront Plan*. Major elements of the plan included: recommendations for substantial public space and riverfront improvements, including the addition of more than 30 acres of new parkland; the construction of a pier and over 2,000 linear feet of docking for recreational boats; the expansion and rehabilitation of several museums and the local aquarium; the design and construction of a pedestrian walkway network; and \$1.2 million in public arts funding. The consultants estimated the total development cost at \$120 million, and recommended combining \$69 million in public and \$51 million in private funds to ensure its realization.³⁵

One week after the plan's release, Mayor Bob Corker delivered his first-ever "State of the City" address, wherein he publicly announced the major tenets of the plan and described how the city would leverage a recently-instated local hotel-motel tax to finance the public portion of the \$120 million price tag.³⁶ In a public challenge to himself and the rest of the local development community, Corker proclaimed his administration would see to it that most of the *21st Century Waterfront Plan* was realized during the remaining thirty-six months of his mayoral term. He

³⁵ Hargreaves Associates, Inc. (2005). *21st century Chattanooga Waterfront Plan*. Chattanooga, Tenn.

³⁶ Gang, Duane. "Mayor Unveils Trust for Riverfront" in *Times Free Press*, 3.23.2002, A1.

also challenged local private and nonprofit developers to construct at least 750 new units of housing in downtown Chattanooga during the same time period.

To Corker, the use of public monies to advance Chattanooga's reputation as a place where "healthy, intelligent people want to live" rather than a city marked by "crime, decay and blight" seemed intuitive: the cost of using public investment to catalyze private development, particularly when the funds weren't coming out of the city's general coffers, would be greatly outweighed by its benefits, especially once private-driven gentrification took off. "We will add another layer to our progress by continuing to establish our community as a place where healthy, intelligent people want to live," he declared to the local citizenry. "It is not acceptable for (residents) to have to live in neighborhoods where they are burdened by the fear of crime, decay, and blight that result from the irresponsible acts of those who live outside their neighborhood."³⁷

But Corker's economic rationale contained a deeper, racially coded subtext about participants' visions for the city: the thriving, innovative Chattanooga of the 21st century would be defined by and for its newcomers; it's socially and culturally desirable, cosmopolitan citizens. It would not be a city by and for the economic underclass; for undesirables whose personal "irresponsible acts" had transformed them into criminals and forced them into the economic and cultural margins of society. And in Chattanooga, where social inequality was and is highly racialized, where deindustrialization and urban divestment had disproportionately burdened African Americans, Corker's words carried an even more sinister subtext: downtown Chattanooga of the 21st century would no longer be a Black city, but rather a colorblind cosmopolis where legacies of interpersonal and institutional racism were a thing of the past.

Between May and December 2002, Mayor Corker engaged almost singlehandedly in an unprecedented private fundraising campaign to secure the additional \$51 million private dollars

³⁷Corker quoted in Gang (March 23, 2002). *Times Free Press*.

needed to realize the *21st Century Waterfront* vision. The projects included in the \$120 million budget were allocated accordingly: the redevelopment of Ross's Landing (\$25.9 million), the Steps connecting the Hunter Museum to Market Street (\$6.35 million), \$5.5 million for land acquisition, \$30million for the Aquarium expansion, \$19.5 for the Hunter Museum expansion, \$3 million for the Creative Discovery Museum expansion, \$15 million for parking, \$13.5 million for Roper Park, and \$1.1 million for miscellaneous expenses. Also during this time, the Southside Redevelopment Corporation was renamed the Chattanooga Downtown Redevelopment Corporation and charged with overseeing the implementation of the 21st Century Waterfront Plan, while the Community Foundation was assigned to serve as the fiscal agent.³⁸

In October 2002, the City of Chattanooga announced the sale of \$55 million in public bonds to front the public piece of the funding, stating it would use the revenues gained through the local hotel-motel tax to repay the bond. Local planners and policymakers agreed that Phase 1 of implementation would include \$46 million to improve Ross's Landing, create a connection between the Hunter Museum and Market Street, and construct a new public park on the North Shore. Correspondingly, major several downtown tourist attractions announced their plans to use private capital to expand their facilities alongside the city-backed public space improvements: the Tennessee Aquarium announced a \$30 million expansion, the Hunter Museum pledged to give itself a \$19.5 million "facelift" and the Creative Discovery Museum set aside \$3 million for renovations.³⁹

³⁸ Gang, Duane "Waterfront plan has new Approach in Fundraising" in *Times Free Press*, 11.25.2002, B1.

³⁹ Approval of these bonds occurred at the same special committee meeting where the City Council voted to approve \$11 in local matching funds for the \$35m federal HOPE VI redevelopment of the Spencer J. McCallie Homes in Alton Park (Gang, Duane. "City Sells Bonds for Waterfront Projects" in *Times Free Press*, 10.11.2002, B1). Pare, Mike "\$105 million in riverfront work readied" in *Times Free Press*. 9.28.2002, C1 and Gang, Duane. 11.25.2002, B1.

Interpreting Ross's Landing

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the original site of Ross's Landing was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, though little happened with it in the ensuing decades. With the announcement of the *21st Century Waterfront Plan* thirty years later, local planners and placemakers turned their attention to the site.

Knowing that any redevelopment of the Landing would be subject to regulations stated in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act,⁴⁰ the 21st Century Waterfront Plan design team established a formal participation process for determining the future use of Ross's Landing as well as the appropriate historical interpretation of the space.⁴¹ Because the *21st Century Waterfront Plan* posed the redevelopment of Ross's Landing in relation to ongoing efforts to have Moccasin Bend designated as a National Historic Park, River City Company initially reached out to the National Park Service (NPS), who offered the services of an in-house consultant to help interpret the site.

A *Times Free Press* story published several weeks later stated that the consultant had presented "several ideas on how to interpret the Trail of Tears in the riverfront plans. These

⁴⁰ Initiate Section 106 process: The responsible Federal agency first determines whether it has an undertaking that is a type of activity that could affect historic properties. Historic properties are properties that are included in the National Register of Historic Places or that meet the criteria for the National Register. If so, it must identify the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer * (SHPO/THPO*) to consult with during the process. It should also plan to involve the public, and identify other potential consulting parties. If that officer determines that it has no undertaking, or that its undertaking is a type of activity that has no potential to affect historic properties, the agency has no further Section 106 obligations. The regulations also place major emphasis on consultation with Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, in keeping with the 1992 amendments to NHPA. Consultation with an Indian tribe must respect tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship between the Federal Government and Indian tribes. Even if an Indian tribe has not been certified by NPS to have a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer who can act for the SHPO on its lands, it must be consulted about undertakings on or affecting its lands on the same basis and in addition to the SHPO.

⁴¹ In 1972, Ross's Landing was added to the National Register of Historic Places because of its significance as a Cherokee settlement and its role in the Trail of Tears. Three years later, a 3,100-foot strip of the site was dedicated as a park, and a small plaque was added to highlight the history of Ross's Landing. Over the next thirty years, however, few improvements were made to the site or its surrounding properties, and the significance of Chattanooga and Ross's Landing as key sites in the Cherokee cultural memory was lost to most of those who lived in or visited the city (Coulter 2006).

range from having two-dimensional cutouts of a Cherokee detachment walking down Market Street to a maritime exhibit at Ross's Landing depicting the flatboats some of the Cherokees were forced into as they were sent west on the river."⁴²

When asked to reflect on the NPS proposals, members of the small but vocal local Native American community, including Vicki Karhu, Director of the Indigenous Resource Center and Library, agreed that city plans to honor the area's Trail of Tears history were "long overdue," but contended that efforts "need to involve Native American artists and architects in the plans."⁴³

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act sets out special provisions about engaging Native American tribal organizations, and River City Company staff, also uncomfortable with the encounter exhibits proposed by the NPS, organized a series of meetings between the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Band of Cherokee and the National Park Service.

During these conversations it became quickly evident that the NPS's proposals for the space were both insensitive and inadequate for dealing with the great traumatic events that had occurred in the space more than one hundred and sixty years prior. At the heart of Native American participants' critiques were concerns about Cherokee self-determination and cultural survival, and how the symbols and time frame suggested by the NPS consultants presented narratives of extermination and defeat instead of survival and resilience.

In an interview with the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, Dr. Richard Allen, a policy analyst with the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma who had participated in the initial planning meetings, recalled a turning-point conversation between the different stakeholder groups:

⁴² Herrington, Angie (September 26, 2002). "Trail of Tears History in Waterfront Plans in *Times Free Press*, page A9.

⁴³ Vicki Karhu quoted in Herrington, Angie (September 26, 2002). "Trail of Tears History in Waterfront Plans in *Times Free Press*, page A9.

We politely thanked the park service but rejected their idea. [Ross's Landing] wasn't theirs to interpret... In order for Chattanooga to understand its history, it would have to go back into the pre-contact era and bring it forward. It's not a reversal of the Trail of Tears, but it does acknowledge that we were there. I think people will know the things sacred to us. The mountains, the river, the landscape. All of that belonged to us. It's a sacred place.⁴⁴

For Allen and other Native American participants, the construction of the stockades and barges would infuse the downtown landscape with a neo-colonial narrative dislocation and displacement, which were problematic on multiple fronts. For one, recreating sites of trauma suggested that the long and rich Native history of the city and its environs could be summed up by the colonial encounter, which culminated with the Indian Removal Act (1835) and the Trail of Tears (1838-1839). Moreover, for present-day Cherokee involved with the project, the reconstruction of these structures of trauma and dislocation implied the impossibility for a return, either symbolically or materially, to their ancestral homeland.

Native participants articulated a more positive, living vision for the revitalization of Ross's Landing-- one that would infuse the riverfront with rich historical and cultural meaning, while also physically inscribing public space with a distinctly Cherokee aesthetic. Participants wanted the space to remind visitors that although the Trail of Tears changed the courses of history for both the Cherokee Nation and the United States forever, the event did not weaken Cherokee culture nor define them as a people. On the contrary, the Cherokee had persevered and thrived despite the injustices wreaked against them, adapting their communities several times over in the projects of forging new 'homespaces' in unfamiliar environments.⁴⁵ Today, they survive and thrive as a dynamic, diverse and contemporary people.

⁴⁴ Dr. Richard Allen, policy analyst with the Cherokee Nation, quoted in Higgins, Trevor (May 8, 2005). "A Grand Finale" in *Times Free Press*, page A1.

⁴⁵Lightweis-Goff, J. (2011). *Blood at the root: Lynching as American cultural nucleus*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

The Passage at Ross's Landing

The idea for the Passage at Ross's Landing had several roots. The plan recommended substantial pedestrian access, public space and public art improvements along the riverfront, especially in the areas between the aquarium and the river, which were physically severed by Riverside Drive. To help realize those recommendations, Mayor Corker funded \$1.2 million for acquisitions and appointed a thirteen member committee to manage the city's public art agenda. In November 2002, the city, working with Allied Arts of Chattanooga, organized a series of community input sessions which attracted more than five hundred participants. Several months later, in May 2003, the Allied Arts of Greater Chattanooga released a Public Art Plan intended to establish a policy framework for making use of the substantial public arts allocation.⁴⁶

Additionally, in January 2003, Governor Don Sundquist announced a \$2.55 million federal transportation grant to the city of Chattanooga to support pedestrian connections on the waterfront. The *21st Century Waterfront Plan* called for an underground passage connecting the public space and aquarium to the river, and planners agreed "the area [would] also serve as the trail head for the Trail of Tears and feature some interpretive elements and fountains."⁴⁷ Mayor Corker boasted that Chattanooga's riverfront would add to the city's cultured, cosmopolitan feel during the press conference where he announced the public arts allocation: "I am confident that the pier and the passage will become very visible landmarks and when completed will cause our community to be distinguished around the nation for our commitment to public art."⁴⁸

The sentiments expressed by Native Americans consulted about the redevelopment of Ross's Landing were taken into consideration by the Public Art Committee, and ultimately

⁴⁶ Coulter, Ann (2006). *Documentation of the Art at the Passage at Ross's Landing*.

⁴⁷ Pare, Mike (May 13, 2003). "Pedestrian Tunnel would Link River to Downtown Area" in *Times Free Press*, page A1.

⁴⁸ Bob Corker quoted in Gang, Duane (July 18, 2003). "Panel Approves Funding for Waterfront Artwork" in *Times Free Press*, page B1.

formed the basis for the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) related to the passageway site. Arts educator and former Executive Director of Public Arts Chattanooga Peggy Townsend recalled the RFQ development process, which ultimately garnered twelve submissions:

They wanted something that was more celebratory that nodded to the past but also celebrated a very alive and thriving culture and a place of joy but not so somber... *That prompted us to really write that kind of language in the RFQ and also require that team members that were selected be Native American...* I think we ended up having about 5 or 6 teams that were shortlisted... They were all really different and really wonderful... The winning team was Gadugi. They're all from Locust Grove, Oklahoma.⁴⁹

Each of the shortlisted artists was awarded a \$2,500 stipend, plus travel expenses, to develop a proposal for the passageway site. Ultimately, the committee chose a collective of (five?) Cherokee craftsmen and artists who called themselves “Gadugi” (ᏍᏍᏅ)—a traditional Cherokee term meaning “to come [or work] together.”

Gadugi’s incorporation of circles and pre-Cherokee, Mississippian symbology compelled local organizers, who wanted the site to tell a much longer story than the events leading up to and surrounding the Trail of Tears, and who wanted the space to suggest the potential for both symbolic and physical return. In Cherokee culture, the circle signifies reconciliation and return. Gadugi team members contended that the planning, design, and construction of The Passage would “[complete] a circle of return that began with the removal of their culture from this area over one hundred and fifty years ago.”⁵⁰

The number seven is also sacred within Cherokee culture, representing the seven original clans of the Cherokee people, and was a central theme woven into the design proposal.

Townsend recalled how out of all of the proposals, the Gadugi vision for the passageway best encompassed the positive narratives of cultural survival and resilience that the earlier Native American participants had called for.

⁴⁹ Peggy Townsend. Personal communication. March 26, 2013.

⁵⁰ Gadugi quoted in Coulter, Ann (2006). *Documentation of the Art at the Passage at Ross’s Landing*, page 14.

*Kudos to the committee for really thinking that through. It was the right thing to do. Just little, wonderful kind of poetic things happen throughout that project. The Gadugi talked a lot about the prophecy of coming home ... They use the circle a lot and the imagery there. When they were selected and we got to know them a little bit, they told us that this was a prophetic project because they are coming back to Chattanooga to work on this thing in this place, which is pretty huge. None of them were professional public artists. One of them is a school teacher. One of them is a potter. One of them is a metal worker. They're all incredible artist but they had never worked in a large public art setting.*⁵¹

In an interview for the *Times Free Press*, Gadugi member Knokovtee Scott emphasized that Chattanooga had been a cultural epicenter long before the arrival of colonial settlers, and the Passage would take this longer view of local history: “visitors will find out that Chattanooga has an amazing past. One thousand years before Chattanooga existed, it was an epicenter for the Southeast of a culture that was flowering.”⁵²

But while the celebration of Cherokee and pre-Cherokee culture were to be the presiding narratives at The Passage and Ross’s Landing, the Gadugi team did want to acknowledge and memorialize the space as a central holding and deportation center during the forced removal of the Southeastern tribes. An editorial published in the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* supporting the project described Gadugi’s inspiration for the design of the public space:

Entering the Passage from Market Street, people will approach seven doorways. From the lintel of each, water will trickle down like tears, for the tears along this cruel trail began as the Cherokee were taken from their doorways of their homes. The trickle will fall into a stream of water dropping toward the river in a growing cascade that recalls the chaos of the brutal roundup and stockading which preceded the removal. The water will come to rest in a reflection pool beneath the parkway.⁵³

The final design for the Passage contained four areas-- each with a distinct water feature. By late 2003, construction on the site was underway, with the Gadugi team serving as creative consultants during the building phase. The first area is adjacent to the aquarium and contains seven doors; water drips from each of these doorframes, signifying that the Trail of Tears began

⁵¹Peggy Townsend. Personal communication. March 26, 2013.

⁵²Knokovtee Scott quoted in Pare, Mile (May 2, 2004). “Reviving the Riverfront” in *Times Free Press*, page A1.

⁵³ Editorial (September 21, 2003). “Beyond the Orange Barrels” in *Times Free Press*, page F4.

at the front doors of the homes of the Cherokee people. The second section is comprised of seven descending landings connected by stairs. As the walkway descends below Riverside Drive, the passage widens and a cascade of water rushes down right wall toward the Tennessee River. Seven, six-foot tall clay discs are mounted on the left wall along the descent; each contains a cultural symbol based on artifacts discovered in the ruins of three local Mississippian-era settlements: the Hixson, Dallas, and Citico sites.⁵⁴ At the bottom terrace of the space, a large steel disc with a carving of the Water Spider-- an ancient symbol of prophecy who is said to have foretold the forced removal of the Cherokee from the southeast—rises from a large pool of water opening up to the river and Ross’s Landing. The fourth section of the site is comprised of a twenty-foot tall wall containing seven mounted steel figures of Cherokee stickball players.

The theme of reconciliation is apparent both in the design of the site and the artists’ statement, which is inscribed on a plaque at the entrance to the passageway under Riverside Drive.

It is our team’s honor and privilege to complete the circle begun by our ancestors so many years ago by bringing back to this area the vitality and visual strengths of our Cherokee forefathers’ artwork. Through this art installation, we feel as though we are symbolically returning to our ancestral homeland.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Coulter, Ann (2006). *Documentation of the Art at the Passage at Ross’s Landing*.

⁵⁵ Team Gadugi (2005). *Statement of the Artists*.



Illustration 5.4: The Passage at Ross's Landing (Source: Courtney Knapp 2011)

These symbolic and discursive efforts at reconciliation were further supported during a private ceremonial blessing of the site and a day-long public festival which highlighted Cherokee history and culture through music, dance, sports, and storytelling. During the ceremonial blessing, which was held at dawn in January 2005 and attended by individuals closely involved with the project, a sacred fire was lit from seven special types of wood brought to Chattanooga from Oklahoma. The smoke was used to cleanse the site and put the ancestral spirits who had long remained “unsettled” in the space “at peace.”⁵⁶ In a way, this blessing signaled an emotional reconciliation with the trauma and upheaval that had occurred at the site and across the city nearly two centuries prior.

⁵⁶ Boss Cummings quoted in Coulter, Ann (2006). *Documentation of the Art at the Passage at Ross's Landing*.

On May 13, 2005, the city organized a series of events related to the grand opening of The Passage at Ross's Landing. May 13 opening ceremonies included the performance of an original call and response musical piece, composed by UC faculty member Jonathan McNair. The Chattanooga Downtown Partnership commissioned McNair to compose a "musical logo" for the city. Cara Pritchard, Executive Director of the Chattanooga Downtown Partnership, recalled their motivation in hiring McNair.⁵⁷ The Dedication of The Passage was significant because it marked one of the few occasions where the Chief leaders of all three Cherokee nations (the Cherokee Nation, Eastern Band of Cherokee, and United Keetowah Band of Cherokee) were present together. One Cherokee participant who traveled to Chattanooga to attend the opening ceremony observed, "Watching the little Cherokee children play in the water like looking into the future, which is the direction we need to go for the Cherokee people."⁵⁸

In his opening remarks to festival-goers, Eastern Band Chief Michelle Hicks described the power of The Passage at Ross's Landing to re-inscribe Chattanooga's downtown physical and socio-cultural landscapes with narratives of Cherokee rootedness and return:

Many years ago this passage divided us, broke our nation apart... This place remembers before we were divided, when we were one great nation, the Cherokee Nation. The water holds our tears of joy and sorrow. The rocks hold the sounds of our great Cherokee language. The water holds our tears of joy and sorrow. This soil has absorbed our blood and continues to clutch at our footsteps. How great for a passage that once toe us apart to finally bring us together. No amount of removal or Federal policy can strip this land of the memories it embraces. We have traveled today from all different directions but we can know Chattanooga today as our home.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Pritchard and McNair described their motivation accordingly: "We wanted the music to include a song that would be identified with this and every other major event held along the river. That original song would become the city's musical logo, a piece immediately identified with Chattanooga." "I wanted it to be a tribute to, not imitative of, Native American music. My goal is to pay homage to the Cherokee by using drumming to be evocative of ancient traditions." (Pierce, Susan (April 16, 2005). "Music for the Passage" in *Times Free Press*, page F1.

⁵⁸Terri Rhoades quoted in Herrington, Angie (May 14, 2005). "Fire Across the River" in *Times Free Press*, page A1.

⁵⁹Chief Michele Hicks quoted in Coulter, Ann (2006). *Documentation of the Art at the Passage at Ross's Landing*.



Illustration 5.5: The Passage at Ross's Landing (Source: Courtney Knapp June 2012)

Chief Hicks’s discussion rooted Cherokee cultural memory and meaning firmly in place, arguing that the connection between her people and the land upon which present-day Chattanooga was settled precedes and persists despite the colonial encounter and experience of dispossession. Discussing the economic history of Ross’s Landing, Hicks described the settlement as a place where Cherokee “entrepreneurs” transformed a small trading post into the “economic force of the frontier,” only to be forced to give up “that which they had been told they were too savage to be a part of.” Hicks commended the city for its ability to accomplish such a level of “inclusive” revitalization without “the displacement of the heart and soul of this community, its people and its history.” “It is our team’s honor and privilege to bring back to

this area the artistic vitality and visual strengths of our forefathers' symbolic designs and return the native to its ancestral home.”⁶⁰

Ann Coulter, an urban designer and planner who prepared the documentation of public art at The Passage, described the cultural and historical significance of The Passage in a report submitted to the Allied Arts of Greater Chattanooga, wherein she linked the revitalization of Cherokee culture directly to the economic transformation of the new tourism-driven downtown:

The art installation in The Passage is presently the only large public installation of contemporary Southeastern Native American art in the United States, possibly in the world. The motifs and themes represented in the art are not well known outside of small circles of artists and craftspeople, archaeologists or historians. The art in The Passage, due to its location in a heavily traveled tourist venue, has the opportunity to help whole generations of visitors learn about and appreciate the rich artistic heritage of Southeastern Native American tribes.⁶¹

This site for public education and public art has become a form of sociospatial cultural recognition. The Passage advances a political reconciliation narrative, whereby the city acknowledges its hand in dispossession and displacement and uses the mechanisms of urban reinvestment and cultural revitalization to produce a site which honors the Cherokee as a thriving, contemporary people; people who have managed to overcome the injustices waged against them by colonial settlers and the United States government.

Additional Features of the 21st Century Waterfront Plan

Several landscapes along the riverfront also acknowledge the historical injustices that occurred here in the city. Place-markers and signs located across the downtown are printed in both English and the Cherokee language and sidewalks inscribed with statements from Cherokee and U.S. leaders during the 18th and 19th centuries show the evolution of discourses of

⁶⁰Spokesman for Team Gadugi quoted in Nichols, Ann (March 20, 2005). “Debut of Waterfront Public Art” in *Times Free Press*, page D6.

⁶¹Coulter, Ann (2006). *Documentation of the Art at the Passage at Ross's Landing*, 15.

sovereignty, property rights, and legal entitlement which ultimately culminated in the passage of the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears.

By the time the construction of The Passage had begun, public attention turned to a 23.5-acre industrial site on the north bank of the Tennessee River that had been identified in the *21st Century Waterfront Plan* for a second public space adjacent to Coolidge Park. In early April 2004, the City of Chattanooga announced their plan to develop a \$13 million park on the site. The 23.5 acre site was purchased from GE-Roper Corporation, a stove and stovepipe manufacturing company which had been operating on the site since the 1920's. The project's \$15 million price tag included \$450,000 for purchase, approximately \$2 million for land remediation, and about \$10 million to design and build the park. Although planners focused primarily on the site as a wetlands restoration and ecological park, urban designers also emphasized the historical significance of the space:

On this park site, former slaves who joined the Union army and later settled on the north shore were bivouacked. There is evidence of Native Americans there before written history, and the site was crossed by some of the Cherokee forced from their homes on the Trail of Tears. Chattanooga will symbolically commemorate that sad history in the design of the Passage under Riverfront Parkway.⁶²

Directly across the river from The Passage at Ross's Landing sits Renaissance Park, another major public space feature of the *21st Century Waterfront Plan*. This site of the original African American settlement in Chattanooga is known as "Camp Contraband," this settlement was originally the camp for the Union Army's Colored Infantry but rapidly grew in size immediately after the Civil War, when freed Blacks arrived in Chattanooga to find work in the city's rapidly industrializing urban core.

Today, historic placemaking signage and a riverfront picnic area marks the location of Camp Contraband's original quarters. Running through the back of this space are several

⁶² Pare, Mike (April 6, 2004). "City plans \$13 million park for Roper site" in *Times Free Press*, page A1.

winding, wandering footpaths, designed to symbolize the passage of the Trail of Tears through the space. Finally, in the shadow of the John Ross Bridge stands a sculpture titled “The Bridge,” which depicts several individuals traversing an elevated structure and includes an artist’s statement that reads: “Weary travelers move across the land upon manmade structures that rise above our reach but in our view. Many peoples have traversed this site going west; some by choice, some by force, and others in fear. This crossing holds the spirits of silent traveler.”⁶³



Illustration 5.6: The Bridge by Andres Hussey (Source: Courtney Knapp July 2011)

Memorandum of Understanding between the Cherokee Nation and the City of Chattanooga

On October 16, 2006, Chattanooga city officials took their efforts further when Chattanooga Mayor Ron Littlefield and Chadwick Smith, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which recognized that the “City of

⁶³Hussey, Andres (2008). *Statement of the Artist*.

Chattanooga is located within the boundary of the Cherokee Nation before the forced removal in 1839” and that both parties had an interest in the “preservation and interpretation of Cherokee Historic sites in and around Chattanooga.”⁶⁴ “In the spirit of repentance,” this contract intended to bind the parties “together in a relationship expressed in the Cherokee language as Du-na-li-i-yv and described in the English language as “a friendship between groups.”

When asked to reflect on the significance of community history to his placemaking work as Vice President and Treasurer of the Lyndhurst Foundation, Bruz Clark discussed a deep-seated need to collectively reckon with the complexities of local social life, of the city’s dark episodes and legacies of injustice as well as its innovations and successes.

I think it means a lot. Again, so much of our investment has been on identifying, remembering, celebrating our past, and I don’t just mean our Anglo-Saxon past. It has been the past. As a great example, our Native American past and present as well. History is an interesting thing. I think there is a fine line between being a nostalgist but recognizing history as the foundation for what happens next. Honoring that, if it is to be honored, or maybe regretting it if it was not such a great chapter in our history... The Trail of Tears, for instance, but recognizing that as important and figuring out what to do with it is more – the History Center, from what I understand to be their storylines, I think, they are really going to do a great job at lifting out some of that history, community history, and having that tell us how that has influenced our behavior and decisions, feelings for each other and that sort of thing. It is very complex.⁶⁵

Clark sees his role at the Lyndhurst Foundation, which is and has been one of the premiere institutions supporting local arts and cultural development for half a century, as providing the financial and technical resources to local and regional actors who are willing to take these complexities on in creative and innovative ways.

Substantive Reconciliation and Citizen Claims to the Riverfront

Without a doubt, Chattanooga’s thirty year homecoming to the Tennessee Riverfront is full of powerful examples of what can be achieved when the public, private and nonprofit sectors

⁶⁴Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Chattanooga and Cherokee Nation. 16 October 2006.

⁶⁵Clark, Bruz. Personal communication. October 24, 2012.

team up and lead a group of informed and empowered citizens through community visioning and development processes. But what comments such as Clark's statement above don't clarify are the racialized politics undergirding notions of citizen- and stakeholdership in a city with a three hundred year-long history of racialized exploitation and uneven geographic development. Success is measured based on large numbers of people showing up and participating, but doesn't go further to ask *which* residents showed up and participated in these early discussions, *what* stakes they had—or didn't have—in the redevelopment game, and *whether* their visions and priorities were supported and/or realized.

Citizen participation in the Moccasin Bend Task Force, Vision 2000, and the *21st Century Waterfront* planning efforts have been internationally lauded, and the priorities, goals and recommendations in each have been palatable to many middle class white “back to the city” urban cosmopolitanism enthusiasts. But the visions enacted through policy and planning decisions were not representative of the city's population as a whole, let alone the Chattanooga's urban core, which in 1980 was 50.4% African American and had a combined median household income of \$8,420 per year. The visions for riverfront renewal did not come from the residents who had been unable or unwilling to leave; who had suffered through and bore the disproportionate burdens of urban renewal, deindustrialization, toxic pollution and widespread urban disinvestment.

Vannice Hughley, a lifelong resident of Chattanooga and current President of the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association, argued that the priorities established during these early riverfront and downtown revitalization efforts were hardly the priorities and values held by most working class African American communities in Chattanooga during this time. Referring to the development of the Tennessee Aquarium in 1992, which is hailed by many city boosters as the

cornerstone of the downtown's millennial renaissance, Ms. Hughley contended that for many in the local African American community, the facility is referred to sardonically as the "catfish pond."

Challenging the mainstream narrative of progressive downtown revival, Hughley emphasized the ethical and political limits of a public sector that invests hundreds of millions of dollars in tourism-related development projects when local residents, and working class African American residents in particular, can't access quality education systems or creative, fulfilling economic opportunities that are spurred by new investments. "How are you going to let the schools fall apart," she exclaimed, "but yet you going to put all that money down in the catfish pond?"⁶⁶ Similarly, a local resident who was interviewed by the *Times Free Press* during a visit to the Passage argued that Chattanooga's reinvestment is highly uneven. "This Passage area, the tribute to the Trail of Tears, is a great thing they've done," Henry Slayton told the *Times Free Press*, "but the rest of the city is dealing with potholes and bad sidewalks. This stuff is good, but it should happen in other neighborhoods [as well]."⁶⁷

Racialized disparities in citizen engagement and neighborhood reinvestment have produced myriad negative effects, including apathy, frustration, and distrust on the part working class Black communities toward local government and the downtown development machine. It also is a main factor in the perpetuation of highly inequitable urban economic and social structures across the city. When asked whether the public sector has ever been meaningfully committed to the local African American population, Ms. Hughley responded with exasperation that it "never has, never has. What do they [city boosters] say?" she continued. "That this is an 'open city.' But open to whom? I see all these people and they invited people in from different

⁶⁶ Hughley, Vannice. Personal communication. 8 June 2013.

⁶⁷ Henry Slayton quoted in Wang, Herman (July 24, 2005) "What Price Success?" *Times Free Press*, page A1.

places.... They are giving them incentives to come here and all this stuff. Well you got people here in town that you could do something for... [but we get none of that] here.”⁶⁸

While Hughley’s comments are inflammatory, they reflect a popular sentiment among poor and working class residents: that the story of urban progress told and the economic and cultural values associated with Chattanooga’s riverfront ‘renaissance’ reflect a narrow and elite sector of the population: namely, residents who see themselves having preexisting economic or political stakes in the outcomes of redevelopment, who have the time and schedule to allow for attendance at workshops and trainings,⁶⁹ and who have trust that their participation in public process will lead to outcomes reflective of their priorities and values. As a result, unemployment and underemployment levels are high, poverty grows, and socioeconomic inequality widens as already-privileged residents access better paying, creative economy jobs while historically disadvantaged residents are left to compete for low wage, service oriented jobs related to the tourism and hospitality industries.

Rather than focus on how improve the overall qualities of life among the city’s existing residents, mainstream development agendas prioritize the needs and desires of outsiders, including tourists and ”back to the city” urban pioneers who are returning to downtown Chattanooga after spending several generations in more affluent, secluded communities like Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, and Signal Mountain. Leaders of this movement have pointed to the “Chattanooga Way” of cooperative planning and development to claim broad public engagement and civic participation/ responsibility, effectively obscuring the reality that

⁶⁸ Hughley, Vannice. Personal communication. 8 June 2013.

⁶⁹ It should be noted that this critique is also true of the workshops held by the Planning Free School of Chattanooga (Chapters 9 and 10) and of public participation processes in general. As organizers of the Planning Free School, we tried to address these constraints by offering frequent and regular sessions (typically 4-6 workshops per week), rescheduling events when they conflicted with other important community meetings, inviting participants to bring their children, offering food during weekend events, and arranging transportation services when necessary. These support services will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 9.

the majority of the city's residents, especially African Americans with working class backgrounds, have been absent from and/or unwilling to participate in the process.

Conclusion: Flipping the Script

Presently, there are several popular organizations working to flip the script of mainstream urban planning and economic revitalization in Chattanooga. These largely volunteer-based movements illuminate the highly uneven terrain of urban reinvestment and calling for a more equitably developed city. Volunteer-based groups such as Concerned Citizens for Justice (CCJ), Mercy Junction, Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA), the Westside Community Association, Idle No More Chattanooga and the Grove Street Settlement House problematize Chattanooga's storybook tale of urban progress through a range of creative, place-based public activities and initiatives, including marches, history tours, protests, street theatre, justice schools, skill sharing, storytelling, spoken word, free stores, discussions with community elders, and solidarity fundraisers.

Importantly, these groups integrate the typically cultural and symbolic work of placemaking with an economic justice-based vision for community planning and development, demonstrating the inextricability of these two elements to a transformative urban social justice movement in a diverse city comprised of many historically oppressed groups searching for material security and cultural belonging in their communities. Cultural development is not a set of relics; it is the active production of communities of security and belonging.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Leonie Sandercock and Kim Dovey (2002) explored the politics of Melbourne's waterfront redevelopment, arguing that despite hegemonic forces working to determine community narratives, "the public interest can never be preestablished, but is constructed in and through democratic public debate" (153).

Poverty is Violence In October 2011, local anti-racism activists Concerned Citizens for Justice (CCJ) organized two marches against police brutality along Chattanooga's riverfront. Organizers planned for the march to coincide with one of the city's major outdoor sports festivals ("River Rocks"), which is held at Ross's Landing and attracts thousands of tourists to the city. As part of the demonstration, participants marched to key sites of local Cherokee and African American exploitation and resistance, including the former City Jail, the Passage and the Walnut Street Bridge. Organizers drew attention to the historical significance of the sites and connected these legacies to ongoing struggles for social justice in downtown Chattanooga. During the march, organizers reclaimed sites of exploitation by highlighting the histories of local social and racial justice organizing in downtown Chattanooga. Their central message that "poverty is violence" disrupted the myth that urban reinvestment has been shared by everyone in the city and that racial reconciliation has been achieved.

The CCJ marches against racism and police brutality did more than publicly call out social inequalities: they also helped to forge spaces where diasporic citizens could come together to creatively imagine and create alternative worlds based on mutuality, trust and respect.⁷¹ For example, CCJ organizers used The Chattanooga Body Count Quilt as their banner during the march. The Chattanooga Body Count Quilt was begun by CCJ founding member Maxine Cousins as a way to process, heal, and memorialize the men and women whose lives had been lost while in police custody in Chattanooga since the mid 1970's. Each quilt square contains the name and face of one person.

Cousins described her motivation behind starting the quilt several years ago:

⁷¹ June Manning Thomas (1998) argued that issues of race and racism should be made central to the history of planning in the United States. Centering race helps us understand how space has been racialized and differentially ordered—but also reveals long struggles for community-self-determination.

You know, I really think you have to build relationships. I think you have to feel— from me to you—*that you have my best interest at heart and that I have your best interest at heart*. And that— you have to build that. That’s why I started the Body Count quilt. I think that if you have a *space where people can come to talk about their problems* and do a quilt or whatever—for whatever reason, you build relationships. *You begin to care about each other*. And then you start doing other things... If you’ve got those gardens on the Westside, teach people how to grow food and can! But do it at a big assembly—not individually. That will teach people to care about each other. That’s what needs to happen.⁷²

Cousin’s Bodycount Quilt illuminates some of the conditions that are prerequisites for moving beyond symbolic to substantive reconciliation in 21st century urban planning and community development. It is not simply about bringing people together in a space and letting them hash out differences. More fundamentally, we planners and urban practitioners should support and enable spaces and processes that allow participants to creatively process and potentially heal from trauma, collaboratively design community-based solutions, and practice the arts of interpersonal empathy and care.⁷³

⁷² Maxine Cousins. Personal communication. October 30, 2012.

⁷³ John Forester (1999) explored processes of trauma and healing in the context of participation in urban planning, reminding his readers that “Democracy can be painful, and any theory of political participation that obscures this fact should make us suspicious” (201). In other words, citizen engagement with planning involves interactions between people with, at times, vastly different experiences, opinions, and relationships to the city. To bring these perspectives together for the sake of ‘democracy’ increases the chances for disagreement, hurt feelings, and betrayal. To deny the emotional undercurrents of these differential politics is to deny the nature of democratic practice itself. However, Forester also reminds us that the payoff of going through deliberative processes despite the pains of historical trauma and disagreement can be substantial. “We must be able to design deliberative processes and rituals that do not re-traumatize citizens,” he wrote, “but instead attend systematically to citizens’ needs to safety, voice, recognition, and then public interaction and action together... If we do not ask citizens to leave their pain at the door, and we reshape our deliberative processes... we might better enable both voice *and* mourning, mutual learning *and* public action, that recognize and respond to needs and interests more and miss and dismiss them less” (217- 220).



Illustration 5.7: Members of Concerned Citizens for Justice (CCJ) march with the Chattanooga Body Count Quilt to the Chattanooga Riverfront to draw public attention to racism and police brutality (Photo Source: Jared Story)

Idle No More!

The Chattanooga riverfront and the Passage at Ross’s Landing have also recently become a central gathering space for Native American activists involved in the southeastern Idle No More! movement. Idle No More! is a growing global Native/First Nations movement that began in late 2012 after Attawapiskat First Nation Chief Theresa Spence began a six week hunger strike to protest the Canadian government’s treatment of first nation citizens. Spence’s protest quickly gained the attention of Native American activists and their allies across the western hemisphere, who responded by launching marches, walks, prayer vigils and flash mob “round dances” in public spaces across the United States and Canada. The purpose of these actions have

been to call attention to the apartheid-like conditions affecting Native communities living on Federal tribal lands and demand renewed commitments to legal and cultural tribal sovereignty.

On January 20, 2013, nearly one hundred primarily Cherokee residents from across the Chattanooga region gathered at Ross's Landing for a prayer vigil to honor Chief Spence. During this event, organizers made speeches, issued prayers, sang and played music, danced, and celebrated the Native American heritage of Chattanooga and southern Appalachia. Their collective message to both onlookers and to one another was clear: colonial—tribal relations have come a long way since the days of forced removal, but the legacies of racialized violence and dispossession remain the same. Public spaces such as The Passage tell important stories about resilience and symbolic homecoming, but they are only the beginning of a conversation about how placemaking and community development can support and enable an equitable and racially just world.



Illustration 5.9: Idle No More Chattanooga hosted a Prayer Vigil for Chief Theresa Spence at Ross's Landing (Source: Courtney Knapp January 20, 2013)

In closing, the Tennessee Riverfront and areas immediately surrounding Ross's Landing are historic sites of multiracial diasporic placemaking—spaces where overlapping cultural groups have worked with and against one another to carve out communities of material security and cultural belonging. While mainstream efforts have occasionally produced new collaborations and deeper affinities, oftentimes they resulted in greater conflict and contestation over physical space and cultural place in the city.

By exploring the thirty year-long physical and cultural return to the Tennessee Riverfront, this chapter has demonstrated how public and civic leaders in Chattanooga have used planning and placemaking to acknowledge and attempt to reconcile with local historical violence and trauma through diverse placemaking and policy initiatives. To contextualize the limits of these efforts, the chapter has emphasized the contestability of Chattanooga's mainstream racial reconciliation narrative by exploring two grassroots organizations' creative, direct action claims to the riverfront and the surrounding historic core.

CHAPTER 6: SINGING A BIG NINE BLUES REVOLUTION

While billions of dollars in public and private investments have poured into the riverfront and central business districts of Chattanooga over the past three decades, other inner urban core neighborhoods have not shared equitably in the fruits of these massive public, private and philanthropic reinvestments. Whether done intentionally or not, this historical and systematic neglect is starkly evident when one travels beyond the confines of the inner urban core and explores the neighborhoods that surround it.

The historic “Big Nine” district along and surrounding East Ninth Street (now East Martin Luther King Boulevard) is one such neighborhood. Located less than one mile from the Tennessee Aquarium, which is referred to by many locals as the “jewel” on Chattanooga’s renaissance “crown,” the Big Nine had once been one of the most thriving African American economic and cultural districts in the Southeast United States. In particular, the Big Nine was famous as a center for Blues music and culture, attracting as well as producing a great number of famous Black musicians and performance artists between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries.¹

But although the district was added to the National Register of Historic Place in 1984, today, many properties along the former business corridor stand vacant. Three crucial exceptions are the Bessie Smith Cultural Center and adjacent Chattanooga African American

¹ The cultural significance of East Ninth Street has been well documented. See, for example, Hubbard, R. L. (2007). *African Americans of Chattanooga: A history of unsung heroes*. Charleston, SC: History Press. and Scott, M. R. (2008). *Blues empress in black Chattanooga: Bessie Smith and the emerging urban South*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press..

Museum, which are both located on East MLK Blvd. near its intersection with Market Street, and the offices of the *Chattanooga Chronicle*, Chattanooga’s free weekly African American newspaper. Beyond these cornerstones, East MLK Street has several small African American owned restaurants, barber shops, and auto mechanics. However, the African American-owned business base today is only a fraction of what it was when the “Big Nine” had a reputation for being one of the foremost Black cultural and economic centers in the South. In fact, as urban planner and former Chattanooga Mayor Ron Littlefield joked during an interview for this project, “The most thriving business that we have on ML King right now is the chicken place which is owned by a white guy from Mississippi.”²



Illustration 6.1: East Martin Luther King Boulevard (East Ninth Street) Neighborhood (Basemap Source: Hamilton County GIS)

Recently, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) identified properties along the corridor for future student housing and research facilities, and several arts and community organizing nonprofits have turned their attention the historic district. This chapter assesses the historic rise, ‘decline,’ and ongoing revival of the East Ninth Street/ Martin Luther King Blvd.

² Littlefield, Ron .Personal communication. March 14, 2013.

corridor and neighborhood in order to further illuminate and contextualize the politics of multiethnic diasporic placemaking in present-day downtown Chattanooga. The public and institutional actors involved with the ongoing revitalization of the Martin Luther King Blvd. corridor and neighborhood stand to miss crucial opportunities for realizing the equitable redevelopment of the district. This loss is particularly acute given the neighborhood's long history of creative, cooperative African American (and as this chapter will demonstrate, multiracial) placemaking.



Illustration 6.2: Many commercial properties located along the historic Big Nine are vacant (Source: Courtney Knapp 2011)

Expanding the politics of stakeholdership to include the neighborhood's significant homeless and low to moderate income, non-student populations will do much to mitigate the negative impacts of gentrification across the neighborhood. However, greater inclusion procedurally must be complemented by commitments to a more equitable distribution of urban

opportunities and investment benefits moving forward. Fortunately, there are already several volunteer-based community organizations drawing explicit connections between local history, cultural empowerment, the arts and economic justice in Chattanooga. To this end, this chapter concludes with a discussion of some concrete tools and strategies planners might use to help better support and enable multiethnic diasporic placemaking through collaborative, mutual stakes-and-benefits-based cultural and community development moving forward.

Multiethnic Diasporic Placemaking along the “Big Nine”: Early Encounters

In order to contextualize current development trends in the neighborhood, it is necessary to have a sense for the historical development of the Big Nine and its surrounding residential communities. The opening of the Union Passenger Station at the intersection of 9th and Broad Streets in 1858 had a significant impact on the development of the 9th Street corridor and African American neighborhoods more generally across downtown Chattanooga. The 9th Street corridor, in addition to housing a major passenger depot, served as a thoroughfare to connect the eastern and western districts of the city. As discussed in previous chapters, Hamilton County’s African American population surged following the American Civil War, rising from 1,611 in 1860 to 19,508 in 1900. Historical documents discussed in Chapter 2 reveal that the vast majority of African Americans who migrated to the city in search of work and other socioeconomic and cultural opportunities settled in neighborhoods within the inner urban core.³

Local Civil Rights leader and current City Councilor Moses Freeman described this phenomenon during an interview for this dissertation project, recalling his sense as a young child

³At this time the African American community of Hill City, on the site of the former Camp Contraband, was autonomous and physically disconnected from the south shore of the Tennessee River. For more information, see Scott (2008) and Evans, E. R. (2012). *Bright memories: Beck Farm, Camp Contraband and Hill City*. Chattanooga, Tenn: Hill City Association.

that Chattanooga was a city full of economic, social, and cultural opportunities for African Americans despite the pervasiveness of de facto and de jure racial segregation:

Chattanooga... was a way station. During the migrant years of people going off from the rural areas of Mississippi and Alabama and Georgia going north came through Chattanooga, which was at the crossroads for travel. As a result, a lot of people got to Chattanooga and decided that this was a place to be, and stayed here; they settled here. So you had two factors of people living in Chattanooga: you had people who lived here all their lives, who were born and raised here; and then you had the people who came through Chattanooga and found it as a destination. As such, it was just a great mixture of people with different experiences and so forth.⁴

The vast majority of African American laborers and their families settled close to their industrial jobs, many of which were located near the western terminus of Ninth Street on the West Side of the city.⁵ Parham's *First Annual Directory of Chattanooga* (1871), for example, lists African American laborers employed at and living on the grounds of a variety of heavy manufacturing facilities, including Vulcan Iron Works and the steel rolling mill on the Westside. Many single men resided in boarding houses close to the rail yards and factories. Although Chattanooga's African American community resided primarily in the west and southern areas of town, the 1871 *Directory* also lists "colored" residents living to the east of Market Street on Gilmer (now East 8th) and East King Streets.⁶

By the late 1860's, several new African American and mixed race neighborhoods had begun to evolve in the areas to the east of the Union Terminal Station, including, as discussed in Chapter 3, Tadetown (the subject of the 1885 miscegenation scandals), Bushtown (the first all-Black municipality incorporated in the state of Tennessee), Churchville (another autonomous

⁴ Moses Freeman, personal communication, September 12, 2012.

⁵ Parham (1871), Hubbard (2007), and Scott (2008).

⁶ The largest concentrations of Black residents resided on East King Street (between East Ninth Street and the Terminal Passenger Station on Market) and Stanton's Addition (today the Southside neighborhood surrounding East Main Street). For more information, see *The First Annual Directory of the City of Chattanooga, 1871-1872*.

African American municipality incorporated in the late 19th century), and Onion Bottom (one of the city's most notorious mixed race slums).

Twenty years later, East Ninth Street, and the eight block segment between Houston and Magnolia Streets in particular, was flourishing. Sanborn insurance maps published in 1889 reveal the following commercial and civic uses located on the blocks along the strip: the Howard Colored Academy, the African Congregational Church, a Sunday School, eleven grocery stores, fifteen lunch shops, four boarding houses, five cobblers, four barbers, three salvage yards, two feed stores, two tin shops, a drug store, a wood and coal yard, an undertaker, two offices, a harness shop, a second hand store, two carpenters, a liquor storage facility, a cigar store, a meat shop, a “Chinese laundry” and a general store (Sanborn 1889). Surveyors noted dozens of Black-occupied informal housing structures (“shanties”), “Negro tenements” and “Negro dwellings”, in addition to several smaller African American churches throughout the wider neighborhood.

Subverting Chattanooga's Color Lines

Although policymakers and businessmen drew what they considered to be firm lines between white and black sections of town, de jure and de facto segregation did not stop everyday residents from reaching across the color line in attempts to forge more welcoming and equitable neighborhoods and communities. An excellent example of this early multiracial diasporic placemaking is Chattanooga's First Congregational Church, which was founded at the corner of East Ninth and A (now Lindsay) Streets in the years immediately following the Civil War. In 1866, Ewing Ogden Tade, an African American evangelical minister, moved to Chattanooga from Memphis to serve the rapidly growing freedmen population. Tade was met with opposition when he tried to organize African Americans who were enlisted by the Army of the Cumberland

to de-fortify the city in the wake of the civil war (see Chapter 2).Tade also drew attention for defying strict laws that relegated Blacks to the north side of the Tennessee River (Camp Contraband, later Hill City).

However, within one year Tade had convinced local leaders to grant him land for the construction of a church on East Ninth Street. Originally meant to be nondenominational, it opened its doors as the First Congregational Church on June 9, 1867, and in doing so, became the first racially integrated house of worship in the post-bellum South.⁷ When the Reverend J.E. Smith became the minister of the congregation in 1905, the stone church building which currently stands on the site was constructed employing exclusively African American craftsmen labor (Illustration 6.3 on the next page).

E.O. Tade was also famously responsible for securing the funds to open the original Howard Freedmen School in an abandoned confederate hospital building on Broad Street (1866), and was the namesake for Tadetown, the multiracial neighborhood targeted by anti-miscegenation activists in the early 1880's. Tade believed that access to education and safe, secure housing were paramount to the project of Black reconstruction, and so at the same time that he was securing land for the congregational church and working as a cashier at the National Freeman's Savings and Trust Company, he solicited funds from the New York chapter of the American Missionary Association (AMA) to purchase land for the settlement of between fifty and one hundred freedmen and their families. In a letter to the AMA, Tade contended that offering land would "do [the freedmen] good physically, mentally and spiritually" and promised that "with a little ready money, I can help them to homes—a very important thing in this great

⁷ Evans, R., & Hubbard, R. (2009). *Historic African American places in the Chattanooga area*. Signal Mountain, Tenn: CASI Publishing.

work of reconstruction.”⁸ His plea was successful, and the AMA granted Tade funds to purchase land surrounding the war fortifications in the northeastern region of the city.⁹



Illustration 6.3: The First Congregational Church Under Construction, East Ninth Street, 1904
(Source: *Achievements of Colored Citizens 1909*)

By 1917, the East Ninth Street corridor that had transformed further into an entertainment and cultural center: the street contained the Volunteer State Life Insurance headquarters, three “moving picture” houses, five pool halls, a theatre, lodge hall, bicycle shop, more than 140 small shops and services, an ice cream factory, coal yards, a stock yard, meat processing, a bakery, and several churches. By 1951, Prohibition had ended, and the commercial and civic mix had expanded to include two hotels (including the 50-room Martin Hotel, for a period, the largest full

⁸ Tade quoted in Evans, R., & Hubbard, R. (2009). *Historic African American places in the Chattanooga area*. Signal Mountain, Tenn: CASI Publishing, Page 101.

⁹ Today, the area known encompassing Tadetown is the affluent “Fort Wood” neighborhood adjacent to UTC).

service hotel owned by and operated for African Americans in the U.S. South), the Liberty Theatre, eighty five small shops, twenty three restaurants, four filling stations, several beer and liquor warehouses, and more than a dozen additional skilled services, goods warehouses and manufacturing industries.¹⁰ In 1957, East Ninth Street had 163 registered businesses. Zion College, an institution dedicated to higher education for African Americans, and Walden Hospital, the city's first African American owned and operated hospital, were also located in the neighborhood.



Illustration 6.4: Men standing in front of the famous Grand Theatre on East Ninth Street, 1940's (Source: Bessie Smith Cultural Center)

¹⁰ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company (1917), (1954). *Fire Insurance Maps for Chattanooga, Tennessee*. Sanborn Map Company - Digital Sanborn Maps – Accessed via <http://sanborn.umi.com>.

African American-Jewish Placemaking on the Big Nine

While East Ninth Street and the Big Nine has long been associated with African American culture and commerce, a lesser known and acknowledged history is that of the complex multiracial community building that occurred on the street and in the surrounding neighborhoods beginning in the late nineteenth century. Specifically, the neighborhood was also an important site of diasporic placemaking for a sizable and ethnically diverse Jewish merchant community, as well as a small Chinese population living in the city at the end of the 19th century.¹¹

Several social historians have demonstrated how Jewish merchants and entrepreneurs have been crucial to the Southern economy since before the U.S. Civil War, when they began to migrate beyond the eastern port cities to pedal goods and services in more rural areas across the southeastern and western frontiers.¹² During these travels, the merchants certainly would have interacted with and bartered/exchanged good and services with African Americans, and some social historians contend that these interactions made them more willing to establish permanent businesses in predominantly Black urban neighborhoods in the decades following the war.¹³

While a portion of Chattanooga's late nineteenth century Jewish population were likely native U.S. citizens who had moved from other parts of the country in the years surrounding the war,¹⁴ massive influxes of eastern European Jewish immigrants into the United States between

¹¹ Ten Chinese individuals were recorded by census takers in Hamilton County in 1890, and two Chinese-owned laundries were recorded on East Ninth Street in the *City Directory* for the same year. See *Chattanooga city directories, 1871-1901*. (1990). Nashville: Tennessee State Library and Archives.

¹² The southward and westward migration of Jewish immigrants is well documented. See Weisbord (1974), Franklin (1998), Webb (2001).

¹³ Webb, C. (2001). *Fight against fear: Southern Jews and Black civil rights*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press. See also Franklin, V. P. (1998). *African Americans and Jews in the twentieth century: Studies in convergence and conflict*. Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press.

¹⁴ The first Chattanooga City Directory, published in 1871, listed a Hebrew Benevolent Society and contained the listings for residents with several distinctively Jewish surnames. Jewish entrepreneurs owned dry goods stores,

1881 and 1924 likely accounts for most of the population growth. Prior to the U.S. Civil War, Hamilton County had a negligible foreign born population, totaling twenty-nine individuals in 1850. By 1860, this population had grown to 331 individuals, or 2.8% of the county's total population.

The 1870 Decennial Census was the first survey where detailed origin of birth data was collected, and in Hamilton County, these numbers reveal that although the majority of immigrants living in the county were from Canada and western Europe, there were growing Germanic and eastern European populations migrating to the county, as well. Of the 582 foreign born individuals recorded in the 1870 Census, for example, nearly a quarter were from Germany (N=143 or 24.6%). Over the next several decades, the eastern European and Russian immigrant communities in Hamilton County continued to grow: the German-born population alone nearly tripled in the ten year period between 1880 and 1890, while the Russian born population increased from zero in 1880 to 436 in 1910.

The *Chattanooga City Directory* published in 1890 provides further insight into Jewish-African American relations along the Big Nine at the dawn of the twentieth century: interspersed alongside Black-owned barbershops and grocery stores were Jewish-owned loan companies, cobblers, jewelers, clothiers, tailors, photographers, and dry goods merchants. The same directory also revealed two Chinese-owned businesses on the street, including Sam Wah's laundry service, which co-habited a commercial building on East Ninth Street with J.G. Higgins, an African American barber.¹⁵

By 1930, the eastern European immigrant populations in Hamilton County represented nearly a dozen countries, including Russia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia,

clothiers and at least one jewelry store. See *Chattanooga city directories, 1871-1901*. (1990). Nashville: Tennessee State Library and Archives.

¹⁵ Chattanooga City Directory, 1890-1.

Lithuania, Greece and Austria. While part of this growth can be attributed to the pro-immigration agendas adopted by the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce intended to dilute the political and economic power of African Americans during the Great Migration, the migration trends must also be put into their global historical context. While considered “white” by census takers, many of the eastern Europeans and Russians who migrated to the United States between 1881 and 1924 were ethnic Jews fleeing their home countries to avoid religious and cultural persecution in the wake of the Russian Empire’s expansion.

Mullins (1999) examined discourses of consumer belonging in Jewish owned, African American marketed business advertisements to argue that that in part because of their common diasporic experiences of cultural marginalization and physical insecurity, interactions between Jewish immigrants and African Americans in the Jim Crow south were fundamentally different than those between non-Jewish whites and Blacks. Not only could Jewish merchants empathize with African Americans’ desires to be treated with humanity and respect in the marketplace-- they also saw the systematic economic neglect of Black communities by established whites as significant consumer bases waiting to be tapped. Mullins wrote,

African American marketing discourses were central to the critique of racism in consumer space because they attempted to accept, evade, minimize, or resist economic and civil injustices inflicted by white merchants...Practically, most African American marketers were unable to utterly circumvent White elite control of dominant labor structure, production and capital distribution. Nevertheless, a host of small merchants marketed a wide range of essential goods and services to African Americans and helped African Americans articulate their shared desire for material and social self-empowerment denied in White consumer space...African American marketing confronted White consumer space’s racist boundaries and envisioned how African America could secure increasing influence over consumer space.¹⁶

¹⁶ Mullins, P. R. (1999). *Race and affluence: An archaeology of African America and consumer culture*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. Page 98.

While Mullins presents a compelling theory of Southern Jewish-African American collaboration and mutual support in the economic sphere, there is not consensus among historians that Black-Jewish mutuality was the dominant trend. Webb (2001) argued that many Jewish merchants' attitudes towards substantive African American civil rights and racial integration were ambivalent at best. Webb argues that in Atlanta, Little Rock, Birmingham, and other urban areas across the Southeast, Jewish merchants owned many of the large department stores where lunch counter sit-ins and other forms of nonviolent civil disobedience were staged in the early 1960's. Eager to retain the patronage of both white and Black customers, Jewish business owners found themselves "caught in the crossfire" of the unfolding Civil Rights movement. Clive summed up this ambivalence as such:

The owners of [department] stores were obliged to observe existing laws about the separation of the races...[The Greensboro, North Carolina sit-ins] sparked a series of similar direct action campaigns across the South...No matter how sympathetic Jewish merchants might have been in principle to the idea of integration, in practice they appeared to be stern opponents...Ultimately they were paralyzed by the conflicting pressures that the black and white communities placed upon them. Anxious to arrive at a settlement that would not alienate either side and therefore adversely affect their businesses, the merchants were unable to offer any clear direction as to how the conflict should be resolved.¹⁷

In the context of downtown Chattanooga, African American—Jewish economic and social relations were likely not a case of either-or, but both-and. In the predominantly Black sections of town—especially East Ninth Street—small business owners of both races worked (and to a lesser extent, lived) side by side as early as the Reconstruction period.¹⁸ But in the white owned-and controlled Central Business District along Market Street, African American civil rights demonstrators were met with ambivalence if not outright resistance from the Jewish merchants

¹⁷ Webb, C. (2001). *Fight against fear: Southern Jews and Black civil rights*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press. Page 89.

¹⁸Chattanooga City Directories 1871-2, 1900-1, 1920-1.

who owned the department stores where the sit-ins were staged (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the Chattanooga sit-ins).

The complexity of multiracial diasporic placemaking along the Big Nine is further complicated by the presence of more radical social actors who sought to build a more just and equitable society *outside* of the capitalist marketplace. In Chapter 3, I briefly discussed how Chattanooga's rapid ascent to "Dynamo of Dixie" status attracted the attention of radical labor organizers in the 1920's and 1930's, many of whom identified as Jewish communists.

As early as 1876, members of the Socialist Labor Party of America (SLPA) were organizing exploited industrial workers across downtown Chattanooga (Hamilton 2013), and on February 8, 1885, a group of German-born laborers reportedly met to organize a socialistic party based on, among other principles, "equal rights to all without distinction of race or sex."¹⁹

The influx of Jewish radicals ramped up in the months following the Stock Market crash of October 1929. Earlier that year, several members of the Communist Party of the United States of America's (CPUSA) National Textile Workers Union had moved to the region to stage a massive labor strike at the Loray Textile Mill in Gastonia, North Carolina. Sixteen organizers with the union were arrested and charged with murder and conspiracy after a policeman was shot and killed during a camp raid on the night of June 7, 1929; the three women (Amy Schecter, Sophie Melvin and Vera Bush) faced long prison sentences, while the men faced execution by electric chair. In response to the arrests, the CPUSA began a major campaign to free Loray Mill organizers, and following national protests against "Gastonia-style justice" most of the defendants were exonerated of their charges and allowed to resume their work.

Less than four months after the Loray Mill strike, the stock market plummeted. Realizing that the crash presented a political opportunity, CPUSA organizers decided to leverage public

¹⁹Chattanooga Times, February 9, 1885, page 8.

discontent against big capital as a means to expand the party's membership base. With its expansive and diverse manufacturing base, rapidly growing pool of nonunionized labor, and regional proximity to Birmingham, Atlanta, and Knoxville (not to mention the rural communities between them) the Dynamo of Dixie quickly became the center for the CPUSA's southern organizing efforts. According to local historian Chuck Hamilton,

The CPUSA's first inroad into the city of Chattanooga came in 1930 via the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL). The TUUL was the CPUSA's arm for organizing labor at the time, setting up parallel organizations to and within existing trade unions as well as organizing the unorganized. Its headquarters was at 2207 South Broad Street, a building which no longer exists due to US 27 (formerly I-124). The local was staffed by Amy Schechter, Fred Totheroe, Red Hendricks, and an "unnamed Negro."²⁰

Both Schechter and Hendrix had been defendants in the Loray Mill strike trial, while Totheroe worked as a textile worker in Gastonia. Although the African American organizer was never named, he was described by the press as a "Georgia Negro with a Harlem accent."²¹

Although their office building was several blocks across town, at least one of the organizers (Schechter) resided on East Ninth Street (Chris Brooks, personal communication, 2012). The TUUL quickly set about building their membership base, which because of widespread racial antipathy among whites, was comprised almost exclusively of African American laborers. During TUUL's inaugural meeting in Chattanooga on February 1, 1930, Schechter appealed to workers on both sides of the color line, proclaiming that their common experiences of economic exploitation united them more than their races divided them. "The Trade Union Unity League is an avenging angel," Schechter warned participants during the meeting, "sent to strike down the bosses and heal the wounds of the working man."²²

²⁰ Hamilton (2013), page 1.

²¹ *Chattanooga Times*, February 2, 1930, page 5.

²² Schechter quoted in Brooks, Chris (2012).

Despite their emphasis on racial unity, local racial tensions and white laborers' resentments towards African Americans threatened to divide and conquer TUUL's membership base. Not only were white laborers unwilling to place themselves in solidarity with Blacks, who they viewed as inferior to themselves, but so too were these ideas rejected by prominent Black residents in town who (at least publicly) preferred racial "harmony" to racial equity. Following the TUUL meeting, D.C. Harper, a well-known African American, made the following statement in an interview with the *Chattanooga Times*:

The colored people are against the movement made by the communists in this city. It can do nothing more than stir up strife among the whites and blacks. We want harmony and we are doing everything we can to get it. I know that the better classes of the whites are doing the same thing. Of course, we are not talking asking for social equality, but we do want, more than anything else, to get along with the white people and this I believe will help us. I am asking every negro pastor in Chattanooga to instruct his congregation about these communists...I want these pastors to tell the people that it can bring nothing but ill feeling among the whites and blacks if they join the movement.²³

Harper called on local Black ministers to "condemn" and "flay" the communists. Eager to appease the white power structure, fourteen Black pastors spoke out publicly against the "reds" on Broad Street, declaring that interracial organizing would only "stir up strife" between the races. In response to this threat, and fueled by their moral opposition to African American lynchings which were plaguing the region, the CPUSA used their newspaper *The Southern Worker* to launch anti-racism and anti-lynching campaigns from their headquarters in Chattanooga.²⁴

The editorial staff published numerous first person accounts of the unequal and inhumane working and living conditions experienced by many Black laborers and their families, in addition

²³ Harper quoted in *Chattanooga Times*, February 1, 1930, 7.

²⁴ Although the newspaper's byline said it was published in Birmingham, the *Southern Worker* was actually published and printed in Chattanooga. CPUSA organizers printed "Birmingham" to mislead anti-communist thugs who might try to target and destroy the office and printing press (Chris Brooks, personal communication, August 2012).

to political cartoons and editorials emphasizing the interconnectedness of white and Black class liberation (Illustration 6.4). As part of their antiracism work, TUUL collaborated with the Southern Provisional Organizational Committee of the American Negro Labor Congress to organize a national Anti-Lynching Conference in Chattanooga. An editorial entitled “At the Basis of Lynch Law” captures the CPUSA’s reasons for supporting the conference and anti-lynching/anti-racism organizing more generally:

Lynching is not some “evil” separate and apart from the whole capitalist system. It is part and parcel of the whole system of capitalist exploitation. Any ruling class which exploits the masses in the manner in which 12,000,000 Negroes are being exploited in this country, must have resort to all manner of terrorism to “keep the nigger in his place.” In other words, to keep him chained to the wheel of profit...

Actual lynching by rope, stake and gun, by some mob of white hoodlums usually led by white businessmen, is not, however, the only form that lynching takes... Continually, every minute of the day, the whole system of segregation and Jim-Crowism functions as a lynch law process in a thousand and one ways-- making the Negro suffer all forms of humiliation and persecution. Making the Negro seem like a lower form of humanity, who for some reason or another have not attained that degree of higher white civilization which finds such keen delight in all the delicacies of lynching, makes it that much easier to give him lower wages, the dirtiest work, takes his crops away from him, fire him. And if the Negro revolts there is lynch law to deal with him...

The fight against lynching is a part of our whole struggle against capitalism. Only by defeating capitalism, and smashing the whole lynch law system, can we do away with lynching... The full energies of the white and Negro workers of the South must be devoted to making a success of the Anti-Lynching Conference in Chattanooga called by the Provisional Committee for the South of the American Negro Labor Congress to make it representative of the wide and militant masses of Southern toilers.²⁵

The conference, which was held on November 9, 1930 at the Odd Fellow’s Building (124 East Ninth Street), attracted fifty four delegates from three southern states. African American autonomy and self-determination were central themes during the event-- though both were understood as hinging on the cooperation of white workers’ whose potential solidarity could

²⁵ *Southern Worker*, September 27, 1930, page 4.

overpower the divide and rule strategies used by politicians and businessmen eager to exploit labor to expand financial profits. During a keynote speech, Tom Johnson, an African American CPUSA member and local Chattanooga, proclaimed that “lynching will only be done away with in the South after the Negro masses have won for themselves the right of self-determination, the right to set up an independent Negro state of the South where Negroes are in the majority.”²⁶

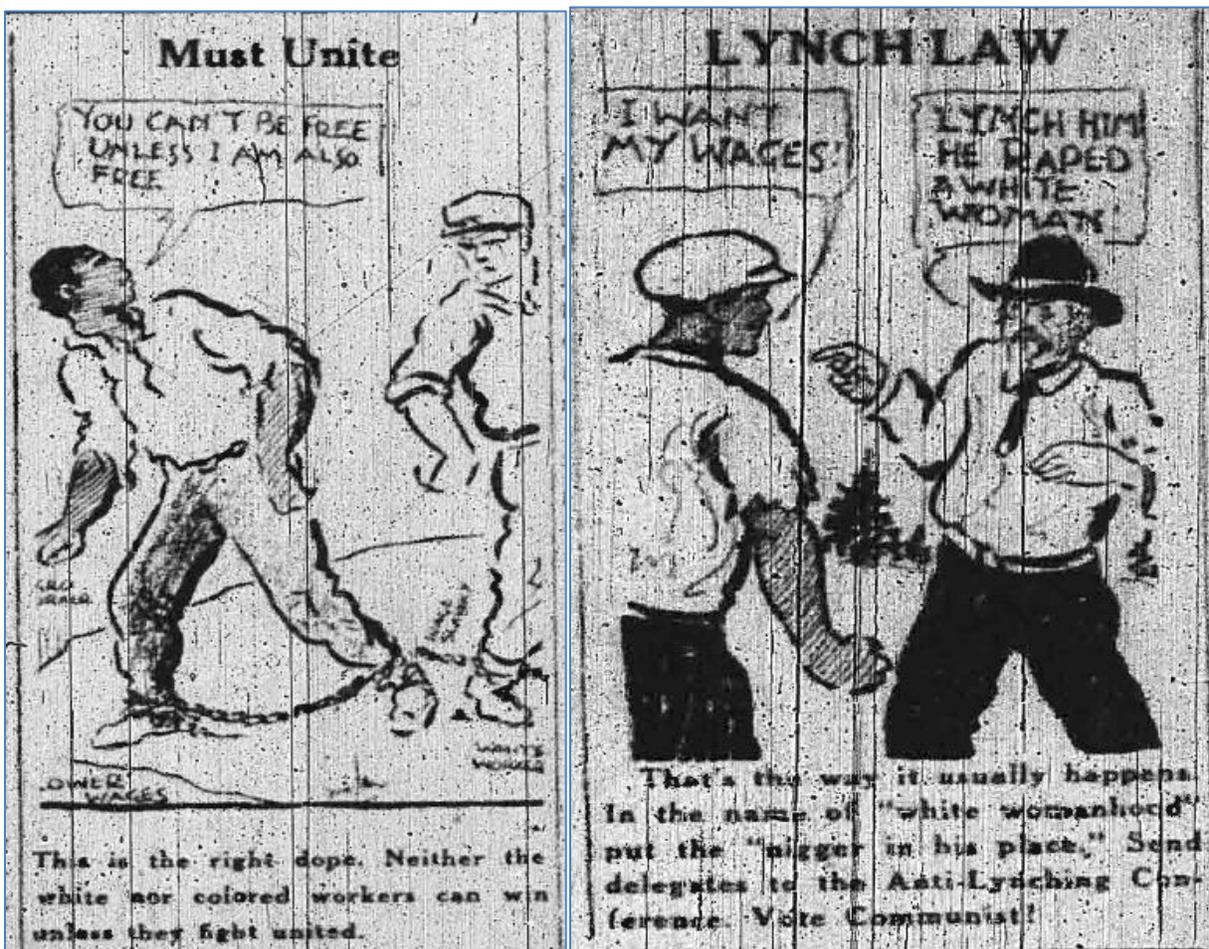


Illustration 6.5: CPUSA illustrations promoting interracial worker solidarity and the anti-lynching movement (Source: Southern Worker 1930)

²⁶ Johnson paraphrased in *Southern Worker*, November 15, 1930, pages 1-2.

Blues on the Big Nine

Despite de facto and de jure racism and spatial segregation, Chattanooga's African American artists, civic leaders, entrepreneurs, and everyday residents created a flourishing artistic, economic and cultural base in Black sections across the city. These creative community-building activities included music, religious and spiritual practice, civic participation, performance and visual arts, and a range of private and cooperative enterprises, produced a sense of freedom and opportunity that in some ways transcended—or at least distracted from-- the physical confines of spatial segregation during the Jim Crow era.

At the center of African American cultural production during the Jim Crow period was a burgeoning popular musical form known as the Blues. Local Chattanooga and Blues social historian Clark White described Chattanooga at the turn of the 20th century as place in rapid flux, where regional cultural, economic and social traditions were converging, overlapping, adapting, improvising, and reconfiguring themselves—forces which produced unique forms of creative expression reflective of their unprecedented movements and migrations:

[Blues] was the music of the Black rural peasant slowly becoming a new industrial working class. They came from land defined by the soil to land covered with concrete. They no longer had to labor as plantation hands—they now found employment as industrial workers in the emerging foundry industry of the city. The music of these proletarians was the blues. It was rooted in and defined by the laws of Black folklore, which included songs, rhymes, stories, sayings, jokes and sermons that reflected an African American point of view. The blues is not exclusively and primarily a “sad” music as it is so often represented. However, this essentially existentialist worldview encompasses feelings that include affirmation, lamentation, celebration, contemplation, irony, wit, and ambivalence. Blacks in Chattanooga had a lot to sing the blues about.²⁷

With its numerous restaurants, theatres, dance halls, and other creative community spaces, East Ninth Street quickly became a center for Blues music and culture in the South. But while the

²⁷ Clark White (2014), page 7.

image of Bessie Smith singing on the street corner is the most popular indication of the Big Nine's significance to Blues culture, the late urban social historian Clyde Woods (1998) argued that the Blues as uniquely diasporic forms of cultural expression go well beyond their popular definitions as a Black musical genre.²⁸

Randolph Miller, for example, the ex-slave-turned-journalist and community organizer who published the *Chattanooga Blade* and who led the July 1905 Jim Crow streetcar protests, had his office and printing press in the vicinity of the present-day Bessie Smith Cultural Center. Unwilling to endure racist policies in public transportation, Miller not only publicly rejected the Jim Crow streetcar laws—he self-organized an alternative transit system to transport African Americans around the city in dignity and with respect (see Chapter 4). In Woods's sense, Miller's transportation justice work was a form of blues as spatial practice-- at once resisting oppressive white structures and articulating an alternative world based on equity and racial justice. Moreover, Miller's hackney/jitney lines are an example of how and why diasporic placemaking activities have historically occurred outside of and/or in opposition to official (i.e. white, middle class) processes and city-backed institutions.

Diasporic placemaking also produced a number of civic, fraternal and mutual aid organizations—and unsurprisingly, many were located on or in the vicinity of East Ninth

²⁸ For Woods (1998), the Blues encompass an epistemological frame or “system of [world] explanation” that undergirds all daily socio-spatial practices, including placemaking, planning, and community development. Grounded in everyday acts of creative resistance against oppression and desires to forge places of belonging and security out of at times violently unwelcoming environments, the blues epistemology is defined in part by the shared historical experiences of physical uprooting, political marginalization and economic injustice, but importantly, is not imprisoned by them. Woods argued that it was through the various expressions of the blues epistemology that a society based on racial and economic justice and socio-spatial equity had emerged historically and would continue to emerge in the future. During the last three hundred years, the African American working class has daily constructed their vision of a non-oppressive society through a variety of cultural practices, institution-building activities, and social movements. By doing so, they have created an intellectual and social space in which they could discuss, plan, and organize this new world. The blues are the cries of a new society being born.” (Woods 1998, page 39). In so far that many of the African American placemaking and community building activities discussed throughout this dissertation occurred in and around East Ninth Street, it was from within the Big Nine that the cries of a new society could be heard the loudest.

Street.²⁹ These formal and informal associations provided crucial social services to members of the Black community in the absence of economic, political and technical support from white public and private institutions. A powerful example of an informal mutual aid association from this period was the Loomis and Hart Manufacturing Company. Located at 719 East Ninth Street, the company employed a racially mixed workforce, who were known for donating a portion of every paycheck to a fund to support the Steele Home, an orphanage established for the hundreds of African American children orphaned by the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878.

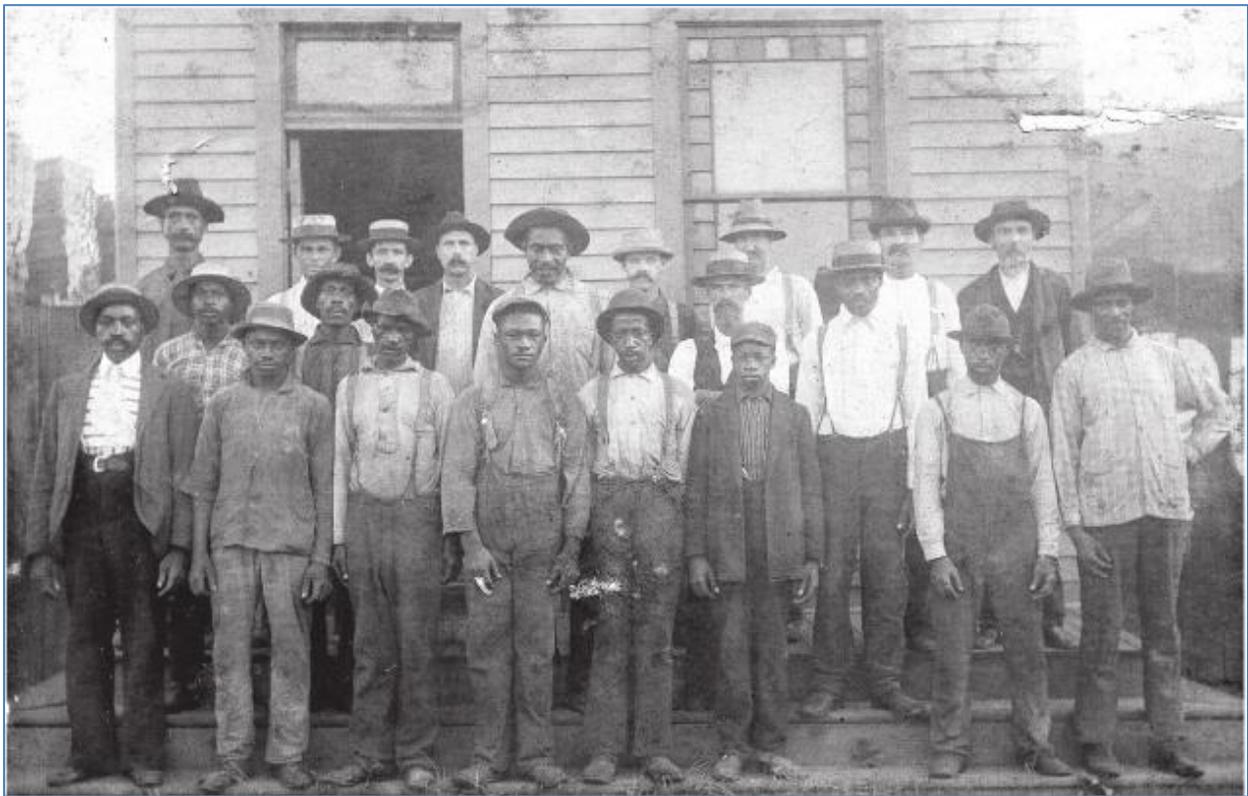


Illustration 6.6: Workers employed at the Loomis and Hart Manufacturing Company donated 25 cents of every paycheck to the nearby Steele Orphanage for Colored Children

The Chattanooga branch of the Supreme Officers of Knights of the Wise Men, a fraternal Order associated with the Freemasons, was one of the most prominent of the formal cooperative associations to serve Chattanooga's Black community at the turn of the twentieth century.

²⁹ *Chattanooga City Directories* (1880-1) and (1902-3). See also Hubbard (2007) and Scott (2008) for brief discussions of the Loomis and Hart Company.

Formed in Nashville in 1879, within ten years the Officers had expanded to 278 lodges across the Southeast, and for a time, the Chattanooga lodge had the largest membership in the United States.³⁰

Headed up by J.L. Brown, the Supreme Officers provided fraternal insurance and burial benefits to its members—services that few working class African Americans could afford. The association was so popular that it nearly bankrupted itself paying out benefits to members following a smallpox epidemic during the winter of 1882-3. In an advertisement published in the *Biography & Achievements of the Colored Citizens in Chattanooga* (1904), Brown described the organization’s commitment to the principles of friendship and mutual aid, defining their work as a form of “disinterested mutual regard” which was rooted partially in the shared experiences of economic marginalization, but more importantly, in the wisdom that comes with recognizing the fundamental equality of all races:

In its degrees the necessity of brotherly love is taught, and the importance of the relief of distress, and consoling the afflicted. Some may ask: “Is friendship taught, and what is it?” We would answer: “It is disinterested mutual regard.”... We take it for granted that good morals, good education and good homes are necessary to good citizenships, and the foundation stone of good government and lasting usefulness.

We believe that an acre of noble oaks is worth a forest of brush wood, and that one true and loyal Knight is worth a Lodge or Chamber room full of trash.

We fully recognize the fact that we are poor and need no weight upon us, and to make our way successfully through life requires through organizations of the masses, without which our future cannot be a bright one. It is only by our good qualities rightly set forth that we are to succeed in the future. First by educating every boy and girl and teaching them from the cradle to the grave honesty, industry, economy of time and means, and the fullest enjoyment of all rights as citizens, and the destruction, death and burial of the accursed idea that the negro is inferior, simply because he has been in time deprived of life, liberty, and property. Let us all be wise men and women.³¹

³⁰ Walker (2008).

³¹ J.L. Brown, Supreme Archon of the Supreme Officers of Knights of Wise Men of the World quoted in White, J. B. (1904). *Biography and achievements of the colored citizens of Chattanooga*, 1904. S.I: s.n..

Black Cosmopolitanism in Jim Crow Chattanooga

Despite pervasive economic and social inequality between whites and Blacks living in the city, many local African Americans today who lived during Chattanooga's Jim Crow period maintain that the tight-knittedness and sense of opportunity within the Black community itself made up for the lack of opportunities available to them in the broader white-controlled city and region.. To this end, the cultural and economic significance of the Big Nine for African Americans is apparent whenever one speaks to a local resident who lived during Jim Crow-era Chattanooga and experienced the vitality of the street firsthand.

Regardless of socioeconomic status, the Big Nine offered African Americans living in and visiting the city a place to create and appreciate art and music; shop, sell, and barter goods and services; participate in Black civic and political life, and seek out and build community through churches, social clubs, businesses and other place-based associations. For current City Councilman and longtime civil rights worker Moses Freeman, who grew up in the College Hill Courts public housing project on the Westside, Jim Crow-era Chattanooga was a thoroughly “cosmopolitan” place for African Americans in large part because of the artistic and cultural opportunities located along the Big Nine and in other Black sections of the downtown:

Chattanooga at that time, in my mind, was a cosmopolitan community—both in the white community and the Black community. There was lots of entertainment; lots of restaurants and nightclubs—particularly in the MLK area—but there were a few in the downtown area, as well... There were a lot of rooftops; a lot of living space above businesses; there were thriving businesses of all types, that were there during the day and nightclubs that operated primarily at night. There were a few what we called “juke joints” that operated all day and night long. But by and large, it was just full of restaurants. The people who lived above the businesses, all up and down 9th Street, really were the clients, the primary clients, of the businesses up and down the street. And of course we came from all over town to the central area to do business, and so it was

thriving. Just about anything you could want to do in life could be found there—you know, of any type and variety.³²

While the Blues were often performed in outdoor public spaces, it was within the juke joints that the Blues were arguably expressed in their purest forms. Juke joints and other somewhat ‘underground’ community spaces were critical sites of diasporic placemaking, wherein African Americans desiring communities of cultural belonging and material security could articulate and at times enact their visions for a fair and equitable world without fear of retribution. Off limits to the majority of whites, these at-times-underground spaces afforded working class African Americans reprieve from the de jure and de facto racism that determined their access to physical and social space in the city, while also providing a semi-public space wherein to articulate their alternative visions for the city and world.³³Freeman continued:

Chattanooga [has] always [been] a musically gifted city during my lifetime. Even when I was a kid selling newspapers up and down the street, there was always live music playing in the clubs up and down Ninth Street. On any given weeknight, even during the week, you would have Blues *live* in one place; Jazz *live* in the next; somebody playing violin in another place; a piano player *playing* and a singer *singing*. You could have a dance music group playing with a bunch of kids dancing... *all on any night*, you could go from place to place to place.³⁴

Although it was predominantly a low income, renter population, the East Ninth Street community defied negative stereotypes about poor, segregated communities. In 1950, the neighborhood (census tract #15) had 7,184 residents comprising 3,305 households. More than four-fifths (80.5%) of the population was Black, while the remaining twenty percent (19.7%) were white. Compared to urban core as a whole, the Big Nine neighborhood had a lower median household income (\$1,246 versus \$2,066), lower median school years completed (6.8 versus

³² Freeman, Moses. Personal communication. September 12, 2012.

³³ Woods (1998) and Scott (2008).

³⁴ Freeman, Moses. Personal communication. September 12, 2012. .

8.8), lower median contract rent (\$19/month versus \$25/ month), and a slightly higher unemployment rate (8% versus 5.4%).³⁵

Despite these statistics, the East Ninth Street community at the dawn of the Civil Rights period was socially tight-knit and economically stable. Of the nearly two thousand (1,933) housing units in the district, only forty-six (2.4%) were vacant. More than three quarters of residents had lived in the neighborhood for at least one year, and those in the work force were employed in a diverse range of manufacturing and primarily service-oriented economic sectors.

For Freeman, a proper education and gainful employment were the keys to being able to participate fully in all of the “cosmopolitan” urban social life that Chattanooga had to offer. Oftentimes, children in low income families like his would work in addition to going to school, in order to contribute to the family’s economic security and help build access to some middle class amenities. Freeman continued in his description of growing up in a segregated yet cosmopolitan city:

It was cosmopolitan to the extent that living even—we were poor. My family was poor—we lived in [public housing]—but we never had a sense of being poor, or in poverty or deprived. You could live whatever life you could afford. I started working, myself, in the third grade, selling newspapers up and down the street, primarily on West 9th Street. So I was in and out of the businesses selling papers. I got to see the lives that people were living, and I guess you could say it was a pretty picture. I could see what was going on and wanted to live that life myself. And I just enjoyed Chattanooga. Chattanooga was just a *unique place*. We had [Ku Klux] Klan activity, but it was isolated and infrequent. So it really didn’t bother us. In some instances, we ran the Klan off—the adults—and...we had guns, too.

So we sort of lived a segregated life and we lived a *good life*, for that matter. During my teenage years, in order to socialize as a teenager, I had to own a tuxedo. I had to have a white dinner jacket for Spring and Summer, and a black tuxedo for the fall, because we

³⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. Population Statistics, 1950 SF1 tables. Available from Social explorer: <http://www.socialexplorer.com>.

had a lot of events; we were a close-knit community. But we *lived* the typical middle class lifestyle even though we were poor.³⁶

Ms. Vannice Hughley, the current President of the Lincoln Park neighborhood in East Chattanooga, was born in her home at the corner of Ninth and University Streets on July 10, 1938. During an interview for this project, Hughley recalled her life as a young African American woman growing up under strict Jim Crow rule in downtown Chattanooga. Like Freeman, Hughley grew up low income but had a sense she had been somehow protected from the limitations of her family's socioeconomic status by parents and a community who cared for one another:

I was raised on the corner of University and 9th Streets. And most of us, if not all of us, were born at home. [Black folks didn't trust the hospital]. We had doctors who came to our house. And midwives. All of us were born at home. And that was just the norm. Family came; ladies came in and helped; it was so *simple*... We were simple, and it really was a good thing. It was a good thing. You didn't even realize there were rich people and there were white people.³⁷

Although there were certainly drawbacks to living in a racially segregated city—Black students would have to travel far to get to public school, for example, and the African American schools were always stocked with the outdated hand me downs from the white schools—Hughley, like Freeman, recalled with nostalgia the tight-knittedness of a community that looked out for and took care of one another; that protected their children and kept them sheltered from the racist hostilities surrounding them.

As discussed in Chapter 2, local white political and economic leaders co-opted important wins in the strong Black community to argue that the city was progressive and racially tolerant. But, as argued in Chapter 4, liberal rhetoric often concealed highly conservative policies and practices enacted precisely to control and limit the movement of Black bodies in physical and

³⁶ Freeman, Moses. Personal communication. September 12, 2012.

³⁷ Hughley, Vannice. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

social space. As this chapter has already shown, attempts made by individuals and groups to dismantle the local Jim Crow society and/or promote racial equity were often met with reservation and bureaucratic stalling from local elected officials, hostility from white residents, and fear from African American elders who had lived through more violent times.

Such was the experience for Moses Freeman, who as a child visited the City Commission with a group of white coworkers and requested permission to play baseball together:

I can't tell you what was going on in the white community, except that in my job as a newspaper boy, I ended up working with all white newspaper boys. I was the only Black boy who worked with these white kids. The difference was that even though I lived in the projects, I felt that I was better off than most of them. They came from *very poor* homes, and they came there to support themselves and their homes; to buy their shoes and clothes; and most of them were dropping out of school. They lived in parts of the Westside but were more towards the river—down on Chestnut Street and Pine Street and over by the university—those were white communities. We had some interminglement. As kids, we played sports, and naturally our neighborhood wanted to play their neighborhoods, and we were able to do that as kids and met some lifelong friends in that environment.

What we did with playing competitive sports was frowned upon by the general population. In a lot of instances, we were forced not to do so. I was part of a group of whites and Blacks who were to City Hall to *get permission* to play with each other. We were naïve, I guess, at that time. Of course, the Commissioner told us that *could not happen*. And so, you know, it didn't happen. We were afraid of the police and the enforcement mechanism. There were a lot of mean white people who said mean things to us as kids, so we stayed and shied away from any environment that would put us in confrontation with them. But we maintained some of our friendships through the years.

There were a few of the boys who sold newspapers who I went on to study with, and that's when I first realized that we had different text books. They had newer text books and we had the older books that came from those same schools. But we competed with each other academically and with studying, with learning the states and geography and history; who could speak the best English language and stuff. A couple of them went on to become teachers, and I became a teacher; so we met as teachers and that sort of thing. Some of the kids we would meet, even growing up downtown, we would have to ignore each other as if we didn't know [one another], because if they let on to their parents particularly, that would be the end of that. They'd get in serious trouble. And if we let our parents know that we had white friends, our parents would become so frightful and

afraid. And so they'd discourage the mingling out of fear, more so than out of hatred, which was prevalent in the white section at that time.³⁸

Freeman's passage is illuminating for several reasons. First, citing the "natural" desire to interact and compete with other children, Freeman's anecdote fits into a historical legacy of interracial mutuality *in spite of* de facto and de jure forces trying to keep whites and Blacks apart. Relatedly, it was through these unsanctioned social interactions that Freeman's own sense of racial inequality began to form. Given the fragility of the possessive investment in whiteness³⁹ in Chattanooga, it is unsurprising that many whites living in the city would have felt personal stakes in maintaining a segregated spatial order: allowing youth to interact would have given them opportunities to compare notes about the varying qualities of life (or in the case of the passage above, qualities of public education) in their communities. As with the case of Freeman comparing his textbooks with those of his fellow newsboys, such comparisons often produced an acute sense of inequality and injustice and inspired many to become involved with the local civil rights movement that was ramping up around the Southeast during this time.

Coming of age in the Jim Crow South required that African American residents learn to obey a "second set of rules" for both public and private conduct that were both racialized and gendered.⁴⁰ Instructed by their elders to always act demure, accommodating, and to never talk back to white people, young African Americans living in Jim Crow-era Chattanooga, and women in particular, became targets for all sorts of race-based emotional, physical and sexual violence.

³⁸ Freeman, Moses. Personal communication. September 12, 2012.

³⁹ Denying whiteness as a racial category, neglecting to see that whiteness has a history and geography—as Americans have long done—allows whiteness to stand as the norm. "Whiteness never has to speak its name," George Lipsitz (1998) wrote, "never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations" (page 1). Despite its pervasiveness, the stability of whiteness as a form of social power is quite fragile, depending "not only on white hegemony over separate racialized groups, but also on manipulating racial outsiders to fight against one another, to compete with one another for white approval, and to seek the rewards and privileges of whiteness for themselves at the expense of other racialized populations" (3).

⁴⁰ Hughley, Vannice and Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

Often this harassment would occur in the workplace, with some of the most egregious violations happening in private homes.

In 1950, more than one-third (474 or 36.2%) of employed women who lived in the East Ninth Street neighborhood worked in private homes (US Census Bureau 1950). Hughley described how her father tried to protect the women in her family from potential exploitation by forbidding her to work in private homes:

My dad wouldn't allow us to work in a private home. As his girls, we weren't allowed to work in a private home. Or babysit. He was so mean! We'd be lucky if we had fifty cents, if we got fifty cents or a quarter. Everyone else worked on the weekends and in the summertime. They had money to buy themselves new clothes. And we didn't. I couldn't understand why my dad never wanted us to work in a private home. My Mom did; but we didn't. We *couldn't*.

I read the book, after I was grown up, called *Black Like Me*. This white woman did something to her skin to make it dark, and went into a private home to work as a maid. Everyone went to work, and then the husband *came back to the house and raped her*. That book *Black Like Me* told it. Then I understood why my father never let us work in private homes. He had this little bitty axe, and if anyone ever messed with his girls, well... he was always sharpening that axe. We used to laugh at him because of that axe, but now I understand why he never, ever allowed us to work in a private home. Nope! We couldn't do it.⁴¹

Although the extra income from a private household job would have likely created new economic opportunities for her family, many African American households such as her own preferred to live with less money, and in doing so, gain greater safety against potential white violence.

Desegregation and Suburbanization's Impact on the Big Nine

Similar to many deindustrializing North American cities during the second half of the twentieth century, Chattanooga suffered immense economic damages following the global

⁴¹ Hughley, Vannice. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

economic restructuring that resulted from the international oil crisis in 1973. As international trade barriers were lifted and the world opened itself up to the flows of global capital, the economic divestment in U.S. urban centers accelerated. The results were massive increases in urban unemployment, decreased center city property values, structure abandonment and physical neighborhood deterioration, and exacerbated racial and socio-economic polarization.

As the most heavily industrialized city in the Southeast,⁴² Chattanooga suffered dramatically during the decades where the city transitioned away from a manufacturing-based economy. For decades the city had been known around the world as the “Dynamo of Dixie.” In fact, a publication celebrating the city’s 150th anniversary stated that Chattanooga had led the State of Tennessee in industrial expansion for the fifth straight year, waging an unprecedented \$152 million in industrial investments in 1964.

But having one of the world’s most diversified industrial economies became more of a curse than a boon during these structural transformations, and unsurprisingly, communities of color were hit the hardest.⁴³ In 1970, for example, the unemployment rate in Hamilton County was 2.94%-- with rates distributed more or less equally across race (2.6% white versus 4.9% Black) and gender (2.3% men versus 3.82% women) categories. Ten years later, the county-wide unemployment rate had increased to 6.8%, with African Americans suffering the greatest employment losses (11.7% unemployment versus 5.9% among whites).

Although several Black neighborhoods across the urban core suffered even greater physical and economic deterioration than the East Ninth Street neighborhood, the impacts on the district were also dramatic. As illustrated in Table 6.1 below, the total unemployment rate in

⁴² Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce. (1964). *Chattanooga, Tennessee industrial report. Chattanooga*. Page 7.

⁴³ A number of sociologists have demonstrated how the shift from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy disproportionately impacted communities of color. See especially Hong, G. K. (2006). *The ruptures of American capital: Women of color feminism and the culture of immigrant labor*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

census tract #15 increased from 2.9% to 19.2% between 1970 and 1980, with African Americans experiencing virtually all of those losses (from 3.1% to 17.8%). Over the next twenty years, African American unemployment in the neighborhood steadily increased: by 2000, nearly one-third of African Americans in the workforce were unemployed.

Table 6.1: Changes in Unemployment in the East Ninth/ MLK Neighborhood, 1970-2000

	1970		1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Total Unemployment	27 (935)	2.89%	145 (757)	19.15%	80 (281)	28.47%	143 (399)	35.84%
African American/ Black	27 (881)	3.06%	118 (666)	17.72%	63 (229)	27.51%	87 (284)	30.63%
White	0 (54)	0%	0 (0)	N/A	17 (52)	32.69%	56 (94)	59.57%

Source: US Census Bureau, 1980-2000, Social Explorer 2013

White unemployment trends in the neighborhood have a different explanation. In 1970, there was no unemployment among whites living in the neighborhood, and ten years later, that rate was the same because there was no white workforce living in the district. By 1990, the neighborhood's affordable housing and proximity to campus had begun to attract university students needing off campus housing. However, many students choose not to work while attending school, though they may still consider themselves part of the workforce. The expansion of the University of Tennessee—Chattanooga is discussed later in this chapter, but is important to mention here because it explains both the growth in white working age population in the neighborhood as well as their unusually high unemployment rates (the white unemployment rate for Hamilton County for both years was 4.8% and 4.2%, respectively).

In Chattanooga as in many other U.S. cities during the post-World War II era, inner city divestment and decline were exacerbated by suburbanization. In Chapter 4, I discussed how desegregation coupled with suburbanization had major impacts on the Black communities in

downtown Chattanooga, who found themselves no longer spatially confined to the urban core and eager to experience suburban amenities. .

In the East Ninth Street neighborhood, the losses in population and housing stock were extensive. In 1950, the neighborhood's development peaked with 7,184 residents and 1,933 housing units (the majority were multifamily dwellings). Over the next ten years, both declined slightly; but the most dramatic losses occurred between 1960 and 1970, when the neighborhood lost more than half of its total population (dropping from 5,934 to 2,612 residents) and more than one-third (N=625) of its housing stock.⁴⁴

One unintended consequence of Black flight from the neighborhood is what many African Americans living in downtown Chattanooga consider to be the loss of their tight-knit communities. According to Vannice Hughley, who was born on East Ninth Street and has lived for three-quarters of a century in downtown Chattanooga, desegregation was actually a curse to the local Black community because it led to a de-concentration of African American placemaking and cultural production:

[Then] people moved to different areas. You just knew before where people lived. This person lived in East Chattanooga and this place lived in South Chattanooga...[Once people began to spread out] that's when it got diluted. The purity was gone.⁴⁵

The outward and downward trends also negatively affected the business and cultural district along East Ninth Street. Some longtime residents who lived during this period theorize that the successful Black-owned businesses followed the Black middle class to the suburban neighborhoods east of Missionary Ridge and what remained were the establishments unwilling (or unable) to keep up with the times. Former Mayor Ron Littlefield (2013) juxtaposed his own theory of the street's decline with that of former NAACP Chapter President James Mapp's,

⁴⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. Population Statistics, 1950 – 2000 SF1 tables. Available from Social explorer: <http://www.socialexplorer.com>.

⁴⁵ Hughley, Vannice. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

contending that the Big Nine's deterioration has resulted from poor business management decisions combined with expanded African Americans consumer choices:

The one thing that civil rights did which was an unintended consequence is all of a sudden black people could shop anywhere. There might have been cultural restrictions but there were no legal restrictions and the cultural restrictions even kind of went away overtime. As a result of that a lot of thriving black businesses lost their base and they had gone away and ML King Boulevard, Big 9 here is still recovering.⁴⁶

Although many local Chattanooga attribute white and black urban flight during this period to a combination of market forces and individual preferences, others see the economic decline of the Big Nine as symptomatic of the historical and systematic neglect of Chattanooga's Black communities by the local white-controlled political and economic power structures. To this end, the roles of professional planners and elected public officials in coordinating uneven geographic development across the city must also be acknowledged and understood.

In the 1950's, planners involved with the Golden Gateway Urban Renewal Project on the Westside persuaded the City Commission to vote to convert East Ninth Street from a two-way street into a one-way outbound street in order to mitigate traffic congestion between the central business district and eastern suburban neighborhoods (Chattanooga Times, 2004 and 2009). This conversion had the effect of transforming East Ninth Street from a pedestrian-oriented small business district into a vehicle-oriented thoroughfare un conducive to stopping, parking, or traveling by foot. While this reorientation did not alone ignite the deterioration would come to characterize the Big Nine, it did exacerbate and arguably accelerate the socio-spatial transformations (i.e. suburbanization) already underway.

In October 1976, the City of Chattanooga submitted an application to the United States Economic Development Administration (US EDA) for \$1.9 million in Public Works Capital Act grant funding to support to a revival of the city's central business district (CBD). Although

⁴⁶ Littlefield, Ron. Personal communication. March 14, 2013.

eleven census tracts within the urban core comprised the planning target area on the EDA application, only projects along Market Street and Broad Street were prioritized for funding.

Two months later, the Chattanooga City Commission proposed to use federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to raze the 900-block of Market Street and clear the land for redevelopment. The block was one of the last remaining African American business hubs in the post- Golden Gateway Urban Renewal city,. Local business owners threatened with displacement made public pleas to the city, arguing that the block, which abutted the entrance to East Ninth Street, was a critical place of Black commerce and employment. “There are no abandoned buildings on this block, except the theatre, and there is no blight here” Tony Schefano, owner of Standard Furniture Company, told a staff writer with the *Chattanooga Times*. Moreover, leveling the block would put between thirty and forty individuals permanently out of work.⁴⁷

Business owners suggested the city use the funds to make improvements along East 9th Street, which had been struggling at that time for more than a decade. In response to this suggestion, E.D. of Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission T.D. Hardin stated that the area of East Ninth Street between Market and Central had never been included in any of the proposed downtown redevelopment and revitalization plans, and that this avoidance had been done intentionally as a benevolent gesture to the business community. “There are no plans for that area,” Hardin stated in a public meeting, “and we have shied away from it, because it would not be economically feasible for the businesses in that area to move to other areas and would put many of them out of business.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Wann, Libby (December 8, 1976). “Merchants Fight Razing of 900 Block of Market” in *Chattanooga Times*, page 1.

⁴⁸T.D. Hardin quoted in Scaife, Clarence (February 24, 1977). “Upgrading Not Slated on East 9th” in *Chattanooga Times*, page 37.

Whether or not this benevolence was authentic, the sustained neglect of the Big Nine over the course of several decades had irreparable negative effects. Poverty, and by association, crime, surged in the neighborhood. On April 19, 1980 public attention turned to East Ninth Street when four African American women were shot by members of the Ku Klux Klan during an unprovoked drive-by shooting. The shootings sparked three days of civil unrest, where eight policemen were injured and “scores of Blacks were arrested for throwing firebombs in housing projects.”⁴⁹ Although the men were initially arrested, Criminal Court Judge Jo DiRisio later dismissed the charges of assault with intent to commit murder against three of the men; ultimately an all-white jury acquitted three, while the ring leader received a reduced punishment involving a \$250 fine and a nine-month work house sentence.⁵⁰

In response, religious leaders in the Black community convened a meeting with Mayor Charles Rose and issued a list of demands to benefit the city’s 60,000 African American residents. While the list included safety provisions, such as a ban on Klan cross burnings, leaders also demanded solutions to address structural inequalities, including “more hiring and job training aimed at...Black residents, and improved maintenance of recreation facilities at city housing projects.”⁵¹ Finally, they called on the city to rename East Ninth Street “East Martin Luther King Boulevard” to honor King’s legacy and his commitments to peace and non-violence.

Their proposal was quickly rejected by prominent white developers who felt threatened by the association with Black space that the name suggested.⁵² Outraged by their resistance to renaming the street, African American community organizers took matters into their own hands.

⁴⁹ *New Pittsburgh Courier* (March 20, 1982).

⁵⁰ *Washington Post* (September 16, 1980).

⁵¹ *Washington Post* (July 27, 1980). Page A2.

⁵² For example, T.A. Lupton, the local developer responsible for building the Chattanooga Convention Center on a parcel located on West Ninth Street, threatened to pull his project in the event that its street address would be listed as “Martin Luther King Blvd.” The City Commission responded by changing the name of only the eastern half of the street—a move that was subsequently rejected by those leaders who had initially brought the idea to the table.

In May 1981, approximately four hundred African Americans assembled on the street where the women had been shot the previous year. The group marched up the boulevard while singing “We Shall Overcome”; as they moved, they pasted signs reading “Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd” over the existing street signs along the strip. Though many demonstrators were filled with anger, others, including Dr. Virgil Caldwell, saw the event as “a day of joy.” In a speech to the crowd, Caldwell commended the “many people [who had] taken it upon themselves to do what we must do to honor Dr. Martin Luther King—what the city fathers chose not to do.”⁵³ Ultimately, the City Commission voted to change the street name on only those blocks to the east of Market Street.⁵⁴

The Turning Tide

As discussed in the previous chapter, the early 1980’s marked a turning point in the history of urban planning and redevelopment in Chattanooga. Over the course of the winter of 1984, approximately 1,000 individuals participated in at least one of the 32 sessions held as part of the Vision 2000 process—an initiative established to “determine community priorities relative to the development of and the future of the Chattanooga area.”⁵⁵

Chattanooga Venture used these input sessions as the basis for the goals and recommendations outlined in their Priority Workbook. Ongoing neighborhood deterioration was one of the major issues identified by residents, and planners quickly zoomed in on East MLK as one of the neighborhoods most in need of attention. Believing that doing so would help to catalyze redevelopment along the business corridor, participants decided to make a museum

⁵³ Caldwell quoted in *New Pittsburgh Courier* (May 9, 1981), page 3.

⁵⁴ Ultimately, the four women who were shot, as well as a fifth who was injured by broken glass during the shootings, filed a civil suit against the Ku Klux Klan. On March 19, 1982, a U.S. District Court civil jury ruled in favor of the women. Collectively, they were awarded \$535,000 in civil damages. This trial marked the first time a civil rights suit had been filed against the Ku Klux Klan.

⁵⁵ Chattanooga Venture (1984).

dedicated to Bessie Smith's life one Venture's five "wish list" priority projects. They also solicited funds from the Lyndhurst Foundation to sponsor a blues festival on the street as part of the city-wide Riverbend music festival.

Community-based developers had already begun to work on housing rehabilitation in the neighborhood. The Inner City Development Corporation, for example, formed in 1984 with the goal of stopping the outflow of people and resources, and over the course of two years, the group rehabilitated seven houses in the MLK neighborhood. Seeing their success, local lenders began to finance their efforts, which had previously been considered too risky to back financially.⁵⁶

While many residents lauded CNE and other community developers' efforts in the MLK neighborhood, others were more skeptical of the long term impacts on housing affordability and potential resident displacement. An editorial published in the *Chattanooga Times* captured this tension, arguing that any neighborhood revitalization ought to directly benefit those long-term, primarily low income residents who had endured the hard times:

A hearing on whether the entire M.L. King area should be designated as a redevelopment area... may be a good idea, as long as the long income families now living in M.L. King don't get shunted out of the center city the way the people living in what is now Golden Gateway did a generation ago. If we can keep the decent, struggling M.L. King-area families who refused to be driven out of their homes by the petty thieves and drug pushers, the prostitutes and pickpockets—and draw in dozens or even hundreds of equally committed new inner-city residents—we'll have taken an enormous and long-overdue step toward improving the changes of restoring the M.L. King area itself, and that can do nothing but help the neighboring center city.⁵⁷

Ultimately, the neighborhood was designated as a target area, and CNE began identifying properties for redevelopment. Table 6.2 below captures these changes in the local housing stock over a twenty year period. Between 1980 and 1990, the neighborhood lost approximately half of

⁵⁶ Lewis Gross, Chairman of the Board, quoted in Burke, Lorrie (May 11, 1986). "Downtown Community Gets a New Look" in News Free Press, page J1.

⁵⁷ Editorial (May 13, 1986). "M.L King Key to New Downtown" in *Chattanooga Times*, page C1.

its single family homes and duplexes. Ten years later, those numbers were once again cut in half: only 115 single family homes, 62 duplexes, and a fraction of the three-plus multifamily structures remained.

Table 6.2: Changes in the E. MLK Neighborhood's Housing Stock, 1980-2000

	1980		1990		2000	
Total Housing units:	1,059		836		453	
1 Unit:	334	31.5%	164	19.6%	115	25.40%
1, detached	268	25.3%	164	19.6%	115	25.40%
1, attached	66	6.2%	0	0.0%	0	0%
2	203	19.2%	96	11.5%	62	13.70%
3 and 4	165	15.6%	119	14.2%	62	13.70%
5 or more	349	33.0%	449	10.9%	214	47.30%
Other	8	0.8%	8	0.0%	0	0%
Vacant Housing Units	198	18.7%	186		93	
For Rent	178	16.8%	67		21	
For Sale	5	0.5%	34		10	
Other vacant	15	1.4%	85		62	

Source: US Census Bureau, 1980-2000, Social Explorer 2013

As more units were rehabbed and the neighborhood's worst eyesores targeted for demolition, middle class residents and university students seeking off campus housing began to see East MLK as a destination rather than a danger. The evidence of this shifting perception is found in the demographic changes underway across the neighborhood during this time. Table 6.3 below shows changes in housing tenure by race during the same time period. From these figures, it is clear that the majority of housing units targeted for demolition were rental units: the number of renting households living in the neighborhood, for example, decreased by -60.8% between 1980 and 2000. The number of owner occupied units also diminished, though African American homeowners in particular held their ground during this period of socioeconomic transition.

Table 6.3: Changes in Housing Tenure by Race, 1980-2000

	1980		1990		2000	
Owner Occupied	109	12.7%	86	14%	67	19.9%
White Owner	10	9.2%	1		4	
African American	92	84.4%	85		63	
Renter Occupied	686		565		269	
White Renter	19		184		25	
African American	667		378		238	

Source: US Census Bureau, 1980-2000, Social Explorer 2013

Relatedly, the economics of the neighborhood were starting to change. As evidenced in Table 6.4 below, the median gross rent more than doubled between 1980 and 2000, while median home values, and median household and family incomes followed similar upward trends.

Table 6.4: Changes in Rents and Incomes, 1980-2000

	1980	1990	2000
Median Gross Rent	\$140	\$181	\$254
Median Home Value	N/A	\$30,100	\$50,700
Median Household Income	\$5,322	\$5,586	\$13,229
Median Family Income	\$9,073	\$10,750	\$27,625
Average Household Income	\$10,397	\$9,013	\$19,570
White families	\$29,101	\$5,705	\$14,143
African American families	\$9,627	\$7,983	\$20,253

Source: US Census Bureau, 1980-2000, Social Explorer 2013

Mounting Development Pressures

One of the most celebrated moments for urban planning enthusiasts in Chattanooga came in 2001 when Hamilton County adopted an urban growth boundary. Touted by urban revivalists and environmental conservationists alike, the regulatory measure was meant to incentivize urban infill development while discouraging suburban sprawl and greenfield development. For many of the planners and community developers discussed in the previous chapter, the growth

boundary was considered a boon because it promised to accelerate downtown revitalization. But for local leaders concerned about economic and social justice issues, the policy was contentious.

Chattanooga Rainbow Coalition Chapter President Johnny Holloway expressed deep concern that African Americans would fail to benefit from economic revitalization associated with neighborhood infill development. Although some merchants with small businesses on East MLK Blvd supported the boundary because neighborhood gentrification meant the potential for more revenues, Holloway feared too much investment too quickly would effectively price out the longtime residents who had “remained there through the lean years.”⁵⁸

Holloway’s concern stemmed from learning about the gentrification and displacement patterns that emerged after Portland, Oregon adopted its growth boundary. Although Holloway’s statement reflected a growing awareness about the negative byproducts of urban revitalization, his opinion was a minority voice in the city. Many local stakeholder groups—including homeowners, small business owners, local developers, municipal and county staff, and university officials, hailed the boundary as a foolproof strategy for wrangling investment capital into the city’s historically African American neighborhood.

In May 2003, Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprises (CNE) and the Lyndhurst Foundation announced the MLK Tomorrow Initiative. This \$28 million public-private investment program committed funds for the renovation and construction of more than 100 market rate homes in the “classic, cool, and close to downtown” MLK neighborhood over a two year period.

Organizers hoped to capitalize on the revival already taking root in the neighborhood vis-à-vis UTC’s Community Outreach Partnership. Launched in 2000, the partnership revolved around the university’s goal to develop more than 1,600 beds of student housing and promote

⁵⁸ Holloway quoted in Gilbert (1999).

faculty and staff homeownership in the neighborhood by 2005. “People want to live downtown,” CNE President Gerald Konohia announced during the public kick-off event. “Providing incentives for them to buy and renovate homes will help bring them into the neighborhood, therefore raising property values and spurring commercial development.” During the same event, a staff person with the Lyndhurst Foundation promised that “M.L. King is well on its way to being a place where people who have all of the choices would want to come and live. And why not? It’s a great place, great houses, wonderful people, and strong schools.”⁵⁹

Interviews with individuals who took advantage of the housing incentive programs sponsored by CNE, Lyndhurst and UTC are instructive. For example, one UTC employee (and white mother of two children) who had recently moved into the neighborhood was asked whether she and her family had been reluctant to relocate to the historically African American neighborhood given its history and reputation. The woman stated, “We were absolutely not hesitant. I haven’t seen any of the crime. I don’t know any of the history, but I know it’s a nice area now.”⁶⁰ In other words, her main impetus for relocating to the neighborhood had had nothing to do with the cultural and historical significance of the place. Rather, she was motivated by a tax abatement package that made East MLK neighborhood an extremely affordable place to purchase a home in downtown Chattanooga.

Although these buyer incentive programs clearly benefitted already middleclass people moving into the area, ‘affordability,’ as always, was a highly relative term. Just because an incentive program exists doesn’t mean everyone can automatically take advantage of it. The focus of the MLK Tomorrow Initiative, according to a consultant working with the Lyndhurst Foundation at the time, was to develop the new and rehabbed housing units and sell them at

⁵⁹ Putnam, Yolanda (December 17, 2003). *Times Free Press*, page B3.

⁶⁰ Putnam, Yolanda (May 4, 2003). *Times Free Press*.

market rates. When pressed about the inclusion of below market rate units, the consultant replied that with all of the additional incentives available to homebuyers, most of the new housing would still be “affordable” to working families.

A longtime clerical staff member at UTC painted a different picture of housing affordability in the revitalizing neighborhood. When she had attempted to access the incentive package and purchase one of the MLK Initiative’s new homes herself, she was denied on the basis of her income. "I would hate to see a program like this be lost on workers," the UTC employee told the *Times Free Press*. But the trend seemed inevitable: even with long term, steady employment, a commitment to the neighborhood, and access to the UTC staff homebuyer subsidy, moderate income households were already being priced out of what had once been a highly affordable, centrally located community.

While the MLK Initiative focused primarily on housing development in the residential neighborhood between East MLK Blvd. and the university, others in the community development field turned their attention to East MLK Blvd. itself. By the early 1980’s many formerly thriving businesses on the street had relocated or shuttered their doors. As previously mentioned, the Bessie Smith Strut began in 1985 with the goal of re-igniting the social and economic vitality of the corridor, but this event only happened once per year. And while planning for the Bessie Smith Hall and Chattanooga African American Museum had also begun around this time, it would be another [twelve] years before the project would be completed and the facility would open on the site of the former Martin Hotel.

In a 2004 article titled “MLK Ripe for Development,” a local real estate professional argued that there was great potential for local African Americans to share in the economic benefits of revitalization along the Big Nine, citing that “70% of E MLK properties [were]

owned by African Americans.” However, one local property owner interviewed for the article was not as optimistic: “If we don’t become involved, every black person is going to lose his property.”⁶¹

In a 2009 interview, a longtime East 9th Street business owner and former president of the local chapter of the NAACP suggested that East Martin Luther King Boulevard had been largely left out of revitalization plans due to racism. Not only had African Americans had a more difficult time getting fair business loans to redevelop the Big Nine corridor, he asserted, but the businesses that had gotten loans and moved into the area either didn’t fit in with the local historical and cultural character of the district, or were having hard times turning profits while located on a commercial corridor that was rife with vacant and underutilized properties. Similarly, one local African American business leader argued that there were “lots of opportunity to build on the rich tradition of this boulevard”— but that in order for future development to do justice to the past, planners must figure strategies to ensure that the African American community benefit and not be burdened by a revitalized corridor.

A 21st Century Engaged University?

In 2010, UTC convened a Master Plan Steering Committee and hired a team of planners and architects led by consultants from the internationally acclaimed firm Perkins + Will to guide an update to its 2000 Master Plan. Over the next eighteen months, these professionals organized a master planning process related to “[guiding] the critical aspects of campus growth” into the surrounding neighborhoods, including parts of the former commercial district of East Martin Luther King Street.⁶²

⁶¹ Reynolds (June 21, 2004). “MLK Ripe for Development” in *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, page B1.

⁶² University of Tennessee—Chattanooga (2012). Accessed via: <http://www.utc.edu/master-plan/>.

In the Executive Summary of the final planning document, which was released to the public in December 2012, its authors contended that the “hallmark of the planning process has been its highly participatory and consensus-building activities” and pointed to the university’s recent Carnegie Foundation designation as an institution of Community Engagement as one of the primary factors motivating the update of its plan. Later in the document, the authors clarified the university’s definition of community engagement, stating that:

UTC’s engagement with the surrounding Chattanooga community promotes the partnership of knowledge and resources with the public and private sectors, with a goal to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.

To this end, the plan outlined ten ambitious development goals to help guide its institutional growth over the subsequent fifteen years. These strategic goals ranged from improved technology and research infrastructure to a reduced ecological footprint and improved university-wide sustainability practices.⁶³ Unsurprisingly, physical campus expansion and university-owned student housing were also central features of the plan. The *2012 Master Plan* was released alongside the *UTC Comprehensive Housing Master Plan (2011)*—a several hundred-page technical document produced by the consulting firm Brailsford + Dunlayey that was based on data collected during “focus groups, administrative interviews, a competitive context analysis, an off-campus housing market analysis, a student survey, and a detailed analysis of the Plan’s financial feasibility.”⁶⁴

⁶³ The *2012 Master Plan* outlines ten strategic goals related to its campus expansion over the next fifteen years. They are: 1. Create facilities in support of educational/research initiatives; 2. Provide physical access to all aspects of the campus; 3. Support technology (infrastructure) to support instruction, learning, scholarship, service; 4. Provide leadership as an environmentally sustainable institution; 5. Promote connections to the environmental city of Chattanooga; 6. Build the framework for a safe and appealing campus landscape; 7. Seek resources to support research and creative/scholarship; 8. Encourage facilities that support strong graduate programs; 9. Create support for intercollegiate athletics program of the highest caliber; 10. Provide housing and residence life opportunities that unify students in an engaged learning community.

⁶⁴ University of Tennessee—Chattanooga (2011), *Comprehensive Housing Master Plan*, page 1.

Consultants projected that UTC’s full time student population would increase by approximately 2.4% per year, reaching 13,542 students by 2020-2021. They estimated that this population would grow to fifteen thousand students in the medium-term, and as many as eighteen thousand in the long term. In reality, the university may reach these enrollment goals even sooner than expected: the full time student population increased by 657 people (6%) between the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 academic year, and since then has surpassed the projected headcounts outlined in the *Housing Master Plan*. Citing the university’s then-present capacity to serve 28% of its student population with university-owned housing, the *Housing Master Plan* identified development goals and defined an implementation path to build and maintain a 35% on-campus population for full-time students. To achieve this goal, the plan recommended the addition of 1,800 new student beds, built in approximately 600 bed increments, to locations adjacent to campus and existing student housing neighborhoods over the next several decades.⁶⁵

Although the plan briefly discussed local housing affordability, it was only in the context that off-campus housing (\$2,050 per semester) was generally more affordable than on-campus, all inclusive housing (between \$2,730 and \$3,575 per semester). Despite the relative affordability of off-campus housing options, the consultants concluded that demand for on-campus housing was high because university-sponsored urban amenities and social activities added value to the units.⁶⁶ In the spirit of promoting a vibrant and cosmopolitan urban university, the *2012 Master Plan* also called for increased mixed-use development and “living-learning spaces to create vibrant, 24/7 residential communities.” And in conjunction with their ten broad development goals, the university identified a master plan land acquisition and improvement

⁶⁵ University of Tennessee—Chattanooga (2012), *Master Plan*, page 16.

⁶⁶ University of Tennessee—Chattanooga (2011), *Comprehensive Housing Master Plan* , page 49.

target area along with several “Key Acquisition/ Partnership Sites” to steer expansion over the next fifteen years.

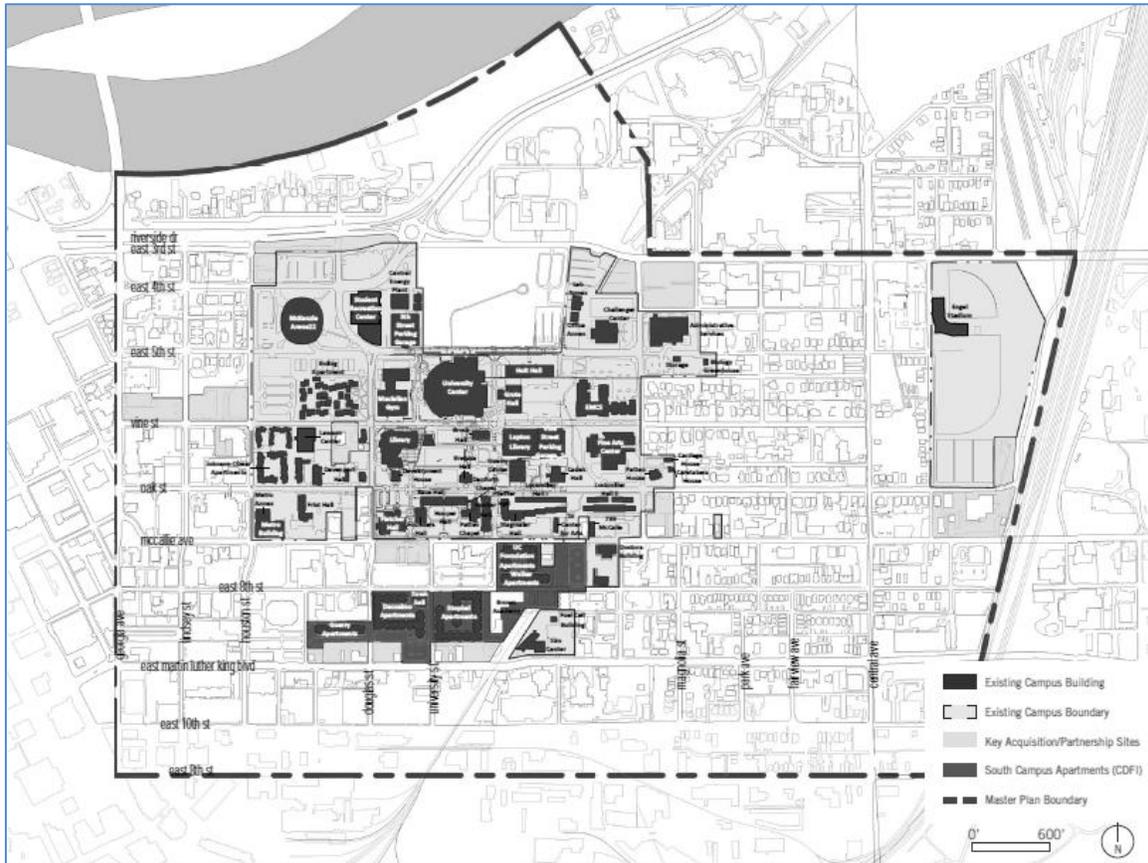


Illustration 6.7: 2012 UTC Master Plan Development Opportunities and Boundaries

As evident from Illustration 6.7 above, UTC’s “Development Opportunities Boundary” extends for several blocks in every direction beyond the existing 123-acre campus footprint. The *2012 Master Plan* Boundary includes all of the East Martin Luther King Street corridor and MLK neighborhood, along with Engel Stadium, Fort Wood, and several blocks of commercial and industrial properties extending as far south as East 11th Street. It also includes a 272-acre historic factory and brownfield close to the riverfront known as the Enterprise South site.

The university’s proposed expansion southward is arguably more significant than its growth in other directions, because the East MLK Blvd. corridor has historically served as a physical and psychological boundary between the ‘desirable’ and ‘safe’ parts of the

neighborhood and those areas considered ‘undesirable’ and ‘dangerous.’ Many current UTC students, for example, recall being instructed during their freshman orientations not to walk along East MLK or venture south of it.⁶⁷ In part because of this neglect, the blocks between East MLK Blvd. and East 11th Street have remained a popular area for homeless encampments: the Chattanooga Community Kitchen⁶⁸ is located on East 11th Street, for instance, and there are several well-known tent cities located on undeveloped and vacant properties in the vicinity.

In the *2012 Master Plan*, the university’s “Development Opportunity Boundary” area clearly encompasses the East MLK Street corridor-- in fact, it emphasizes the street, referring to it as the “MLK Redevelopment Corridor” in maps and planning discussions and outlining several major campus expansion projects for it as part of Phase III of the university’s master plan. The university’s long range development plans for the corridor include three major student housing complexes (totaling 332 beds), student services buildings, a fuel cell and SIM research facility, two major “academic research expansion zones” and open space and streetscape improvements.

Unsurprisingly, the authors of the plan explained the university’s rationale for expanding to East MLK Blvd in terms of the mutual stakes and benefits that arise from being an engaged urban university:

Much like the medical center, the MLK corridor represents an opportunity for UTC for future development to become more integrated with the neighborhood and support common goals for the future. Planning activities have been established along the corridor and future UTC housing along MLK Boulevard would be consistent with this vision with retail or office type uses on the first floor.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Tyree, Gayle, personal communication. October 5, 2012 and Gursakal, Baris. Personal communication, November 9, 2012.

⁶⁸ The Chattanooga Community Kitchen is a faith-based, “freestanding social service agency” whose “primary goal is to lessen the poverty and despair among the homeless in the city of Chattanooga and to restore dignity and self-reliance to those we serve” (Chattanooga Community Kitchen 2013, <http://community-kitchen.org/>).

⁶⁹University of Tennessee—Chattanooga (2012), *Master Plan*, page 80.

The plan goes on to describe the intersection of East MLK Blvd. and Douglas Street as a future “gateway” to the university, stating that “campus gateways and landmarks are primary access points to the University and should create an inviting appearance and begin to define the campus experience. The plan states that “MLK Boulevard gateway [will create] an enhanced entrance to the University from the south with new planting, signage, lighting and paving areas.”

Critical Omissions

UTC’s southward expansion onto East MLK Blvd and beyond poses both opportunities for and threats to equitable neighborhood development. On the one hand, new opportunities for long-term community engagement and mutually beneficial urban redevelopment exist between UTC and its neighbors in the areas of education, public health, workforce development and training, affordable housing and public space. On the other, as history has demonstrated, an expanded target area suggests an ongoing gentrification-induced displacement of low and moderate income residents, and African American residents in particular, from their historic neighborhoods in the urban core.

As this chapter has demonstrated, such demographic transformations have been underway in the residential neighborhoods surrounding East MLK Street since the mid-1980’s. In 1980, 91% of the population was African American. By 1990,⁷⁰ however, the Black population had dropped to just over three-quarters (76.7%) of the total population—a rate that persisted through 2000. However, the most recent Decennial census reveals dramatic changes underway: for the first time in the neighborhood’s history, the white residents outnumbered African Americans. While population growth across all racial groups occurred during this ten

⁷⁰ The total population change as well as specific racial demographic changes between 1990 and 2000 can be partially attributed to census tract redistricting. In 1990, census tract #15 included much of the area now considered to be the “Southside” business district. As of 2000, the boundaries were changed to exclude those areas.

year period, white residents accounted for the majority of this growth, rising from 145 residents (17.5% of total population) to nearly two thousand residents (N=1,899 or 62.1% of the total population) over a ten year period.⁷¹

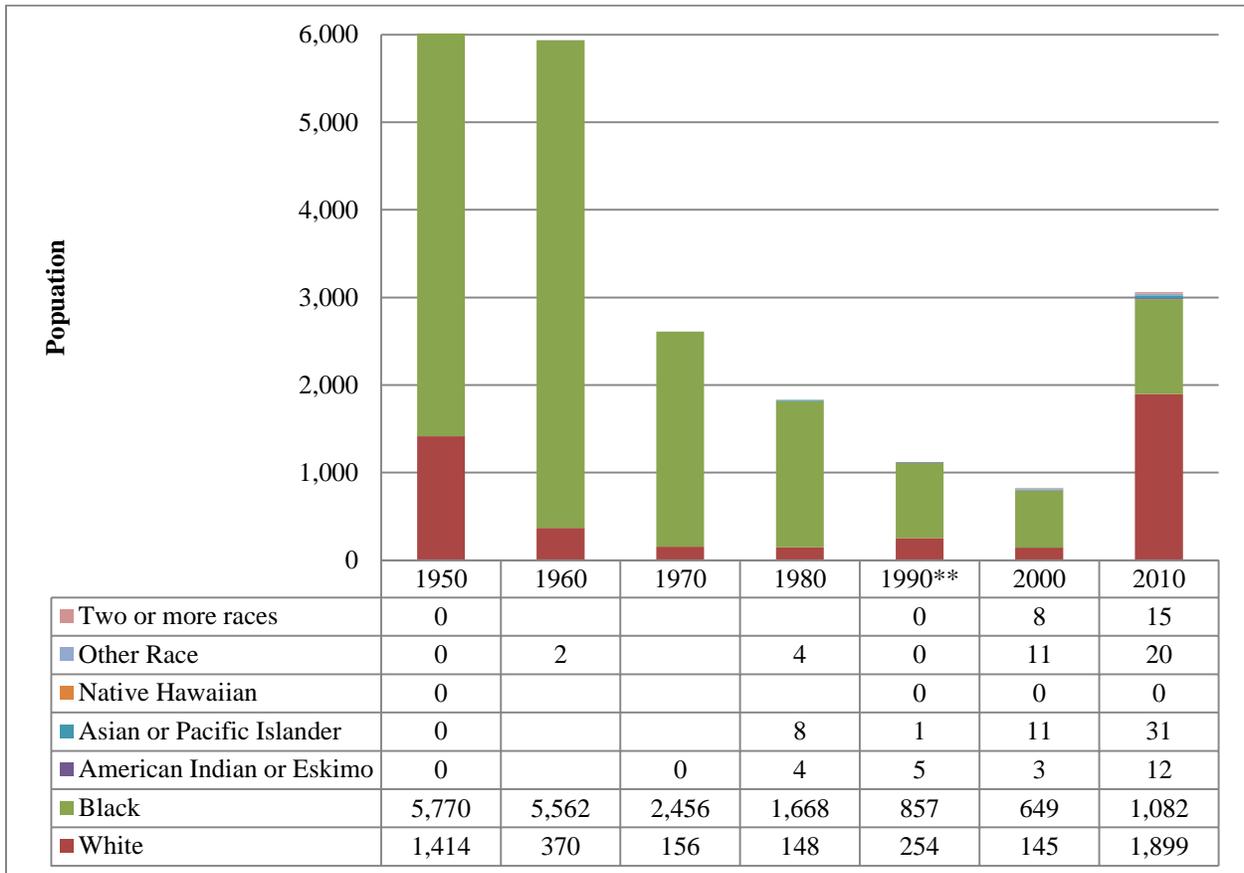


Figure 6.1: Changes in Racial Demographics of East MLK Neighborhood, 1950-2010 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1950-2010)

While some local leaders maintain that the university’s expansion southward will be the neighborhood’s saving grace, upon closer scrutiny, an analysis of the policy and planning recommendations outlined in the *2012 Master Plan* reveal a failure to think through the broader social and political implications of the university’s proposed campus expansion into several historically significant and still racially and socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods. To be sure, university officials have adopted the language of urban institutional embeddedness and

⁷¹ U.S. Census Bureau. Population Statistics, 1950-2010 SF1 tables. Available from Social explorer: <http://www.socialexplorer.com>.

community-university engagement. Yet the recommendations outlined in the plan are firmly rooted in the university's own expansion and redevelopment interests, and thus fail to consider how UTC fits into a rapidly gentrifying urban core as both a public institution of higher education and a socially responsible neighbor.

For example, the *2012 Master Plan* does not consider the long term affordability impacts of student and faculty-driven gentrification on non-university affiliated community members living in nearby neighborhoods. Nor does it fully think through the prospects for economic revitalization along the historic "Big Nine" corridor. In the *2012 Master Plan*, consultants argue that "given the urban context of the campus, open space should be treated as a sacred space."⁷² But by failing to plan for the equitable redevelopment of the district, the university's expansion plans threaten to desecrate an historic neighborhood with one of the most vibrant legacies of multiracial diasporic placemaking in the city.

Creative Resistance against Cultural Displacement

Fortunately, there are several community-based arts and popular organizing groups who are actively contesting these processes of physical and cultural displacement underway across the district. The most widely-known institution working to preserve the historical integrity of the neighborhood is the Bessie Smith Cultural Center. Despite years of criticism from the mainstream economic development community, the Cultural Center, which also houses the Chattanooga African American Museum, is leading the charge to educate the local community about the historical significance of Chattanooga's Black communities and retain the cultural significance of the Big Nine. In an interview for this project, Carmen Davis, the Director of Educational Programming at the Cultural Center, described her organization's commitment to

⁷² University of Tennessee—Chattanooga (2012), *Master Plan*, page 40.

realizing its original goal of catalyzing economic and cultural revitalization for the local Black community:

We consider ourselves the ‘cornerstone’ of M L King Street— the main vein or artery of M L King. So, we really want to promote this street as growing, with a lot of things happening. With the Bessie Smith Heritage Festival, which is an indoor-outdoor festival, we get to highlight the businesses all up and down the street and draw attention to the area. This is one of our major goals: to draw people back onto M L King. It’s our biggest program and draws the most people for us.⁷³

Additionally, in 2012, the Bessie Smith Cultural Center assumed management over the annual Bessie Smith Strut. Earlier in the year, then Mayor Ron Littlefield had suggested discontinuing the wildly popular blues festival because of concerns about public safety and potential financial losses (since Riverbend had begun in 1985, the Strut had been the only night granting free admission). The local community responded en masse, taking over a City Council meeting and lambasting the Mayor for threatening to do away with the “only time [each year] when whites and blacks truly mingle in the heavily segregated city.”⁷⁴

In a last minute attempt to save the Strut, the Bessie Smith Cultural Center offered to oversee management responsibilities from the Friends of the Festival, a nonprofit charged with planning Riverbend. Davis described the Cultural Center’s motivations for taking on such a behemoth task, arguing that many of the changes (in security and admission) that resulted were unjustifiably-yet-unavoidably imposed from the top down:

We were kind of thrown into the round to take on the [Bessie Smith] Strut, and of course that *really* highlights the entire street. In a very short amount of time, we were able to pull it off—with major changes, which were kind of forced upon us. [The Strut] is an institution in this city. People love it. It [was] the one free night of Riverbend. And we had to make some changes which I really don’t think were fair, because if you look at the Strut’s twenty-something year history, there were maybe one or two incidents—and neither of them actually happened on Strut property. So I think there was sort of an unfair....’whatever’...attached to the Strut, which really wasn’t there, and created this

⁷³ Davis, Carmen. Personal communication. January 11, 2013.

⁷⁴ *Washington Post* (June 2, 1994) page E2A.

atmosphere that *luckily* the public didn't fall for. The public was like "I've *never* had any issues, and I've gone for ten, twelve, fifteen, *twenty* years!"

We had to bump up all the security, and it was just—to me, a bunch of unnecessary changes had to be made to accommodate our administration... Last year was the first year we had to charge an admission because we had to pay to block everything off; for fencing and additional security and all these things that normally... I mean, the Strut incurs costs, which are handled by Friends of the Festival normally. But since it was sort of thrown in our lap, we had all these extra costs that we had to take care of, and that the City was not willing to give us a break on. So to *handle that*, we had to charge admission in order to pass some of those costs on.



Illustration 6.8: The Bessie Smith Strut in 2013 (Source: Courtney Knapp)

While the Bessie Smith Cultural Center's main focus has been on catalyzing redevelopment along the East MLK corridor through a place-based, historically and culturally rooted framework, the organization increasingly brings its message to residents living in other areas of the city. For Davis, this transition seems inevitable: as more African Americans are

priced out of the urban core, the Cultural Center will need to devise new ways to take their programming on the road:

Well, we're probably a little different than any other cultural institution [in the city] because we focus on African American culture and history. Normally, when we talk about community outreach we're talking about lower income people, who sort of all fall in the same area. So that's always been our thing—it's not like we have to make a special effort to do, per se. We do prefer that they come to us, but... we had to shift our understanding about how we reach lower income folks in the city.[The schools]... don't really take fieldtrips anymore. So we had to shift. Now we have things like "Bessie in the Box" where we have little, small exhibits that they can take to their schools, or I'll go and speak in the schools... And they sometimes still come here. We work with a lot of summer camps in particular who work with low income families and high risk children and teens. We let them come into our facility and take classes, such as the Art Fun Factory—that's dance, music and guitar—so we let them come in and they take those classes for free. There's no charge. If they can just get the students to us, we can take care of everything else.

Another organization doing important placemaking work in the East MLK neighborhood is Mark Making, a volunteer-based public arts organization dedicated to using art to advance "individual empowerment, beautification of visual landscapes, visual art education, and teaching opportunities."⁷⁵ Over the past five years, Mark Making has spearheaded eight major public art projects in the neighborhood: "We Speak" (2009-2010), "I Have a Dream" (2011), "We Inspire" (2012), "Eight on the Big Nine" (2012), "Principle Colors" (2012), the "M.L. King Street Art" wheat-pasting project (2012), "Big Nine Legends" (2012), "We Shall Not Be Moved" (2013), and "A Dream Built on Faith" (2013).

With each project, Mark Making has engaged a range of historically underrepresented local stakeholders in the creative process. For example, the "We Speak" project (Illustration 6.9) engaged seventy teenagers in the local foster care system in a creative process that began by asking them to choose one powerful verb "which best represented what they would express to all Chattanooga and its visitors" (Mark Making 2014). During an interview for this project, Frances

⁷⁵Mark Making (2014). *Vision Statement*.

McDonald, the founder and Executive Director of the organization, described the evolution of the project:

When you're a teen and you're getting slapped around; when nobody cares about you...what's the worst of that? The kids in foster care. They've been rejected several times over. .. It's one of those places that is really hard to walk into and get trust. It's really hard to build trust. We basically said, "Look, we know that you don't get to call any of the shots about your lives. Nobody gives you any power; you feel powerless." They said, "You have no idea what you're talking about!" But we said, "just go with it." We told them, "we're going to give you a microphone which you can use to talk to politicians and tourists and everybody else and we're going to have you say 'I—with a really strong verb.' What are you going to say?"

So they came up with these statements... They all picked words ...So we said "OK, this is how you make a mouth...They got really into it. So then we said, "Fine, but put those away. Here is a mirror—say your word." So they had to say their word—and this was scary—they had to say their word to themselves a bunch of times. Just stare at yourself in the mirror and say "I create" a hundred times. They had to do it by hand.... They got over the self-conscious part. The funny part was that if we had done that with a class of artists, the artists would've walked out. But these kids, they started doing it.

Once the youth completed the drawings of their own mouths, Mark Making organizers projected the images onto large canvasses and asked them to transform the drawings into murals. These seventy images were then used to cover the boarded up windows on a building that had once housed the East Ninth Street "colored" YMCA.

Beyond the connection between art and personal empowerment, Mark Making's projects often use creative placemaking to connect historic and contemporary struggles for community empowerment and social justice in the city. The "Big Nine Legends" mural (Illustration 6.10) on the side of the Live and Let Live Barbershop (East MLK's longest operating business) was their first project to really focus in on the transformative power of art and creative expression to produce complex narratives connecting history and memory to place.

[Big Nine Legends] really strung a lot of chords in people's hearts—in Black peoples' hearts. We do these things and we don't know where that energy goes or what it means

to other people. We're very careful when we make it. We're not Black—but we sat down with the right people and said “OK, you need to make this decision because we're not Black and not from here so you need to make this decision for your neighborhood. We are here to serve and not tell you...[right from wrong].” So we got a lot of help. What it means on the back end—and I forget sometimes—we choose these musicians and we're learning all about these musicians and I'm *feeling all this*, but then when you're doing the work you're not paying attention to all of that. You're thinking, “That texture won't work there; chalk off that edge and stick it over there.” *You're doing the work*. So then it's all said and done and the phone rings and this lady says “I'm Johnny Smith's daughter! I'm so honored that you chose to figurate *my father on your wall*.”

I'm like, *so shocked*. It's like oh, my god! But then I'm like, well *yeah!* If I were her I'd be feeling the same way. But it just surprises me that it actually gets that far. Because we do what we do and we do everything the right way, it's just—you do it because it's the right thing to do, not because anybody else thinks it's the right thing to do. You do it because *you* think it's the right thing to do. You just do your best; you don't know where the cards fly. But when they fly and it comes back and it's a good thing you think, “Oh, I guess I did it decently!” It's so surprising.

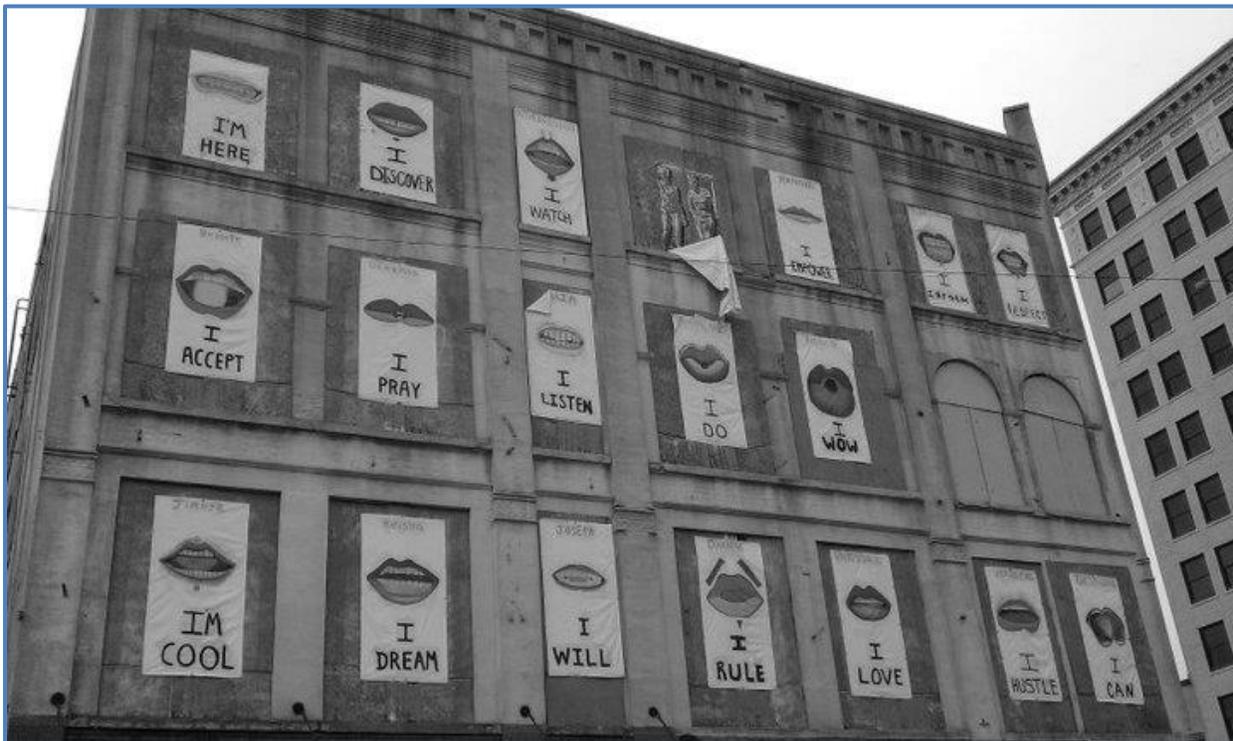


Illustration 6.9: Mark Making, a community arts nonprofit, worked with local teenagers in the foster care system on the “We Speak” mural project near East MLK Boulevard (Source: Courtney Knapp, July 2011)



Illustration 6.10: Mark Making's "Big Nine Legends" (2012) celebrates the historical significance of East MLK Blvd to African American music and culture

Conclusion: Towards a Blues Movement in Downtown Chattanooga

This chapter has measured the rise, ‘decline,’ and ongoing revival of the East Ninth Street/ Martin Luther King Blvd. corridor and neighborhood in order to further illuminate and contextualize the politics of multiethnic diasporic placemaking in present-day downtown Chattanooga. I have argued that institutional (especially public, foundation, and university) actors involved with the ongoing revitalization of the Martin Luther King Blvd. corridor and neighborhood stand to miss crucial opportunities for realizing the equitable redevelopment of the area—a loss that is particularly acute given the neighborhood’s long history of creative, cooperative African American and multiracial placemaking.

The history of multiracial diasporic placemaking in the East Ninth Street/ MLK neighborhood suggests a much more complex urban social environments than most people attribute to the segregated South in general and Chattanooga in particular. Through every day

acts of community building and creative resistance against socioeconomic exploitation, black and white residents living, working and playing in the neighborhood have long understood themselves to be economically, politically, and culturally connected. Historically as well as today, this recognition has taken place through worship, commerce, political organizing, the arts, and more. To be clear, my emphasis on multiracial placemaking along the Big Nine in no way means to diminish the powerful African American base that evolved in the neighborhood over one hundred years of Jim Crow segregation. It does intend to disrupt public narratives that represent interracial placemaking efforts in Jim Crow-era Chattanooga as superficial at best, and at worst, nonexistent.

In order to do justice to the dynamic history of multiethnic placemaking along the Big Nine, the revitalization of East MLK Blvd and the MLK neighborhood into a vibrant twenty-first century cultural district must go beyond status quo gentrification activities (i.e. façade/streetscape improvements and promised injections of capital investment from UTC) and support and enable equitable development through a multiethnic diasporic placemaking frame. Given the neighborhood's rich cultural history, special opportunities exist for linking equitable community development to the arts and creative and cultural development. The successes of the Bessie Smith Cultural Center and Mark Making are powerful testaments to what can happen when the city's most marginalized residents are offered space and resources to express themselves creatively. By continuing to expand the politics of neighborhood stakeholdership to include not only public, institutional, and traditional homeowner and commercial-related interest groups but also the neighborhood's significant homeless and low to moderate income, non-student populations will do much to help planners and policymakers understand and counteract the negative impacts of gentrification already underway across the neighborhood.

However, commitments to more democratic engagement must also be complemented by commitments to a more equitable distribution of urban opportunities and reinvestment benefits, including affordable housing, education, workforce development and employment opportunities, arts and cultural development funding, public transportation, and environmental amenities. The University of Tennessee—Chattanooga and community institutions like the Bessie Smith Cultural Center, in partnership with place-based neighborhood associations and directly impacted residents, will be central to realizing an arts and culture-based equitable redevelopment agenda moving forward. And non-institutional community-based actors such as Mark Making will also, as recent history is showing, be critical to the realization of a fair and equitable neighborhood, where marginalized and historically underrepresented voices are both included and valued as integral fibers in the neighborhood's physical and sociocultural fabrics.

By reframing urbanization and community development in the city as processes of 'diasporic placemaking'—which was defined in previous chapters as a dual process of forging communities of cultural belonging and material security among historically uprooted/ migrant populations—I hope that city and institutional planners might gain fuller perspectives about why it is so crucial to make sure contemporary culture-based revitalization initiatives—especially those meant to boost tourism -- directly benefit those marginalized communities whose stories and experiences are being re-worked into the urban landscapes.

First and foremost, there must be a renewed emphasis on and commitment to engaging historically marginalized and other directly impacted residents in neighborhood visioning, planning and development. While the outcomes of these processes very well may point to expanded tourism and cultural development, they may also emphasize other community development goals and strategies. What matters most is that historically marginalized and

excluded populations have a direct say in and benefit from the planning outcomes. “In the absence of a tourism agenda that has emerged from community-based decision-making,” social historical Clyde Woods (1998) warned, “a community’s heritage can be turned against it and used to reproduce and expand the existing structures of exploitation.”⁷⁶

Fortunately, making such a transformative shift does not require starting from scratch. On the contrary, one only has to look back at the history of multiethnic diasporic placemaking along the Big Nine over the past one hundred fifty years to discover a treasure trove of examples of creative, cooperative community building that have both defied and subverted de facto and de jure racism and segregation in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. In the next section of this dissertation, I discuss two recent urban planning experiments in Chattanooga that sought to build upon these historic placemaking struggles.

⁷⁶ Woods, C. A. (1998). *Development arrested: The blues and plantation power in the Mississippi Delta*. London: Verso. Page 260.

CHAPTER 7: COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION AND INTERDEPENDENCE IN LINCOLN PARK

In this Chapter, I present the case of planning and development in Lincoln Park, a small, historic African American neighborhood located in East Chattanooga. Lincoln Park is an illustrative case for thinking through contemporary struggles over space and place for four reasons. First, as one of the oldest and most historically significant Black neighborhoods in Chattanooga, Lincoln Park is, quite literally, the product of more than a century of cooperative African American placemaking and community building in the city.

Second, although most of these placemaking efforts have happened outside of formal, institution-backed initiatives, several have occurred inside or because of them. For this reason, Lincoln Park also presents a case for better understanding how spatial collaborations and contestations take place in communities comprised of multiple, overlapping diasporic populations. Third, Lincoln Park has a thirty year history of resident-based and driven organizing against both institutional neglect and encroachment. Currently, their resistance involves building a coalition to fight off a major road extension meant to connect Riverfront Parkway to Central Avenue by way of their neighborhood. The Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association is working with Chattanooga Organized for Action and the People's Coalition to save what remains of their historic public space from engineers and urban technocrats who have different visions for the space.

Finally, the neighborhood has been a pilot site for several innovative community development initiatives, including the construction of the city's first (and for many years, only) public spaces for African Americans in Chattanooga (1918), Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise's substandard housing eradication program in the 1980's, Erlanger Hospital's Community Partnership program in the 1990's, and most recently, the Planning Free School and SPARC Initiative.



Illustration 7.1: Lincoln Park Neighborhood in East Chattanooga

Although the fate of their historic park and the neighborhood named after it remains uncertain, neighborhood leaders have suggested that their participation in the Planning Free School and SPARC Initiative have the potential to be game-changing. Up until now, planning processes for Lincoln Park have been organized by professional planners who live outside of the neighborhood. The residents of Lincoln Park have been collectively treated as just another stakeholder alongside the railway company, Erlanger Hospital and the University of Tennessee—Chattanooga. Residents have historically had to wait to be invited to their own planning and community development tables.

The SPARC Initiative, on the other hand, puts the power of community planning directly in the hands of neighborhood leadership and their constituents. The Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association and their constituents, in partnership with Chattanooga Organized for Action and the Planning Free School, is managing a community-controlled process where Lincoln Park residents are involved with all aspects of visioning, data collection and analysis, and implementation. Currently, the Neighborhood Association is several months into SPARC process, and hopes to complete their neighborhood action plan by the summer of 2014. Neighborhood leaders hope that by developing their own independent plan for the community, they will preempt and influence any attempts by the city or regional planning agency to develop plans for their neighborhood. As residents in seemingly-disparate neighborhoods move through the collaborative SPARC process together, they are more likely to recognize social interdependence within and between communities and are more likely to turn inward and to their neighbors to help devise and implement community-based solutions to community problems. The unique urban opportunities and challenges that have emerged from the confluence of these intersecting forces can help urban planners and practitioners understand how to better support and expand diasporic placemaking in the in the contexts of institutional relations, historic preservation, cultural tourism and community economic development.

Constructing Lincoln Park

On April 12, 1918, the Chattanooga city commission announced their plan to construct a public space that would “compare favorably with any colored park in the country.”¹ One of only two recreation grounds for African Americans in the state of Tennessee, Lincoln Park, unlike Church’s Park and Auditorium in Memphis, would be the first publicly owned and financed park

¹ “Lincoln Park Opens June 1” in the *Chattanooga Times* (April 12, 1918). Page 7.

for blacks in the state.² The site chosen for the park was a former corn field adjacent to an established African American community located between Erlanger Hospital and Citico Creek. Initially, the city acquired the property to construct a tuberculosis hospital. They later determined that the site unfavorable conditions for a clinic, and decided to use it for a park instead.

An unnamed reporter for the *Chattanooga Times* described the initial progress on the site accordingly:

This time last year the land was a corn field in the midst of a large negro community in the rear of Erlanger Hospital, near Citico. When seen yesterday there was a noticeable improvement. The old corn field had given way to a tract of improved ground that had been rolled and planted with grass, just now springing up.

The plan was unprecedented in its attention to landscape details and public amenities. Planned features included landscaping and plantings; a children's playground with sandboxes, swings, see-saws and other playground equipment; a dancing pavilion, a carousel house, a refreshment stand and restrooms; and a fountain and lily pond with surrounding gardens. Although it is unclear from the report whether the "large negro community" mentioned is the same one that would go on to establish the Lincoln Park neighborhood, fire insurance maps published in 1901 and 1917 show the presence of two black churches, dozens of residences, and the Steele Orphanage for Colored Children in the immediate vicinity of the proposed park.³ Bushtown and Churchville, two independent African American municipalities located in what is now East Chattanooga, were also proximate to the park. These artifacts suggest that the Lincoln Park

² Robert R. Church Park (1899) in Memphis was financed by businessman and civic leader Robert R. Church, who, for many decades, was the wealthiest African American living in Memphis. Church was dedicated to providing urban amenities and institutions to the Black community in the absence of governmental support. For more information, see Lommel, C. (1995). *Robert Church*. Los Angeles, Calif: Melrose Square Pub. Co.

³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company (1901), (1917). *Fire Insurance Maps for Chattanooga, Tennessee*. Sanborn Map Company - Digital Sanborn Maps – Accessed via <http://sanborn.umi.com>.

neighborhood has been significant to African Americans since well before the construction of the park in 1918.

WPA Era

By the late 1920's, the park also included baseball fields, a miniature golf course, and an open air dance pavilion. It is clear from archived news articles published during this period that the park had already become a regional destination. In May 1935, for example, the *Chicago Defender* reported that the James Henry Y.M.C.A (located on the Westside of Chattanooga) used Lincoln Park to hold a week-long interschool sports and civic competition called "Boy's Week." One month later, the *Defender* advertised that renowned African American composer Hershel Banks and his twelve-piece orchestra had performed a free concert in the open air pavilion.⁴

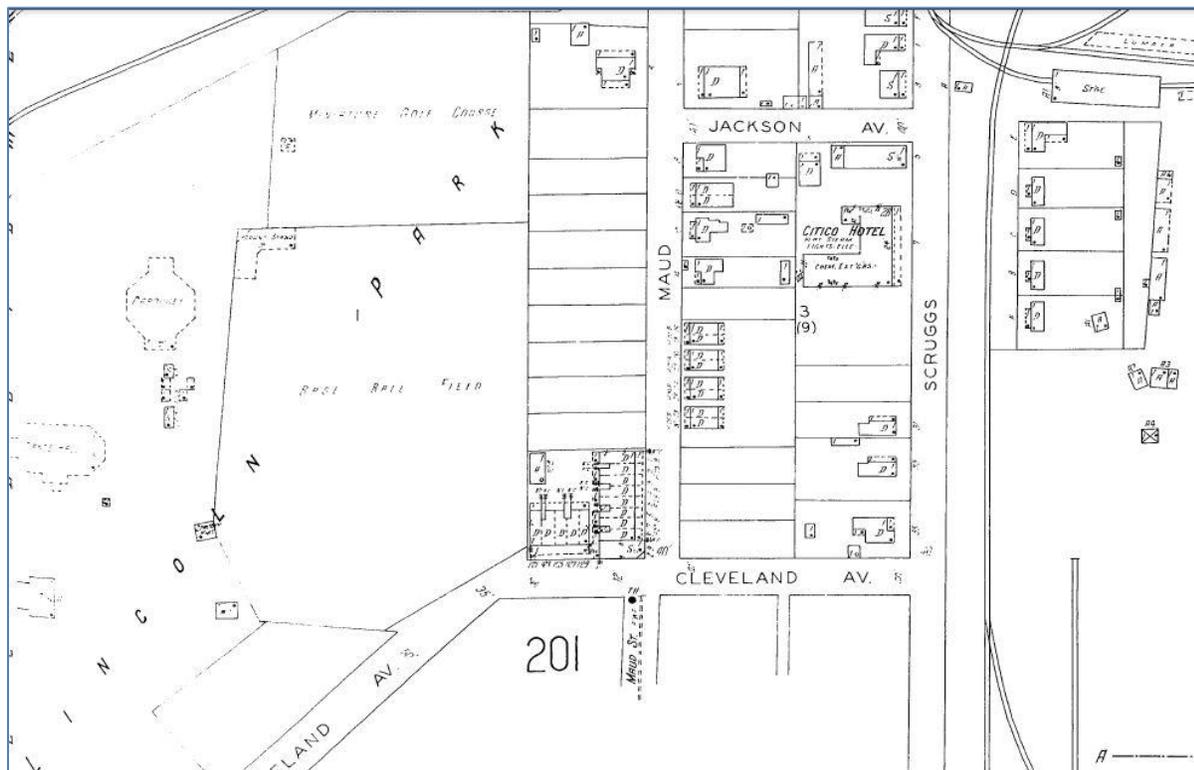


Illustration 7.2: Lincoln Park and its adjacent neighborhood in 1929 (Source: Sanborn Insurance Company 1929)

⁴ *Chicago Defender* (May 12 and June 29, 1935).

Locked in to the north and east by the Southern Railway, the west by Erlanger Hospital, and the south by Harrison Avenue (now East Third Street), Lincoln Park has always had a fixed and relatively small geographic area. As the park improved, the surrounding Lincoln Park neighborhood also evolved to accommodate the growing African American population moving to and traveling through the city. The entire residential neighborhood land area totals 0.04 square mile—yet by 1929, there were nearly one hundred single family homes, eighteen duplexes, two large apartment buildings, several shops and four churches within that small area.

Many renters in the neighborhood were affiliated with the Southern Railway Company, whose massive track-yard bordered the neighborhood to the north and east. The Citico Hotel on Scruggs Street, for example, was constructed as a dormitory for African American men working for the company. Unlike the nearby park, however, the Citico Hotel was not a family-oriented establishment. Characterized by “poker games that...could go on for weeks,” the Citico, or as it was more commonly called, “the grap” or “the beanery” was, despite these distasteful activities, a critical site of diasporic placemaking. Chattanooga had the largest terminal on the Southern Railway system and railroad laborers from Atlanta, Birmingham, Sheffield, Knoxville and Cedartown often boarded at the hotel. Former Southern Railway employee Duane Mintz recalled how important the Citico was for these men from across the Southeast as a place to gather and build community through storytelling:

The main thing I miss most after all those years of labor with the Southern Railway was the camaraderie that existed among the employees I was associated with... My cognizance of the individuals I’m speaking of goes back to the early days of the old Citico Hotel, which was the name of our dormitory in Chattanooga. The long front porch that faced east and afforded us a shady place in the hot afternoons to engage in conversation in regards to the rules, good trips, as well as bad ones and plain old bull-shooting.⁵

⁵ *The Rockmart Journal* (April 1, 1998), page 5A.

On September 26, 1936, the *Chicago Defender* reported that Works Progress Administration (WPA) District Director J.W. Gentry had stated that he would be willing to consider constructing a public pool in Lincoln Park as part of the federal WPA program.⁶ Less than one year later, the city commission voted to approve \$36,000 in coupon bonds to fund the city department of parks, playgrounds and utilities. The goal was to use the money to build up to fifteen new play parks around the city.

The majority of the funds (\$29,000), however, were earmarked for the Lincoln Park pool. Constructed using the labor of more than one hundred WPA workers, the pool was completed in less than a year's time. It would go on to become the first and only Olympic-sized public swimming pool for African Americans in the U.S. South (Illustration 7.3 on the next page). During the groundbreaking ceremony on August 3, 1937, Dr. Spencer J. McCallie, headmaster at Chattanooga's private McCallie School for boys, called for a "united front" of whites and blacks to help create a more racially equitable city. In McCallie's estimation, the pool's social value went well beyond the temporary jobs that were generated by its construction. The pool was a concrete symbol of the city's a commitment to the long-term health and well-being of all its citizens regardless of their race. During his keynote address, McCallie proclaimed:

Crime can best be prevented by giving youth a better environment, such as projects of this type will give. To build jails and prisons after failing to give youth a better environment is damnable...The construction of this pool is not the climax to efforts to better environment of the colored citizen, it is just another layer. God forbid we ever stop.⁷

An opening ceremony was held in the park on July 1, 1938. The ceremony featured guided tours by local Boy Scouts and a performance by the Royal Knights Orchestra. Several members of the citywide inter-racial committee offered speeches to the more than five thousand mostly African

⁶ *Chicago Defender* (September 26, 1936), page 24.

⁷ "First Ground Broken Today for Colored Swimming Pool" in *Chattanooga Times* (August 3, 1937), page 5.

American spectators in attendance. During his remarks, Reverend L.D. Cartwright, Chairman of the Negro Division of the Interracial Committee, urged his fellow citizens and civic leaders not to stop their efforts with the swimming pool. The Black community in Chattanooga, he contended, also needed a library and cultural center. Stressing the interdependence of all citizens and the intersectionality of racialized oppression, Cartwright proclaimed: “We must have a library for Negroes that will be a cultural center. It has long been the habit and tendency of the south and this community in matters of finance and community improvements to forget the Negro. But this must not be done in the future, for what affects one affects all.”⁸

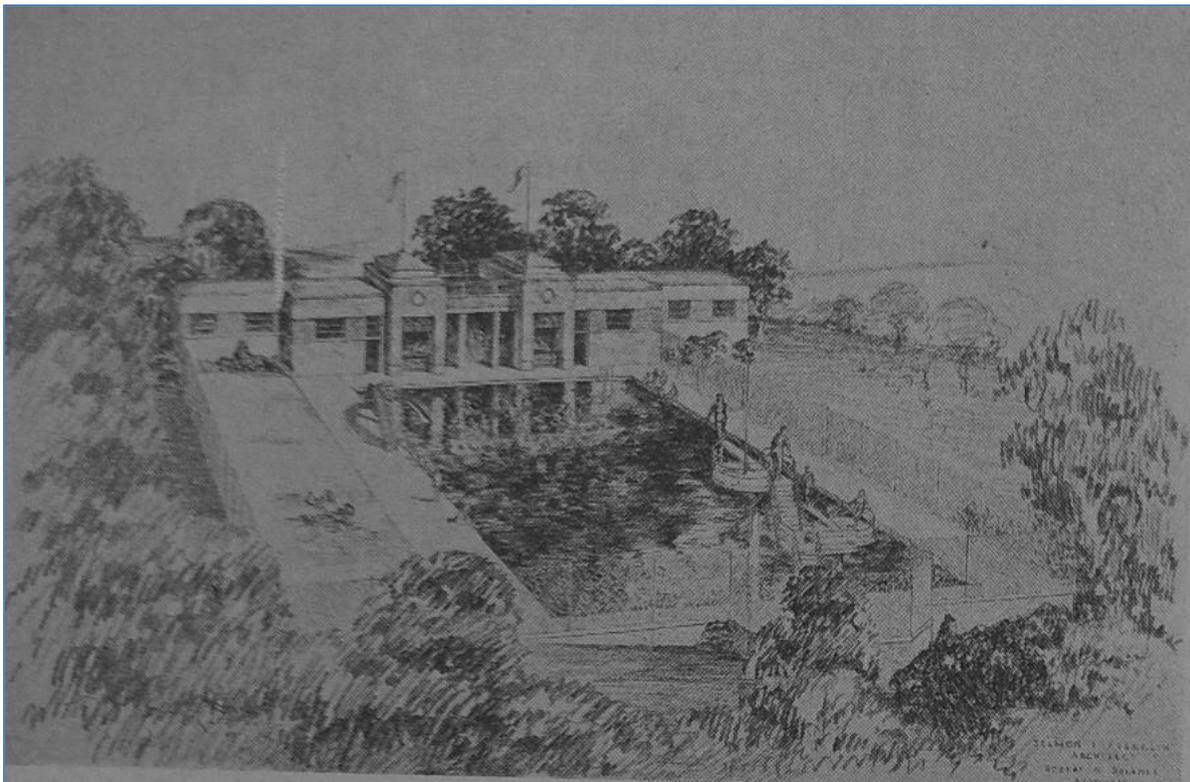


Illustration 7.3: Artist's Sketch of the Lincoln Park pool, constructed in 1937-8 as part of the WPA program (Source: *Chattanooga Times*, July 28, 1937, page 3)

Similar to McCallie, Cartwright saw the ongoing improvement of Lincoln Park as one layer in a multifaceted racial equality agenda. But unlike McCallie, who approached the service

⁸ Rev. Lin D. Cartwright quoted in Duncan, Jasper “Chattanooga Dedicates new \$60,000 Swimming Pool for Negroes” in *The Pittsburgh Courier* (July 9, 1938), 12.

through a charity (i.e. white, paternalistic) frame, Cartwright saw municipal investments in Black public spaces and facilities as a means to make up for two centuries of racist exclusion and neglect. Though not ‘reparations’ in the traditional sense of the term, public investments into state of the art recreation, educational and cultural facilities in African American sections of town were understood to be crucial for leveling the playing fields between white and black communities. In this sense, they were reparative.⁹

The demand for expanded facilities was healthy. Two months after the swimming pool opened, Lincoln Park staff hosted a citywide playground pageant featuring youth and nine African American playground workers from recreation department-sponsored summer playgrounds around the city. Later that summer, the city installed floodlights on the baseball field, making Lincoln Park’s facilities the only field in the South where African Americans could practice and hold nighttime games.

Lincoln Park and the Southern Negro League of Professional Baseball

The construction of electrical floodlights at Lincoln Park’s baseball and softball fields profoundly affected the popularity of games at the park. However, even before the installation of the lights, Lincoln Park’s facilities were critical to the historical development of African American organized sports. In 1920, just two years after the park opened, the Southern Negro League of professional baseball organized a team in Chattanooga. Although they disbanded after

⁹ Chester Hartmann, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, is one of the only planning scholars to address how urban planning and community development might be worked into an agenda for repairing the devastating effects of slavery and the historic marginalization of African Americans in the United States. He wrote, “Official theft demands restitution, even if decades have passed since the criminal act... And since the cumulative damage done to institutions and systems that impact African Americans is that needs remediation, the moneys likely should not go to individuals...but should be directed to creation of educational, employment, and housing opportunities that will over time eliminate what threatens to be a permanent U.S. underclass. The goal should be to make whole a community that was devastated by slavery. The benefits of such an approach to the reparations issue would, without doubt, accrue to the entire society as we move toward that desired state of racial justice and equality” (364).

only one season (but were reestablished for two seasons in 1926), the Chattanooga Black Lookouts practiced in Lincoln Park in the period preceding the construction of Engel Stadium in 1930.

In the 1940's, Chattanooga and Lincoln Park once again became a seat of professional Black baseball in the South. Engel Stadium was built on an East Third Street property located less than a quarter mile from the playing fields in Lincoln Park. Although the local Southern Negro League team representing Chattanooga at this time (the Chattanooga Choo Choo's) were permitted to play their games in the stadium, Black players and fans were forced to enter the field through a back entrance and sit in the most undesirable seats of the then-state of the art facility. The Choo Choo's were also not permitted to use Engel Stadium for practice games.

For these reasons, the ball fields at Lincoln Park became the preferred venue for African American players and their fans. With stands and a lighted field, the Black baseball community could enjoy the sport in an environment free from the discriminatory gazes and policies of whites. Several important players who went on to pave ways for African Americans in national sports made their professional debuts in Lincoln Park. A sixteen year old Willie Mays, for example, played his first professional game as a centerfielder for the Chattanooga Choo Choo's on the field. Although he was underage and could not legally sign a contract, Mays toured extensively with the Choo Choo's until their Manager folded in 1947. Other notable players who frequented Lincoln Park included Satchel Paige and Jackie Robinson.¹⁰

The 1940's were arguably the park's most popular and thriving period. The Lincoln Center Recreation Center was constructed and opened in late December 1946 and quickly became one of the most heavily used rec centers in the city. The center hosted a neighborhood

¹⁰ For more information about Chattanooga's importance to the Southern Negro League and professional baseball more generally, see Jenkins, D. (2005). *Baseball in Chattanooga*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Pub.

kindergarten school, summer camp, and extensive year-round youth programming.¹¹ A Fourth of July event in 1947 attracted an estimated fifteen thousand patrons to the park. The Howard High School football team played their games in the park, and often the school's famous marching band would march from their school on East Ninth Street to the park along Central Avenue.

The facilities had been expanded to include several amusement park rides, a roller skating rink, and a miniature zoo area. An article published in Chattanooga's African American newspaper the *Chattanooga Observer* described the popularity of zoo, stating that:

There are so many people gathered around the cage where a dozen or more monkeys are housed, that you can scarcely get standing room... The big grizzly black bear in a cage within 20 feet of the monkeys also attract many spectators. This past Sunday hundreds of people spent hours around the monkey and bear cage. The management at the park states "that the monkeys and bear attract more people than any other feature at the park."

Notwithstanding the fact that we have a...prewar swimming pool, the most outstanding for colored in the South. The Loop-O-Plane Ferris Wheel, Merry-Go-Round, Chair-Of-Plane, novelty games, tennis, baseball, softball, community center is located in the park.¹²

During an interview for this dissertation project, longtime resident and current Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association President Vannice Hughley emphasized the park's significance as a local and regional destination for African American families. As we spoke in her living room, Hughely gazed out the window toward what remained of the park and vividly recollected its heyday in her mind's eye:

The park backed up to Wiehl Street. And out there where the nursery is, that was part of the park. It was all part of the park. We had a monkey cage—I don't know how many monkeys we had in there—and a bear cage. Those were the only animals that we had there in the park. But our main draw was that Olympic-sized swimming pool. People came from all over the Southeast to swim in that pool. Every weekend we had buses coming into that park, and it would be *spilling over*. People from out of town, and home

¹¹ "Dedication is Set at Lincoln Center in *Chattanooga Times* (December 12, 1946), page 3.

¹² "The Monkeys at Lincoln Park put on Great Show to a Large Audience" in *Chattanooga Observer* (August 1, 1947), page 6.

people would go. We could go to the park and have a good time when we couldn't go anywhere else. We had picnics in the park every weekend. A lot of Black people couldn't have a picnic in the park during the week because we had to work. But on the weekends, it was *it*. It was filled with hometown people and out of town people. They had buses every weekend that would fill up [pointing] that part of the park; they'd go and park over by the Center. Remember when they used to have buses parked over on the other side of the swimming pool?¹³

Without a doubt, asking any local Chattanooga over the age of fifty about the significance of Lincoln Park will yield a variation on the same story. To most white residents, Lincoln Park was the first and for many years, the only, public recreation grounds for African Americans in the city of Chattanooga. To African Americans who experienced it, however, Lincoln Park was, and still is, much more than an antiquated Jim Crow-era public space. To the contrary, for fifty years, Lincoln Park was one of the epicenters of social and cultural production for African Americans living in Chattanooga and across the South. If the Big Nine was the center of commerce and adult entertainment for Chattanooga's Black community between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, Lincoln Park was its "collective backyard;"¹⁴ its center for youth and family social life.

Desegregation

If the historical development of Lincoln Park during the first half of the twentieth century illustrated the public sector's power to provide high quality services and facilities to Chattanooga's Black community, the second half showed their power to just as quickly take those assets away. In several chapters of this dissertation I discussed the complex relationship that many (especially older) African Americans have to legal desegregation in Chattanooga. While the newfound freedoms in housing and education presented opportunities to escape the

¹³ Hughley, Vannice. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

¹⁴ Vilma Fields quoted in Shearer, John "Lincoln Park was the Place to Go" *Free Press* (October 18, 1998), page A11.

inner city, the result of African American outmigration was the breakdown of what had been historically a centralized, tight-knit community.

Another outcome of public desegregation was the systematic disinvestment in previously Black-only public facilities and spaces. On September 24, 1963, newly elected Mayor Ralph H. Kelley (1963-1969) declared that all public buildings, parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, golf courses and community centers were “open to all.” This announcement, made nearly a decade after the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court Ruling, marked the beginning of formal desegregation in Chattanooga.¹⁵ Over the next decade, the city redirected funds from Lincoln Park into nearby Warner Park. During segregation, Warner Park had been the white counterpart to Lincoln Park, containing a swimming pool, playground and extensive sports facilities. Local planners and policymakers justified themselves by arguing that it didn’t make sense to invest in two major city parks when African Americans could just use Warner Park instead.¹⁶ The concession stand was the first facility to close, followed by the pool in 1966.

Institutional Encroachment + Land Swapping

In late 1974, Hensley-Schmidt Inc., consulting engineers to the state, requested that the City declare the park as “surplus” land in order to facilitate the approval and construction of a Central Avenue “freeway.” Historically, East End (now Central) Avenue had marked the eastern border of the city, and its northern terminus was located on East Third Street at the entrance to the Lincoln Park neighborhood. After Interstate I-24 was constructed through downtown Chattanooga in the late 1960’s, Central Avenue transformed into a major thoroughfare for connecting cars exiting the freeway to eastern sections of the city. The Central Avenue freeway

¹⁵ - See more at: <http://www.chattanooga.gov/about-chattanooga/history-of-mayors/1963-1969-ralph-h-kelley#sthash.vAT1zeQW.dpuf>

¹⁶ Despite their claims that Warner Park was open and welcoming to everyone, few people of color actually used the park in the post-segregation period. Freeman, Moses. Personal communication. September 12, 2012.

proposal recommended that the avenue be connected to North Chattanooga by way of a road extension through the park and bridge over the Tennessee River.

In response to their request to declare Lincoln Park surplus property, Commissioner Conrad issued the following statement:

After studying all aspects I feel compelled to reject the destruction of Lincoln Park and the devastation of the Fairhills-Riverview section of North Chattanooga. I am flatly opposed to this route for several reasons. First, people are my top priority. Secondly, there are other, better alternatives. Third, we must preserve and improve existing park space in our city. Most people want progress. So do I. But at what price? I am not willing, in the guise of progress, to desecrate our environment.¹⁷

Conrad's emphasis on Lincoln Park as a people oriented, community space was perhaps the last time a member of the local political economic structure defended the cultural asset as an end in itself. Ultimately, the proposal for the extension and bridge was abandoned and alternative routes were adopted for bridges to connect the northern and southern shores of the city.¹⁸

But just because state transportation planners had shifted their focus for the time being did not mean that the historic Lincoln Park was safe from institutional encroachment. On November 3, 1979, the city announced that it planned to engage in a public land swap with Erlanger Hospital. The hospital was planning to expand its campus and needed a place to store construction equipment during the process. In exchange for the ten acre Lincoln Park property, the hospital planned to give the department of parks and recreation an eight acre site in Glenwood (East Chattanooga). The city announced that they'd build a park where the old children's hospital had once stood. *Chattanooga Times* journalist Pat Wilcox reported that:

The commissioner said the use of Lincoln Park has been gradually phased out, except for two ball fields there, with the recreational needs of the community being served at the nearby Carver Center and Warner Park. The Lincoln Park swimming pool has been long closed. The tennis courts have not been repaired because new and better ones are

¹⁷ "Conrad Opposes Engineers on Closing of Lincoln Park" in *Chattanooga Times*, (November 10, 1974), page A1.

¹⁸ The C. B. Robinson Bridge opened in 1981 and the Veterans Bridge opened in 1984.

available at Carver Center and Warner Park. And the little-used recreation center at Lincoln Park has finally been closed.¹⁹

In making the case for the land swap, city officials had argued that Lincoln Park had been declining for years. Only a fraction of its original amenities remained, and most of them had deteriorated substantially after years of prioritizing the Carver Center and Warner Park over Lincoln Park for public funds.

Although the commissioner argued that Chattanooga's African American community's recreational needs were being met by Warner Park and the Carver Recreation Center, he did not acknowledge that many African Americans felt uncomfortable and/or unsafe using the facilities at Warner where they had been excluded for decades. Nor did he discuss the historical and cultural value of the park to the Black community. Finally, while the newly constructed Carver Recreation Center did not have the same history of exclusion, its facilities were not equipped to serve the nearly ten thousand children and youth living on the eastside of town.²⁰ Instead, he offered an economic rationale for the systematic neglect and disinvestment of one of the region's most historically significant public assets. With the land negotiated, the city first allowed Erlanger to store their equipment on the site but by the early eighties had transferred the property titles to the hospital authority.

Illustration 7.4 on the next page shows properties owned by the County Hospital Authority along with their year of sale. Based on this map, the County Hospital Authority assumed ownership of one portion of the park in 1979 and the remainder of it in 1981. During the same time period, Erlanger purchased nearly a dozen additional properties in the Lincoln Park neighborhood and along East Third Street.

¹⁹ Wilcox, Pat "Site in Glenwood to Become Park" in *Chattanooga Times*, (November 3, 1979), page D4.

²⁰ In 1970, the total population in East Chattanooga under the age of eighteen was 9,044—down from 10,407 in 1960 (US Census Bureau SF 100% 1960 + 1970).

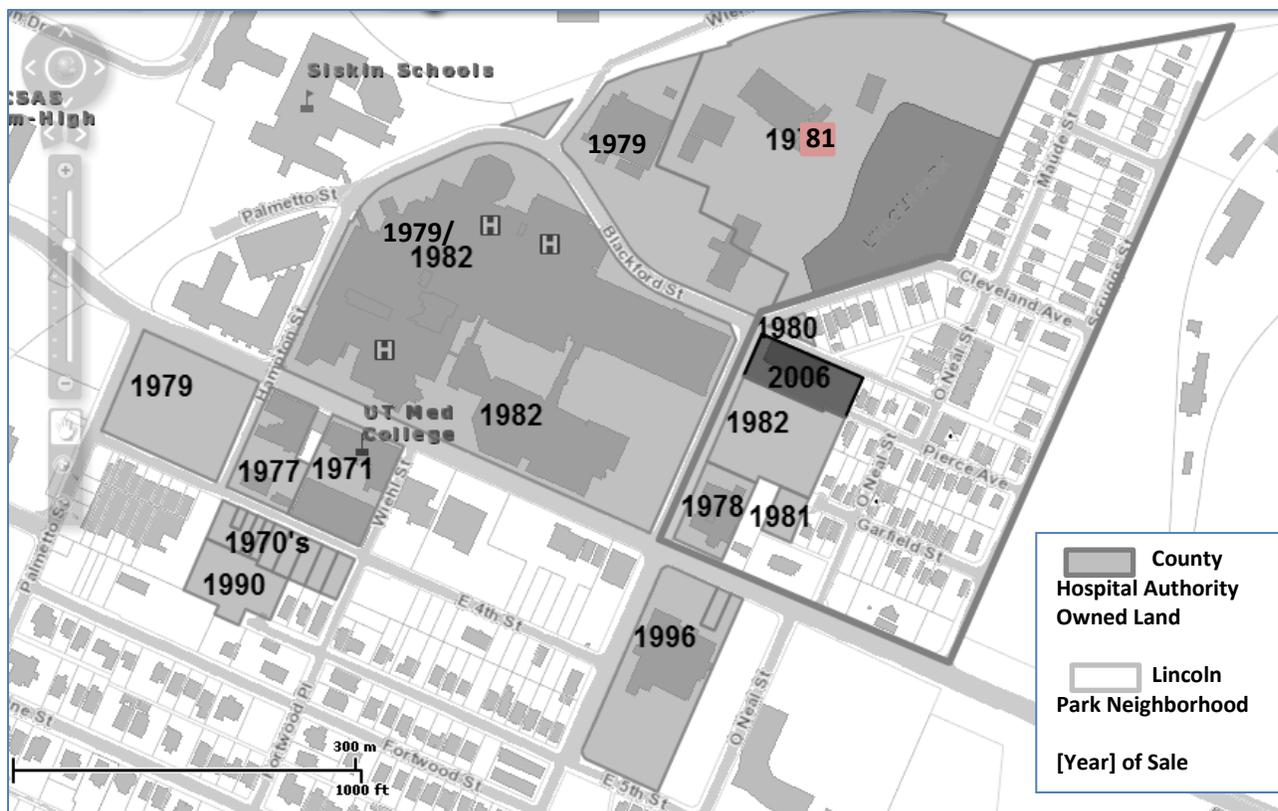


Illustration 7.4: Properties owned by the County Hospital Authority (Erlanger) in 2014 by Year of Sale (Data Source: Hamilton County GIS, Hamilton Country Registry of Deeds; Map by author)

Lincoln Park Neighborhood Improvement League

Between 1976 and 1985, the Erlanger Medical Center’s campus expanded by 500,000 square feet. The additional square footage included a 1,200 car parking garage, two multi-purpose buildings, five additional floors above the Children’s Hospital, a combination energy plant and laundry facility and six additional floors to the west wing of the medical center.²¹

By the late 1970’s, the hospital owned seventeen properties in Lincoln Park and most were residences. Realizing the extent of the hospital’s encroachment and fearing for their own homes, residents sprang into action. In 1982, resident leaders organized the Lincoln Park Improvement League and went to work negotiating an expansion moratorium with their hospital neighbors. The Improvement League was successful in doing so—but didn’t stop there. The

²¹ Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency (1985). *Erlanger/ UTC Planning Study*, Page 9.

group's outspoken President, Bessie "Mother" Smith, convinced her co-organizers to apply for Community Development Block Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to begin neighborhood stabilization efforts throughout Lincoln Park. The League was awarded their first grant one year later (1983-1984); by 1985, the group had received half a million dollars in CDBG funds, which they prioritized for street, sidewalk, curb and gutter improvements. Based on their success the neighborhood was also selected to participate in a "comprehensive housing rehabilitation program" sponsored by the city and funded through the CDBG program.²²

The Lincoln Park Improvement League also launched important cooperative community development initiatives that did not rely on public funds. In 1986, the League organized a city-wide fundraiser to help Alberta Sorrell, a 71 year old widow who had lived in a rented house in the neighborhood for seventeen years, purchase the rental home she was in risk of losing. The house was owned by an absentee landlord who wanted to sell the property. In response, the League organized teas and bake sales and solicited donations from local churches. Through these activities, they raised the \$4,000 asking price and were able to offer Sorrell an interest-free, low monthly payment loan so that she could purchase her home from her landlord. Additionally, the League negotiated with Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) to offer Sorrell a no-interest home improvement loan so that she could make necessary upgrades to the house. The group planned to use the monies repaid by Sorrell to start a revolving loan fund so that they could offer similar services to other low income households in the neighborhood.²³

²² *Ibid*, Page 12.

²³ "Lincoln Park: On the Move" in *Chattanooga Times* (April 4, 1986), page A8. Sorrell paid off the loan for her house in 1995.

Piloting the Community Impact Initiative in Lincoln Park

The Lincoln Park Neighborhood Improvement League's model for cooperative, resident driven community development caught the attention of both local and national community development practitioners. In Chapter 6, I discussed the evolution of Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) and its role in the East Ninth/ East MLK neighborhood. The organization had formed after the famous urban planner and real estate developer James Rouse visited Chattanooga and challenged city leaders to counteract the widespread housing deterioration occurring across the urban core.

CNE approached Lincoln Park to be a pilot neighborhood in their Community Impact initiative—a program intended to eliminate all substandard housing citywide within ten years—and commended the League for their collaborative, cooperative approach, calling it a “model” for sustainable neighborhood development:

That's the key to the Enterprise program: neighborhoods working together to meet the housing needs of their residents, and receiving support from the foundation and other interested agencies and individuals to structure rehabilitation programs and financing packages that get the job done while keeping the price of housing within the means of the poor.²⁴

Same, Same—No Change

While on paper and in the press the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Improvement League's partnership with CNE was touted as a model for successful neighborhood revitalization, descriptions of the collaboration from neighborhood leaders who participated in the initiative paint a less optimistic scene. Vannice Hughley is a longtime homeowner in Lincoln Park and the current President of the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association. Her first involvement with neighborhood organizing and community development occurred during the mid-1980's, when

²⁴ Lincoln Park: On the Move” Chattanooga Times, April 4, 1986, A8.

Community Impact was trying to get resident buy-in for their housing rehabilitation program.

During an interview for this project, Hughley offered the following extended description of her role in an initiative that she believes ultimately caused more damage than it caused good:

The community has been ‘empowered’ by a number of organizations. The more things change, the more they remain same. Same, same— no change. Lincoln Park was a ‘pilot’ area for Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise...Mother [Bessie Smith] was in charge. CNE got down in here and was walking and talking from house to house. There was a lot of resistance, especially from the older people. A lot of “I’m not dealing with this!” And me really believing what I was being told, that this was the way it had always been. If you say it, we believe it until proven different. I was under the impression that this was going to happen! This was going to happen. People could sign up, and they’d sign up, enthused, after we talked to them. Me especially—I sold the thing to them. Me, walking with Mayor Bob Corker and Mother, on the street, talking to people.

Now, after it was all over, there were people who—well, who were homeowners and who made too much money. But you don’t remember when they said “low to moderate income”? Well by what scales? Anyway, no money came. My husband and I didn’t qualify. They had you thinking that there were home improvement loans. People said “oh, I want that.” But to no avail... I would say the renters, they probably got over good. Because a lot of their properties were repaired. Other than that, I didn’t see anything happening. Every time a person would try to ask for a loan or qualify for a loan, there was nothing happening. There was a man...[Matt Piles] I was just giving him a fit. He stopped taking my calls. Because he would talk the talk, but wouldn’t walk the walk. So finally I said, I don’t want to deal with this anymore. I don’t want to deal with it because it’s not what it was supposed to be... I was just over it. I said, “this is not fair.” I told him, “You’ve got some nerve coming down here and getting people emotionally invested, when you knew you weren’t going to do anything about it. I was so mad at him... So that’s what was happening then. Nothing happened. Same, same-- no change.”²⁵

In other words, Hughley believes that she was used by CNE staff and city officials to build community buy-in for an incentive program that was never meant to directly benefit the longtime low income home owners living in Lincoln Park. Landlords who owned rental properties in the

²⁵ Hughley, Vannice. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

neighborhood often qualified for improvement loans, but the owner occupied households who needed capital the most could not qualify for assistance based on their incomes.

The result of this paradox was that many longtime residents had their hopes built up only to be broken back down. This exacerbated residents' distrust of city government as well as the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Improvement League, whose members did most of the pavement pounding. Hughley's story underscores the relativity and fuzziness of the terms "low" and "moderate" income and also shows how planners can use the language of equitable community development to pursue other ends (i.e. to catalyze economic gentrification). Though it seems ironic, this qualification paradox actually supported planning recommendations found in the 1985 *UTC-Erlanger Study*, which argued that Lincoln Park's stabilization depended on successfully attracting hospital and university employees to purchase homes and investment properties in the neighborhood.²⁶

Besides the issue of non-qualifying residents, Hughley criticized CNE's work in Lincoln Park on the basis that they never completed many of the streetscape improvements that they started. By the late 1980's CNE's money for work in Lincoln Park had dried up. Today, in 2014, nearly twenty years after the CNE pilot program was launched, most sidewalks are half-completed and inaccessible to people with limited physical mobility; several streets are without lights; there are no public trash or recycling cans; and storm water management issues continue to affect residents whenever it rains.²⁷

Erlanger in the Age of Community Partnerships

By the late 1980's, Erlanger Hospital had purchased most of the available land along the UTC-Erlanger East Third Street corridor and several properties in the Lincoln Park

²⁶ Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency 1985, 9.

²⁷ Hughley, Vannice and Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

neighborhood. In the past, the relationship between the hospital and Improvement League had been contentious. In an effort to rebuild some of the bridges burned during the previous decade and become a better neighbor to Lincoln Park, Erlanger began to have conversations with CNE about “adopting” the neighborhood in order to market it as a desirable place for doctors and hospital employees purchase homes. “What we’re doing,” one spokesman from CNE told *Chattanooga Times*, “is turning an adversarial relationship into a kind of cooperative one.”²⁸ Likewise, representatives from Erlanger signaled a turning point in hospital—neighborhood relations. Carolyn Gilliam, a spokeswoman for Erlanger, characterized their efforts as an olive branch: “It’s a different picture today. We want our neighbors to be as beautiful as we’re trying to be. Mrs. Smith has been battling for a long time. She may have some scars from those battles.”²⁹

In the early 1990’s, the hospital launched the Erlanger Community Partnership: an initiative focused on restoring a portion of the historic park into a usable “public” space. Over the next twenty four months, Mayor Gene Roberts, the city department of economic and community development, and CNE got involved as well. The group secured \$30,000 in CDBG funds and used the money to make several improvements to the park. First, they commissioned a replica of the Lincoln Park’s original stone archway and had it installed on a parcel of land that Erlanger deeded back to the city. Additionally, they installed tennis courts, a basketball court, picnic tables and grills. In exchange for these improvements, the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Improvement League assumed responsibility for maintaining some of the landscaping.

²⁸ “After Home Improvement Work, Lincoln Park Regains its Pride” in *Chattanooga Times* (August 20, 1989), page A1.

²⁹ Carolyn Gilliam, spokeswoman for Erlanger Hospital quoted in Rawlins, Wade “After Home Improvement Work, Lincoln Park Regains its Pride” in *Chattanooga Times* (August 20, 1989), page A1.

Lincoln Park in the 21st Century

Over the next fifteen years, little public attention was focused on Lincoln Park or its surrounding neighborhood. The Improvement League renamed itself the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association and continued to uphold its end of the Erlanger Partnership by maintaining the landscaping where the archway had been constructed. The hospital maintained its end of the bargain by not encroaching further into the neighborhood. CNE and the city turned their attention away from Lincoln Park towards other neighborhoods in the urban core as they began to focus more on market rate housing development.

Although city and institutional planners never achieved the sort of mixed income economic revitalization they had hoped for, the neighborhood remained relatively stable throughout the first decade of the 21st century. Table 7.1 on the next page shows key demographic changes in the neighborhood between 2000 and 2010.³⁰ In 2010, the historically Black neighborhood was 91.5% African American, and more than forty Black families owned their own homes. The most dramatic demographic shift has been the aging of its population: between 2000 and 2010, the population over the age of sixty-five more than doubled (122.6%), and the population over eighty nearly tripled (280%). Whereas in 2000 senior citizens comprised twenty percent (20.1%) of the total population, in 2010 more than forty percent (43.7%) of residents were over the age of sixty-five. Residents over the age of eighty alone comprise nearly thirty percent (28.7%) of the total population in Lincoln Park. Correspondingly, there has been a significant decrease in the number of working aged adults living in the neighborhood: between 2000 and 2010, the number of eighteen to sixty four year olds decreased by more nearly forty percent (39%).

³⁰ The 2000 Decennial Census is the first census where block-level data is available for Chattanooga. Because of its small size, historic Block Group-level data does not offer an accurate picture of social life and trends in Lincoln Park.

Table 7.1: Key Demographic Changes in Lincoln Park, 2000 - 2010

	2000		2010		Percent Change
	#	%	#	%	
Total Population	264	100%	270	100%	2.3%
White	*		8**	3.0%	*
African American	*		247	91.5%	*
Native American	*		7	2.6%	*
Asian	*		5	1.9%	*
Multiracial	*		3	1.1%	*
< 18 Years	57	21.6%	58	21.5%	1.8%
18 – 64 years	154	58.3%	94	34.8%	-39%
65 + years	53	20.1%	118	43.7%	122.6%
80 + years	20	7.6%	76	28.1%	280.0%
Occupied Housing Units	119	100%	111	100%	-6.7%
Renter Occupied	73	61.3%	64	57.7%	-11.1%
Owner Occupied	47	39.5%	47	42.3%	14.6%
African American Owner	41	34.5%	42	37.8%	2.4%

* *Block-level data for 2000 Decennial Census is incomplete.*

** *2010 White population estimate based on subtraction of white population in Block #1001 (N=57) from total white county (N=65). This large but primarily industrial block includes a UTC fraternity located on Siskin Road.*

As the neighborhood’s population has aged in place, the focus of the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association has shifted. The vast majority of its members today are senior citizens concerned about noise, public safety and youth violence. While many longtime residents remember the park at its heyday, they worry that the now-underutilized space will attract crime and other illicit activities. The park had historically been a space for intergenerational community building, but today is perceived as a place that is unsafe for senior residents. In response to these concerns, the association had the basketball courts removed from the park.³¹

Despite their concerns, there is widespread consensus that the park space is a valuable community asset that ought to be preserved. These commitments ramped up significantly over the past two years, as it has slowly come to light that city has its own vision for the land.

³¹ Hughley, Vannice and Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013. It should be mentioned that the views expressed here belong to Hughley, Rankins, and several other active neighborhood residents, but in no way is representative of all people residing in the neighborhood.

Although the Central Avenue “freeway” project proposed in the early 1970’s was ultimately forgone, recent history has shown that plans for a Central Avenue extension hibernated but never actually disappeared. In late 2011, the city announced their plan to use state transportation funds to construct a roadway (up to five lanes) through a section of the Lincoln Park neighborhood-- a move that would involve building a thruway through a portion of the park along the back sides of over a dozen seniors’ homes.

Tiffany Rankins, Vice President of the neighborhood association, described how she and Hughley first learned that the City of Chattanooga was revisiting their plans for a roadway to connect Central Avenue to Riverside Drive. Although Hughley had been the president of the neighborhood association for several years, she and Rankins learned about the extension the same way that everyone else in the city did: by reading about it in the *Times Free Press*. She recollected how:

There was an article in the paper in 2011, with an image of a map, and it mentioned the extension. So basically, Mom started calling the Mayor’s Office, and I got on the phone and asked someone to explain the maps. The city engineer agreed to host a meeting downtown to provide details about the plan. He [the city engineer] didn’t show, but some other people showed: the architect showed, and Ellis Smith, the reporter. So we were sort of twiddling our thumbs, going back and forth. What was kind of weird was Ellis Smith got up and asked the architect whether he had said anything that made them mad. I thought, why would he say that? So then we called the Mayor’s office and told them that nobody had showed up to the meeting. So they said they’d come down [to Lincoln Park]. But we had no idea the kind of entourage they’d bring in. So basically each individual was getting up and saying a little of this, a little of that. They were showing concepts at the time, which ended up being the actual footprint, but they kept calling it a “concept.” Every time [Mayor] Littlefield spoke, he would turn to his colleagues rather than to us. They didn’t tell us about the NEPA application or any of those things. We were basically...we didn’t know what to ask.³²

So then they left, and the next thing we heard was when Councilor McGary called one morning to say that they would be voting on the project that evening. Rankins recalled: “We got up [to

³² Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

the Council meeting] and said what can we do about this? And [Chattanooga City Councilor] Pam Ladd said, basically, nothing.”³³

In other words, furious that the neighborhood had been left out of the conversations leading up to the decision to reintroduce the Central Avenue extension project, Hughley and Rankins reached out to the public administrators discussed in Ellis Smith’s newspaper article to get a better sense for the scope and scale of the project. But instead of having a frank conversation about how the road would impact the park and neighborhood, they were shown drawings and assured that they were only “conceptual” plans.

The Central Avenue extension would use state and federal transportation dollars and was subject to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), but city officials and their consultants never made neighborhood residents aware of the public comment period leading up to the approval of public funds. When leaders of the neighborhood association expressed their surprise and disapproval of the proposed route through their historic park, they were told in an air of condescension that the project had been in the works for forty years and was therefore unstoppable. Even though the funds had not yet been approved at the time of the meeting in Lincoln Park, Chief Engineer Bill Payne was quoted in the *Times Free Press* as saying ““The goal isn’t for residents to say if they want the Central Avenue extension but to help the city determine the community impact it will have. It’s not necessarily a question of ‘do you want this or not.’”³⁴

For Rankins and Hughley, the meeting with Mayor Littlefield and his “entourage” was further evidence that professional planners in Chattanooga have no commitment to the local

³³ Ibid (2013).

³⁴ Putnam, Yolanda. “Lincoln Park Residents Oppose Chattanooga Plan to Extend Central Avenue” in *Chattanooga Times Free Press* (March 19, 2013). Accessed online: <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2013/mar/19/lincoln-park-residents-oppose-extension/>.

Black community—especially when it is low income and socially vulnerable, as is the case in Lincoln Park where most residents are elderly and living on fixed incomes. Rankins continued:

Mom says it all the time: when someone is getting shot, murdered, or when the houses are burning, it's "your community," but when I want to take something in there and build it up, it's "our community." Littlefield came up in here and said this has been going on for forty years! What has? What's been going on? And it's not just him. When it was going through the City Council there were councilors up there telling us "There's nothing you can do about it." I was sitting there like, "Wow. *This is how they talk to us.*" You know your voice doesn't mean a thing. They say, "We'll come and get your input." But what for? You're not going to do anything with it or about it.³⁵

Rankin's statement underscores the paternalism that many city officials exhibit toward low income communities of color in Chattanooga. It also illuminates the political economics of uneven geographic development in a city where racism is coded and social inequality is greater than it ever has been before. Poverty is pathologized and residents are told they must "take their own neighborhoods back" from criminals and other undesirable citizens. Statements such as those made during the early Central Avenue meetings fail to acknowledge historical legacies of racism and inequality; the fact that African American neighborhoods have been neglected by economic development planners, who consider public investments in risky, 'dangerous' parts of the city bad uses of funds. However, as gentrification expands beyond the central business district and real estate pressures create "new frontiers" in historically neglected parts of the city, public discourse shifts. Suddenly, impoverished inner city neighborhoods are treated as underutilized property ripe for the taking. The onus is no longer on existing residents to take their communities back, but rather on city officials and private developers to save these neighborhoods from themselves.

³⁵ Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

Assessing Historical Significance and Integrity

The outcomes of these double standards are evident in policy and planning documents used by planners and urban technicians to rationalize their expansions into new gentrification frontiers. In her statements above, Rankins mentioned that city officials never explained the NEPA process or the criteria that they used to assess the environmental and social impacts of the Central Avenue extension. Had they done so, the community would have submitted comments outlining how the further destruction of their park would significantly impact the historic and cultural resources in their community.

Given their lack of input, it is little surprise that the final NEPA document concluded that the road would not significantly impact the historical assets in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. When evaluating the historical and architectural impacts of the proposed roadway, authors of the document used an undisclosed “four tiered approach” to their assessment. The following quote summarizes the alleged impacts of the road on the historic park and Lincoln Park neighborhood:

Lincoln Park – The preliminary assessment is that Lincoln Park does not meet National Register of Historic Places eligibility because it does not retain its historic size and features. The park has been reduced in size by over half. Additionally, the only historic features that remain on the subject piece of land are: 1) the old gate post, which stands at the southern edge of the park along Cleveland Street; 2) and the concession stand, which has been altered. Extant features in the park date to the 1980s and 1990s. While the tennis courts may be at or near their historic location, the current ballfield is not.

Lincoln Park Neighborhood – The preliminary assessment is that the Lincoln Park neighborhood does not meet NRHP eligibility because development has eroded the neighborhood edges to the west and south, numerous homes have been demolished leaving vacant lots throughout the neighborhood, a number of new houses have been built and many older homes have been altered by substantial renovations and additions. Additionally, the small neighborhood lacks a cohesive feel architecturally as it was built out in different eras and there are many vacant lots and two relatively large paved parking lots adjacent to the neighborhood churches.³⁶

³⁶ City of Chattanooga (April 17, 2013). *Central Avenue Extension – NEPA Historical/Architectural Assessment Summary*.

In other words, planners used the decades of institutional neglect and asset stripping in Lincoln Park to justify their ruling that both the park and neighborhood lacked historical and architectural integrity. Nowhere in their assessment do these planners contextualize the physical changes in the neighborhood; nowhere do they acknowledge the neighborhood's disagreement with their evaluation. Moreover, the statements above illustrate the assessors' lack of intimate knowledge of the historic park space. Had someone who really knew and remembered the park been part of the evaluation, they would have quickly pointed out that the "old gate post" was a reproduction built in the 1990's, and that the original WPA-era pool and bath house, though significantly altered, was still intact on the site (see Illustration 7.6 below).



Illustration 7.5: Once the largest public pool for African Americans in the south, the Lincoln Park pool was constructed as a WPA project in 1938. For the past thirty years, the former bathhouse has been used as an equipment storage facility by Erlanger Hospital (Source: Courtney Knapp 2013).

Finally, in addition to the park and neighborhood, the NEPA Historical/ Architectural assessment included a third site of potential impact: the Cumberland Corporation site (constructed in 14941/1947), which is located directly to the north of the park. Although it isn't mentioned in their evaluation, the Cumberland Corporation facility has long been eyed by local planners as a potential adaptive reuse site. The hospital and university in particular have eyed the site for redevelopment into high end housing and commercial because of its uniqueness and proximity to their facilities.³⁷

Presumably knowing these interests, the NEPA evaluators concluded that the Cumberland Corporation site is eligible for historic preservation status: a move that will enable redevelopers to access a range of historic tax credits and other financial incentives. They write:

The Cumberland Corporation property meets National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility criteria for architecture and is a good example of a middle twentieth century railroad-related industrial and manufacturing ... The 1941 manufacturing building and the two 1947 structures appended to it and are good examples of utilitarian industrial design from the mid-century... The portion of the property that contains the brick 1941 and 1947 brick buildings is considered eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.³⁸

Given the perceived redevelopment potential of the Cumberland Corporation site, the Central Avenue extension becomes about more than simply connecting two roads and offering better ambulance access to the hospital. It must be understood in the context of short, middle and long-range gentrification planning: the Cumberland Corporation site, perceived as an attractive mixed

³⁷ The Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) selected the Enterprise Center, Inc. as one of its FY 2013 "Area Wide Planning Grant" recipients. The \$200,000 award has been used to develop a planning assessment of the 3rd Street corridor, including the Cannon/ Cumberland Corporation site located on Riverside Drive, directly behind the historic Lincoln Park. Additionally, in 2013 and 2014, the *Times Free Press* reported that a private developer was very interested in redeveloping the factory into a multifamily condo and apartment project. For more information about the EPA award, see the Brownfield Fact Sheet:

http://cfpub.epa.gov/bf_factsheets/gfs/index.cfm?xpg_id=7959&display_type=HTML. For more information about the redevelopment of the site, see Bradbury, Shelley (July 10, 2014). "New Multi-Family Units Proposed near Erlanger and UTC" in the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*. Accessed online: <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2014/jul/10/new-multi-family-units-proposed-near-erlanger-utc/?businessnvalley>.

³⁸ City of Chattanooga (April 17, 2013). *Central Avenue Extension – NEPA Historical/Architectural Assessment Summary*.

use project, is considered eligible, while the historic Black assets in Lincoln Park are disqualified from historic preservation status and the financial incentives that go along with such designation. These decisions have the potential to exacerbate uneven geographic development in Chattanooga even further, by continuing to neglect and destroy African American historical and cultural infrastructure for the sake of economic “progress” which almost exclusively benefits middle to upper class white residents.

No to Central Avenue, Yes to Lincoln Park!

When residents in Lincoln Park first learned about the proposed roadway in 2011, Rankins and Hughley began to explore their options for stopping it and/or changing its route. At the same time that city planners were submitting NEPA comments, Rankins discovered that historic preservation status could prevent the use of public monies. Unaware that the city had already been in conversation with the state historic preservation office (who similarly concluded that the park and neighborhood lacked historical integrity), Rankins compiled and submitted an application to the state to have the park designated as a historic place.

Her main argument centered around the Olympic-sized swimming pool built with WPA funds and the baseball fields where the United Negro Leagues practiced and played. During an interview for this project, Rankins outlined her motivation for pursuing historic preservation: [Lincoln Park] is a historical place, and basically I wanted to just try to put a hold, as far as getting the Federal money, any way I could. I thought that Erlanger was a city/county hospital, but it was created in Nashville. If they're asking for Federal money, then my tax money... goes to supporting that hospital. It's not private. So I should have some sort of say-so. It's the same thing with the land swap. It went on, and it was all undercover. Who knew? Who knew? I'm not trying to get all upset about it, but let's preserve what's left as an African American park. Because there's still a lot that can be done with it.³⁹

Based on her statement, it's clear that the park, though altered through years of city and county neglect, still retained its historic significance. Members of the local Black community, and

³⁹ Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

Lincoln Park residents in particular, also see the potential for the park to catalyze tourism and economic development in the future. After submitting their application, Rankins received a letter from the state preservation office thanking her for her claim but rejecting it. The rejection was based on two points. First, state officers determined that the site had been irreparably altered. Second, they concluded that the property owners (Erlanger Hospital) were not in support of such a designation and the state has no power to impose designation upon an unwilling property owner.

After they received the rejection letter from the state, Rankins and Hughley approached Erlanger to emphasize the historic and cultural significance of the park to the Black community and see if they might be willing to get on board with a plan to save what was left of the park and build a community economic development agenda around the preservation of one of the few remaining African American historical assets in the city. Unwilling to budge, the hospital initially recalled the same talking points as the city and state.

When Rankins and Hughley realized they would be unsuccessful at inspiring a change of heart, they asked the hospital permission to host a Lincoln Park Reunion so that the local Black community could come together to celebrate their memories of the historic public space. Initially, their suggestion was rejected because of the liability it posed to the hospital. But as Lincoln Park organizers persisted, another rationale emerged. Rankins and Hughley recalled how they were told during a meeting with hospital administrators, most of whom are white, that Erlanger was uncomfortable with having one of their properties associated with the United Negro League of professional baseball because of the word “negro.”⁴⁰ Rather than place the term in its historical context and celebrate the site as a critical space of African American

⁴⁰ Hughley, Vannice and Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

placemaking during the Jim Crow period, administrators and board members preferred to disassociate themselves with the realities of local history and race relations in the city.

Lincoln Park and the Planning Free School of Chattanooga

In early March 2013, the *Times Free Press* reported on the Central Avenue extension. One frequent Planning Free School participant brought the article to a Transportation discussion group meeting and suggested that Chattanooga Organized for Action and the free school engage members of Lincoln Park to see if they might be able to assist them in their efforts to stop the route from being built through the park. COA organizers sprang into action; they quickly engaged neighborhood association leaders from all areas potentially affected by the Central Avenue extension and invited them to a meeting to discuss the current transportation proposal. After hearing from members of the Lincoln Park neighborhood, these community leaders wholeheartedly agreed that the plan was myopic: an extension through Lincoln Park would destroy one of the few African American historical assets left in Chattanooga.

These neighborhood associations, which included the more affluent areas of Fort Wood and Highland Park, banded together to form the Coalition to Save Lincoln Park. The coalition began to meet with representatives from Erlanger, the city of Chattanooga, and the Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency. They insisted that the extension proposal and public monies had been approved without having engaged any directly impacted residents, which is a direct violation of federal Title VI legislation.

Simultaneously, COA organizers encouraged neighborhood leaders from Lincoln Park to attend Planning Free School workshops to gain further research and technical planning skills to aid in their resistance efforts. Several members of the neighborhood, including Rankins and Hughley, began to attend Arts and Cultural Development and Housing discussion group

meetings. To accommodate their real time planning challenges and needs, the Planning Free School adapted its curriculum to make the park and neighborhood a central case study for collaborative analysis.

For example, during one of the Housing “Exploring Alternatives” sessions, participants explored community land trusts (CLTs) as a tool for removing property from the speculative market and promoting place-based equitable community development. To contextualize the power of CLTs, participants assessed maps and neighborhood housing data to explore how a CLT might help Lincoln Park practice self-determination in the context of short and long term gentrification planning in Chattanooga’s urban core. Similarly, participants from Lincoln Park used the Comprehensive Neighborhood Assessment (see Chapter 10) to collect community data, which they then used to diagnose community development limits and opportunities.

Having the ability to collect, analyze and represent their own data gave the neighborhood power over their narrative of place and urban change. During one of the Arts and Cultural Development meetings, for example, Lincoln Park leaders were given the floor to make their cases for historic preservation and using the park to catalyze future economic revitalization in the local Black community. The theme of this conversation was unmistakable: the park had been a critical site of diasporic placemaking for African Americans across the Southeast and this historical significance had implications for social justice and equitable development in the future. Also, the park and its namesake residential community are inseparable: what impacts one impacts the other; the destruction of one implies the destruction of the other; survival and cultural preservation of both are inextricable.



Illustration 7.6: Lincoln Park residents explore community land trusts during a Housing Discussion Group meeting

During a workshop focused on linking cultural development to a community economic justice agenda, Hughley stated:

I think, I really do... we have something to be very, very... I don't use the word 'proud'—but we have something to be thankful for and grateful for. Because we are connected to a historical area; the Lincoln Park and the Lincoln Park Community join together. This park was famous and had notoriety, and we ought to be the same way. It used to be better. This community used to be a better community. It was all about... see people... took care of their... we had rentals where everybody took care of the house and took care of the children. You knew you were in Lincoln Park and it was about something.⁴¹

⁴¹ Hughley, Vannice quoted during Arts and Cultural Development Meeting (April 20, 2013). Planning Free School of Chattanooga.

Out of this conversation, organizers developed a new campaign slogan for the Coalition to Save Lincoln Park: “No to Central Avenue—Yes to Lincoln Park!” In this sense, the campaign to save the park is not merely a rejection of the road extension. At its core it is an affirmation of the people who know and love the neighborhood and call it their home. The Coalition to Save Lincoln Park began to carry their message into hospital, city and regional planning agency board rooms. At the same time, resident leaders from the Lincoln Park neighborhood continued to develop engagement skills and collect and analyze community-level data to substantiate the claims they were making vis-à-vis the Planning Free School.

Tentative Wins

The coalition’s campaign combined collaborative research, creative placemaking and direct organizing to make the case for the inseparability of the park and neighborhood. By early summer 2013, this strategy had begun to produce results. First, Erlanger Hospital agreed to sponsor the first annual Lincoln Park reunion later that summer and cover the cost of liability insurance for the event. Second, faced with the threat of a formal Title VI complaint, Mayor Berke issued a resolution stating that no money would be drawn for the Central Avenue extension project until an authentic public engagement process had occurred. In his resolution, Mayor Berke made the following promise: “I want to say loud and clear to the residents of Lincoln Park and surrounding neighborhoods: we will make you part of any process that affects your neighborhood. We want and need your input.”⁴²

In early June 2013, the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association hosted a Reunion Planning meeting. The goal of the meeting was to engage neighborhood residents in a

⁴² Berke Administration quoted in “Mayor Andy Berke to Lincoln Park Residents: We want and need your input” in *Chattanooga Times Free Press*. May 25, 2013. Accessed online May 25, 2013: <http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2013/may/28/andy-berke-to-lincoln-park-residents-we-want/>

conversation about how to best structure the reunion event. For example, organizers used adapted a Free School workshop called “The City as Play” to ask participants to create models of their “ideal reunion” (Illustration 7.8 below).



Illustration 7.7: Free School participants use James Rojas's City as Play exercise to explore "culture in the city" and translate the activity into a reunion planning exercise

Additionally, they invited leaders from Erlanger into the neighborhood to have them hear directly from African American residents about the historical and cultural significance of the park. Residents brought hospital officials on a transect walk (an activity they learned in a Planning Free School workshop) to point out existing historic infrastructure in the park, including the bathhouse constructed as part of the WPA program (Illustration 7.9 on the next page). This interactive and highly participatory exercise illuminated the inaccuracies in the Central Avenue NEPA application and allowed hospital administrators to understand more deeply the significance of the park and neighborhood to the local and regional African American population.



Illustration 7.8: Longtime Lincoln Park residents point out the original WPA bathhouse and pool, which have been converted to a hospital equipment storage shed

SPARCing a New Era of Community Self-Determination and Interdependence in Lincoln Park

As Lincoln Park leaders worked closely with Chattanooga Organized for Action on the Coalition to Save Lincoln Park, a trust in COA’s intentions and organizing tactics began to form. Unlike earlier ‘partnerships’ with Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise, Erlanger Hospital, and East Chattanooga Improvement League’s Weed and Seed program (which Rankins refers to as “Wait and See”) leaders have come to believe that COA has no ulterior motives other than to help them cultivate political capital and exercise community self-determination. When asked how their collaboration with COA is different from previous partnerships, Rankins and Hughley replied that:

Hughley: For one thing, it's more involved, more involved.

Rankins: There is more action...

Hughley: And that's something that we never had before. [To have] Somebody who is on your side; who is for your cause. That's something we've never had before. And so that's why I'm just amazed by [Perrin Lance, Executive Director of COA] being up there, jumping on them people. Oh man.

Rankins: It's good to have someone who's not afraid of their job. You know what I mean? That's the only thing.

Hughley: That's the whole thing.⁴³

In other words, as COA organizers have demonstrated their willingness to take risks and speak truth to power, neighborhood leaders in historically marginalized communities like Lincoln Park have begun to see their community organizing and development work as something distinct from previous mainstream community planning initiatives.

But the proof lay not only in a more democratic process; it also lies in COA's ability to help enable tangible outcomes. Rankins summarizes the importance of outcomes accordingly:

You've got to make sure each step is a winning step, and for it to be shown as a winning step. You have to keep [directly impacted residents] involved in the process; you can't, basically, do things without keeping them involved. Because now you're basically at a point where for so many years, people have seen that nothing has been done. They really believe that "these white folks do what they want to do." That's their phrase. So I am telling them, "no, you have a voice in all of this—you just need to speak it well." They have to listen.⁴⁴

Confident that COA's goal is to help enable diasporic placemaking has inspired leaders in Lincoln Park and several other historically Black East Chattanooga neighborhoods to join the Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative. On June 23, 2013,

⁴³ Hughley, Vannice and Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

⁴⁴ Rankins, Tiffany. Personal communication. June 8, 2013.

Yolanda Putman of the *Times Free Press* published an article announcing Lincoln Park's plan to develop a neighborhood vision and action plan vis-à-vis the SPARC initiative.

This announcement was critical for two reasons. First, it put pressure on the Berke administration who had promised meaningful community input the previous month but had not issued any details about what that process would actually look like. Second, it flipped the script of traditional community planning processes in the city. Instead of having a city or RPA-controlled process where residents were invited into the process, residents announced that they would be organizing and managing their own community engagement process, and the city and hospital would be the stakeholders invited to the neighborhood's decision-making table.

On August 28, 2013, the Coalition to Save Lincoln Park gained a monumental win. Mayor Andy Berke announced during a press conference held in the Lincoln Park neighborhood that the city would no longer pursue its original road extension through the park. Additionally, he vowed to work with Erlanger Hospital and the Trust for Public Land to return the property to the community and ensure that the site is preserved in perpetuity.⁴⁵ In October 2013, the city announced that it had reached a land swap deal with Erlanger. In exchange for the Lincoln Park property, Erlanger would receive a parcel in Alton Park for the development of a new community health center.

Despite all of these gains, recent announcements from the city have left residents skeptical about the true intentions of the Berke Administration. In March 2014, the city released new drawings of the Central Avenue extension. Although the route changed slightly from previous drawings, it still looks as though it will traverse the Lincoln Park neighborhood and

⁴⁵ Lukachick, Joy and Putnam, Yolanda "Chattanooga Mayor Andy Berke Outlines Plans or Lincoln Park Land" in *The Chattanooga Times Free Press*. August 23, 2013).

encroach upon a small section of the park.⁴⁶ Days later, the city announced that it had been awarded a \$2 million EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant to study the redevelopment potential of the nearby Cumberland Corporation site and that it had a Georgia-based developer ready to purchase the site and redevelop it into a major mixed use project. For all of these reasons, it is more crucial than ever that the Lincoln Park neighborhood completes its community action plan that it began in the SPARC initiative.

Conclusion

As of April 2014, the Lincoln Park neighborhood is several months into the SPARC Initiative. Over the past year, they have collected and analyzed baseline neighborhood data and organized several creative neighborhood-wide input sessions. They are using this data to develop housing, economic development, cultural development and tourism, and transportation agendas for the neighborhood. Resident leaders hope that by developing their own neighborhood stories, visions and action plans, they will be able to preempt local and regional planners who have stated that they will begin a comprehensive planning process in the neighborhood beginning in 2017. The neighborhood has stated that they hope to have their neighborhood plan completed by early summer 2014. Moreover, as Lincoln Park progresses through the SPARC Initiative, they have agreed to work with other neighborhoods engaged in SPARC to help enable self-determination while also fostering greater mutuality and interdependence between historically marginalized sections of the city.

To conclude, Lincoln Park is an illustrative case for thinking through the politics of diasporic placemaking in downtown Chattanooga for four important reasons. First, it is one of the oldest and most historically significant Black neighborhoods in Chattanooga. The

⁴⁶ Lukachick, Joy (March 15, 2014). "As details Emerge on a Central Avenue expansion, Lincoln Park residents Say they Aren't Happy" in *Chattanooga Times Free Press*.

neighborhood is the product of more than a century of cooperative African American placemaking and community building in the city.

Second, although most of these placemaking efforts have happened outside of formal, institution-backed initiatives, several have occurred inside or because of them. For this reason, Lincoln Park provides a case for better understanding how spatial collaborations, contestations, and negotiations have taken place in communities comprised of multiple, overlapping diasporic populations.

Third, Lincoln Park has a thirty year history of resident-based and driven organizing against both institutional neglect and encroachment. Currently, the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association is working with Chattanooga Organized for Action to save what remains of their historic public space from engineers and other professional urban technocrats who have different visions for the space.

Finally, the neighborhood has been a pilot site for several innovative community development initiatives. But unlike previous collaborations, neighborhood leaders feel confident that the outcomes of their partnership with COA will produce results that directly engage and benefit residents of the neighborhood, helping to foster a culture of self-determination and community interdependence not yet experienced in downtown Chattanooga.

PART III:
SUPPORTING AND EXPANDING DIASPORIC PLACEMAKING

CHAPTER 8:
FROM RABBLE ROUSING TO SPARCING COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION:
THE EVOLUTION OF CHATTANOOGA ORGANIZED FOR ACTION (COA)

Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA), a local social justice community organizing nonprofit working in Chattanooga, Tennessee, was the primary organization with whom I partnered on the action research component of this dissertation project. Through capacity building and urban planning initiatives like the Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative, COA organizers pursued their mission of enabling community self-determination and interdependence in historically marginalized neighborhoods. By combining traditional community organizing with urban planning and social work, COA helps neighborhood leaders build personal and political capacity and enact their visions for the future through organizational growth and neighborhood plans.

This chapter explores COA's organizational transformation from an issue based protest association into an incorporated nonprofit organization dedicated to "initiating, supporting and connecting" grassroots community groups across Chattanooga's urban core. By moving from the personal to the neighborhood-wide to the inter-neighborhood scales, I argue that the SPARC Initiative has the potential to help community organizers further flip the script of traditional comprehensive urban planning processes by working with directly impacted residents to 'scale out' the scopes of their analyses, leading to a form of bottom-up comprehensive planning. As residents in seemingly-disparate neighborhoods moved through the collaborative SPARC

process together, they were more likely to recognize social interdependence within and between communities and were more likely to look inward and to their neighbors to help devise community-based solutions to community problems.

Chattanooga Organized for Action Version 1.0

On the evening of March 27, 2010, while she and her friends enjoyed the spring night on a café patio overlooking the Tennessee River and Coolidge Park, something clicked in Megan Hollenbeck, and she decided she had had enough. Earlier that evening, the area had suddenly swarmed with police cars, and over the next several minutes, patrons in the café learned that there had been a quadruple shooting in nearby Coolidge Park. As dismayed as Hollenbeck and her friends were that this violence had occurred, they were equally discouraged by the way the news media was representing the case to the public. She remembers, “I think there was talk about “let's do something about this,” Hollenbeck recollected, “but not in the way of let's solve this [one] problem, but maybe, we should talk about why this happens. What's going on?”¹

In response, Hollenbeck and several friends, including future Co-Directors Perrin Lance and Chris Brooks, organized a Facebook site called Conversations toward Action. They used social media to invite local activists, students and community leaders to a series of facilitated conversations held at a public gathering space called Green Spaces, located on Main Street in the Southside neighborhood. It became obvious immediately that the group who assembled had energy but not necessarily knowledge about how to organize a political campaign.

We started meeting as Conversations towards Action at Green Spaces... we had conversations about what organizing was. I never really knew what organizing was or anything like that or anything like that could exist. You hear the term "grassroots" but

¹Hollenbeck, Megan, personal communication, August 16, 2012.

what is that really? It really showed by the people who came to these meetings and maybe felt a little turned off because they didn't really know what it could be.²

Part of this let down rested in the fact that the group's organizers had little formal community organizing training to begin with. They had passion, creativity and a strong sense of right and wrong, but they hadn't yet learned how to channel their energy into longer term, more sustainable advocacy work.

Their group began with a simple mission: "We decided we wanted to bring protest culture back into the City of Chattanooga."³ Over the next several months, the group staged demonstrations against the BP oil spill, bank bailouts and political corruption, occasionally capturing press coverage, but for the most part flying off the radar of the general public and local elected officials.

All of that changed during the summer of 2010, when COA decided to launch an effort to recall Mayor Ron Littlefield. For a group of activists who had little formal political organizing experience, COA's reasons for wanting to recall Littlefield lay more in the principle of political accountability than frustration over any one hot topic or civil or political matter. Lance describes their motivations for undertaking the campaign:

A lot of the reason why we decided to recall Mayor Ron Littlefield was not because of the taxes or the storm water or the annexation... we were recalling him for a reason that didn't get out in the Times Free Press, that didn't get recorded on the news. We were recalling him on principles of social justice. We were recalling him because his policies in City Hall work against people of color; work against the economically oppressed.⁴

Eager to scale up their direct organizing efforts, Lance, Brooks and Hollenbeck launched their campaign to recall Littlefield on July 4, 2010. In order to have the petition certified by the County Commission, the group had to secure the signatures of at least nine thousand signatures Local registered voters. Lance explains,

² Ibid. August 16, 2012.

³ Lance, Perrin, personal communication, August 10, 2012.

⁴⁴Ibid., August 10, 2012.

We... descended on the Chattanooga Pops concert. We began collecting signatures and... [Later] began door to door canvassing. We had to get nine thousand signatures [for it to go to a vote].

And then something really bizarre happened: it started to look like we were going to win... We started to get into the media, into the newspapers. We were calling out public officials; we were demanding accountability. [People got behind it]. It was a day in August when Chris called to say “We’ve got it.” We drove over to the Election Commission to drop the petitions off, I came home and took a shower; when I got out I turned on the radio and then I heard the announcement: Mayor Ron Littlefield is being recalled. I’ll never forget it.⁵

Although COA organizers secured more than nine thousand signatures on their petition, the citizens of Chattanooga were ultimately not permitted to vote on whether or not to recall Mayor Littlefield. The Mayor immediately contested the validity of the petition certification and was ultimately backed by the county commission.

But while COA was not successful at recalling Mayor Littlefield, their organizing efforts had sent a strong message to political and economic leaders across the city: that everyday citizens had endured enough, and they would be demanding improved accountability and a greater commitment to local social justice moving forward.

Entering the Westside

At the same time that COA organizers were using public assembly, street theatre and creative civil disobedience to call out local problems, members of the group were looking for longer term, more community based projects to advance social justice in the city. On September 24, 2010, the *Times Free Press* published a letter written by Robert Caleb George, the thirteen year old grandson of local Civil Rights legends Gloria and Leroy Griffith. In the letter, George lamented the fact that the people who had the power to make decisions about the Westside’s future were not the residents of the neighborhood itself. He asked for his sympathetic neighbors

⁵ Ibid., August 10, 2012.

to help save the neighborhood Dollar General store, which was the only community grocery store accessible to a neighborhood of people with limited social and physical mobility.

Nobody seems to care about the people who live on the Westside, except people who live here. Even the Dollar General Store is closing. That store is the only place in our neighborhood where people can buy milk, bread, canned goods, household stuff and school supplies. Not only do apartment families like mine need the store, everyday senior citizens drive their motorized chairs up and down Scooter Highway (Boynton Drive) to buy what they need at that store...A petition to Dollar General Store is being signed hoping it will stop the store from closing. A news story in your paper and action by your powerful readers might. For it seems the only ones who can get anything done don't live on the Westside, or even in Chattanooga.⁶

Lance emphasized the significance of the morning when Chris Brooks called him and told him to open the newspaper to the editorials section: "At this point, COA had a choice. We had always had a vision for the city... We've always wanted poor and oppressed people, people of color, to have power. We want this city to be run on the values of love, truth and reconciliation. We want to make the world as it is into the world as it should be."⁷ Lance, Brooks and Hollenbeck enacted their values by showing up at that Sunday's service at Renaissance Presbyterian Church, where Reverend Griffith was a minister, and offering their assistance with the neighborhood's struggle for food security in a growing food desert. The Griffiths accepted their offer, and over the next several weeks, COA worked with them to canvass the various sections of the Westside and build awareness about food insecurity and food desert issues in the area.

Although popular education was an important precursor to motivating residents to get involved, in retrospect, too, some COA members felt that their presence in the neighborhood, systematically going through the neighborhood and diagnosing the community's problems, was not the most sensitive or critically self-aware approach. Describing the early days on the

⁶ George, Robert (September 24, 2010). "Store Closing Hurts Westside Residents" in *Chattanooga Times Free Press*.

⁷ Brooks, Chris, personal communication, August 6, 2012.

Westside, Megan Hollenbeck recalls the evening when the problematic aspects of their work became most apparent:

It was a really awkward situation where suddenly ... at first we would go knocking door to door and telling people about their problems and we're just these little white kids with these flyers, please come to this meeting. Everyone was so kind, but we didn't really ... I don't think we quite could look at ourselves in the way that we should have... Basically we have this one meeting at Renaissance where [Perrin Lance] was facilitating and then he was saying all this stuff and all of a sudden there was a hand from the crowd ... She stood up and said, "What are you doing? What do you want? What are you trying to do here?"... "You sound pretentious," and she was exactly right. It was kind of an awkward situation and I think everyone was a little upset, a person didn't really know how to react. We should have listened better. I think we kind of accepted that in fact.⁸

Importantly, the woman who raised her hand was in the company of her daughter and son-in-law, veteran community organizers Ash Lee Woodward Henderson and Jared Story. For more than a decade, Woodward Henderson and Story had organized direct action campaigns in cities and rural areas across the Southeast and Midwest. Woodward Henderson was originally from Chattanooga and the two had settled back in the city to be closer to family.

Although the meeting had been contentious, Woodward Henderson and Story were attracted to the group's direct action philosophy and thought that their own expertise as anti-racism and social justice organizers might help COA leaders and their constituents develop more sophisticated understanding about the internal and external dynamics of anti-oppression work. Most importantly, they emphasized that grassroots organizing is about cultivating relationships, building trust, and being willing to step back and take leads from directly impacted people. Woodward Henderson describes her motivation for working with COA during its early days on the Westside: "there were really no other organizations doing door knocking the way that

⁸ Hollenbeck, Megan, personal communication, August 16, 2012.

Chattanooga Organized for Action prioritized, and [through this canvassing] we met so many wonderful people...our circle of folks from the directly impacted communities kept growing.⁹

Like Hollenbeck, Woodward Henderson recognized that COA's presence on the Westside had serious and potentially problematic implications, as none of the COA team lived in the neighborhood and their commitments to helping enable community self-determination depended on their ability to cultivate and sustain personal relationships with neighborhood leaders beyond single, hot button issues. Woodward Henderson continued:

We...struggled. What does it mean to say "we're working in our community" and folks we talk to are saying "but you don't live in the Westside... and the Westside is actually more than just one neighborhoods—it's a series of neighborhoods." Like, we're learning all of these things. We're learning from their leadership; it's not just us coming in and trying to save the Westside community. So let's maybe just focus in on a couple of things.¹⁰

In order to focus their efforts, COA organizers held a meeting where leaders from the various Westside housing developments assembled to articulate the most pressing concerns facing their communities. In part because COA and the Griffiths had been working to build awareness about the Westside food desert, much of this conversation revolved around neighborhood food insecurity. Woodward Henderson recalls how COA and grassroots leaders used this conversation as a basis for their decision to help the Westside neighborhood organize a food march, which occurred on December 18, 2010:

First off, people need to eat. That's what they're telling us. And second, there's this huge history of resistance... We decided to ask what it would feel like to walk the mile and a half between the Westside and Buehler's Market. So we gathered well over a hundred people and marched from the Church to the Market, where we bought a bunch of groceries and distributed them between folks who had participated on the march and a program that was being run out of the church.¹¹

⁹ Woodward Henderson, Ash-Lee (July 27, 2012). Chattanooga Organized for Action Annual Assembly.

¹⁰ Ibid. (July 27, 2012).

¹¹ Ibid. (July 27, 2012).

After the Food March, the group continued to plan direct actions and organize around specific local injustices as they arose. Between December 2010 and April 2012, COA engaged in thirteen direct action campaigns. Appendix C contains a table summarizing each of COA 1.0's campaigns and their political outcomes. Although there isn't space here to describe each of them in detail, it should be mentioned that the group's efforts revolved around a diverse set of urban social and spatial issues, including, but not limited to, labor and employment, public education, public transit, affordable housing, environmental management, women's reproductive health, and subsidized housing tenants' councils.

After the all-male county commission had voted to eliminate vital family planning programs for low income women in the county, for example, the group organized a Rally to Save Family Planning. Soon thereafter, the group met Dr. Valerie Radu, an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Tennessee—Chattanooga, and together they organized the Defend, Don't Defund Campaign—a response to city and county plans to dramatically slash social service funding. Lance recalls the initiative:

We ended up organizing the Cutting Deep forum... where we invited all these social service providers who would be directly impacted by the cuts—the Children's Home, the AIM Center, Johnson's Mental Health... we had a big forum at the Camp House and it was attended by over one hundred people. We let the suffering speak for itself. Fortunately some of that funding was restored, but not all of it.¹²

Another popular event was the Chattanooga People's History Bus Tours. COA organizers partnered with the Grove Street Settlement House to organize flash mob local history tours aboard crosstown Chattanooga Area Regional Transit Authority (CARTA) buses. Once aboard the buses, facilitators stood up and pointed out important sites and landmarks related to Chattanooga's radical labor organizing and settlement house movements. On one of the tours held during the afternoon rush hour commute, local residents riding the buses when the tour got

¹² Lance, Perrin, personal communication, August 10, 2012.

on board eventually joined in and expanded the conversation, offering their own expertise about Chattanooga's social justice history. COA Board President Michael Gilliland described the power of these tours: "By sharing our own history with one another we deepen the relationships that form the ground out of which our communities grow and gain a greater awareness of how the past informs the present so that we might work together to mold the future."¹³

During this period, COA organizers networked extensively with other local community-based social justice organizations, including Occupy Chattanooga and the Progressive Student Alliance at the University of Tennessee—Chattanooga. Brooks and Lance also began to work with residents living in public and subsidized housing to establish residents' councils and neighborhood associations. As their networks expanded, their regular membership grew; so too did the numbers of people they could get to turn out at direct actions. COA's actions spoke louder than the city's words, and people who had experienced the other side of Chattanooga's renaissance found trust and inspiration in a small group of young rag tag radicals who took on the men and women behind the curtain and acted as though they had nothing to lose by doing so. Suddenly, local policymakers couldn't choose to ignore the organization who they frequently brushed off as rabble rousers.

Westside: Not for Sale Campaign

The scope and scale of COA's resident organizing efforts took on new life during the fall of 2011 after Roxann Larson, the President of the Dogwood Residents' Council notified Lance about a letter she had received earlier that week from the Chattanooga Housing Authority. The letter invited Larsen to an early morning meeting to hear from Mayor Littlefield and the Housing Authority about an exciting new planning opportunity for the Westside neighborhood. Lance

¹³ Gilliland, Michael, personal communication, September 26, 2012.

immediately sought out the other tenants council leaders from across the Westside and discovered that Leroy and Gloria Griffith, who ran the Westside Community Association next to College Hill Courts, had not been invited to the meeting.

Lance, Larsen and Joe Clark (President of Boynton Terrace senior apartments) decided to attend the meeting and see what the city and housing authority had in store for the neighborhood. Lance described the eeriness of walking into a room full of powerful local development players and being completely ignored:

So we roll up and...there's 40-50 white dudes and some women. And everyone is there, like everyone in town is there, except guess who? People from the Westside...Who found out about it at the last minute. And I will never forget this...We just sit down at this table and get our coffee. No one is coming to us or talking to us, that's expected, all right. Then a white guy in a suit gets up, opens the whole affair and says something to the extent of, "I know we're all really excited about what we're going to do here for our community." And thunderous applause... [*The Westside*] ain't seen any of these people there...ever.¹⁴

As the event began, Lance and his colleagues learned that Mayor Littlefield wanted to bring Atlanta-based nonprofit Purpose Built Communities into Chattanooga to redevelop College Hill Courts into a mixed income new urbanist community. The presenters argued that tearing down College Hill Courts and replacing it with mixed incoming housing would improve the overall quality of the neighborhood. They cited statistics about improved educational attainment and income levels.

Considering that the Westside is primarily seniors and families living on extremely fixed incomes, it was obvious to Lance and the Westside leaders who were present that the planners pitching the initiative were not talking about improving the qualities of life among the residents who already lived there.

¹⁴ Lance, Perrin, personal communication, August 10, 2012.

Purpose Built Communities gets up and they go over their plan and they're pitching it to everybody here. Littlefield said that he invited these people from Atlanta a couple of years ago to give this presentation. And they are talking about wanting to tear down the Westside as it is and make it into a mixed income development. They're saying – they are coming out with all these statistics saying – after mixed income developments, the education levels of the children rise. [But what they don't say is that they rise because] they're counting different children!¹⁵

After the meeting, the COA members convened a meeting with Westside leaders to share the information they learned and begin plan their campaign to save College Hill Courts.

Neighborhood leaders took the information and began to research policy and planning tools for preserving affordable housing, including historic preservation designation and inclusionary housing ordinances.

Westside Community Association President Leroy Griffith compiled his research into an inclusionary housing ordinance for the city of Chattanooga. The ordinance outlined several measures to mandate affordable housing development and preservation in the city's urban core, including a one-to-one replacement of all public and subsidized units sold or demolished by the Chattanooga Housing Authority and a ten percent affordability inclusion requirement for all new construction and multiunit housing rehabilitation in downtown Chattanooga.

[The Westside leaders] made their own independent decision[to fight back]. Then Leroy and Gloria and Roxanne and Joe and all them, well they came to us and said, "Okay, what can we do together? What can you all help us with to fight this?" So we worked with them to develop a strategic campaign. The campaign was called the "Not For Sale Campaign" and it basically stated, not only, no to this destruction of College Hills on the West Side. [It also] said no to Purpose Built anywhere in the City. It [also] laid out a vision crafted by the people of the Westside.¹⁶

Equipped with knowledge about inclusionary housing and a piece of legislation crafted by and for the poor people of Chattanooga, COA organizers worked with the Westside Community Association to develop a citizen petition based on the housing legislation. Over the next three

¹⁵ Lance, Perrin, personal communication, August 10, 2012.

¹⁶ Ibid., August 10, 2012.

months, the coalition gathered more than twelve hundred signatures on “The Petition to Save Our Homes.”

Although they were promised opportunities to address the City Council several times during this time, their efforts to play by the rules were always obstructed. Lance recalled what led the group to finally take matters into their own hands:

So, everything kind of got going very quickly. The West Side had several discussions, several meetings. They knew that Purpose Built was going to give a presentation to the City Council. The West Side had to get on the agenda. Sally Robinson, the Chair of the Housing Committee said, “Sure.” We had it in an email. This is their community, right? [The resident leaders] wanted to have a say.

And we roll up and again, everybody is there in their suits and... Sally Robinson says, “No you all can’t stay, you all can’t stay.” She didn’t give a reason as to why the decision changed. She said it is a public information hearing... So there’s a certain point where you have to make a decision to shut things down.¹⁷

So after Purpose Built gave their wonderful presentation meeting... Leroy stood up in full minister regalia and cried out, “When will we be heard? When will the West Side be heard?” And then everybody chimed in exactly, “When are we going to be heard?” The Westside shut it down and immediately, walked out, and held a press conference right there. We shut everything down. Sometimes you have to make those decisions.¹⁸ In the weeks that followed, Mayor Littlefield and the Chattanooga Housing Authority made no efforts to budge in their support for Purpose Built Communities and the destruction of College Hill Courts. In response, COA and the Westside Community Association continued to collect signatures on their petition for affordable housing.

On April 12, 2012, the “Not for Sale” campaign’s efforts culminated in a march from College Hill Courts to the City Council chambers to present the petition and demand an end to Purpose Built’s plan for the Westside once and for all. Organizers began with a press conference

¹⁷ Ibid., August 10, 2012.

¹⁸ Ibid., August 10, 2012.

that was televised by three local television stations. Then, more than one hundred people participated in the march to the Council’s chambers. When the protesters arrived at City Hall, they packed out the chamber so that it was standing room only. During the public comment period, four seasoned Westside activists spoke out against Purpose Built Communities and in favor of the inclusionary ordinance developed by their neighbors.



Illustration 8.1: Chattanooga Organized for Action “Not for Sale” March to City Council (Photo Source: Jared Story)

Michael Hutchins, a longtime resident of College Hill Courts and member of the Westside Community Association, was the first to address the council. In front of a full chamber, Hutchins issued the following demand to his elected officials:

I am here presenting hundreds of signatures on a petition demanding that City Government make the right to housing a priority. As you know, housing for poor people, working people, and people of color is in crisis. Thousands of people sit on the closed waiting lists for public and low-income housing. In the past decade, six public housing

communities have been demolished, and now my home, College Hills, is being talked about as next. Over 4,000 people are homeless every year in Chattanooga, and a big cause of that is eviction. That's the threat we face as public housing residents.

We cannot continue to live in this oppression. That's why we've given you three proposals to consider. First, for every unit of public housing torn down, another one must be built. Second, we want a one-for-one replacement of all the public housing units torn down in the last ten years. Lastly, all new housing developments in the city must include some low-income units.

For public housing and low-income residents, there are few places left for us to go. I feel like our homes are under attack and that the people who want to destroy our communities are right on our door-steps. We need a better plan to housing in Chattanooga. We need you to stand up and work with us. We need elected leaders to have our back.

So far we have been shut out of the process. Meetings have been held without our knowledge, groups like Purpose Built Communities have been invited not by us. They have held meetings we all weren't invited to, and when the meetings were held, I wanted to speak up for my people, but I wasn't allowed to. Even though that moment made me feel low, we have made up for that silence by the voices of everyone here today.

In closing, I want to see results. I want our right to housing defended. The people of public and low-income housing are organizing to protect our homes. Chattanooga supports the right to housing, we ask that you do the same.¹⁹

Within two weeks of the March, the Housing Authority issued a statement to say it no longer supported Purpose Built Community's proposal for College Hill Courts. The Mayor persisted but ultimately lost after Purpose Built Communities pulled out. Although the Westside Community Association has not been successful in having the Chattanooga City Council adopt their inclusionary housing ordinance, they are still promoting inclusionary practices via the People's Coalition for Affordable Housing. The "Not for Sale" Campaign had an indisputable effect on the politics of affordable housing in downtown Chattanooga that continues to play out today.

¹⁹ Hutchins, Michael (April 4, 2012). Public comment, Chattanooga City Council. Accessed via: www.chattaction.org.

Organizing the Hood

On July 26 and 27, 2012, approximately fifty social justice activists living and/or working in Chattanooga gathered in the chapel of the Renaissance Presbyterian Church to attend the two-day “Let’s Organize the Hood!” training. The sessions had been co-organized by members of Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA), a local issues-based community organizing nonprofit, and Concerned Citizens for Justice (CCJ), a volunteer led organization dedicated to dismantling racism and fighting police brutality in the city of Chattanooga.

Most of the training involved facilitated conversations with veteran activists and original CCJ members Maxine Cousins and Lorenzo Ervin. The significance of having two of CCJ’s original members leading these workshops, in a small church on the Westside of Chattanooga, nearly three decades after the group originally formed, had been substantial. CCJ had largely ceased direct organizing in Chattanooga in the late 1990’s after Ervin, a prominent Black anarchist and former political prisoner, was arrested and threatened with a felony charge for disrupting a city council meeting from which he and three colleagues had been barred from presenting.

Ervin’s return to the city for the Let’s Organize the Hood training was his first homecoming since the trial had ended in 1998. During his inaugural address, Ervin acknowledged the efforts of COA’s organizing team, but challenged participants to turn look inward and face the oppressive structures and behaviors playing out within Chattanooga’s progressive activist community. Unlike Concerned Citizens for Justice, which was run by unpaid volunteers, COA was staffed by two white men, whose (albeit meager) salaries were funded through a local Benwood Foundation grant. Ervin warned against grassroots participation in the nonprofit industrial complex, a force he likened to the “21st century plantation” logic of community development.

Ervin's observations about contemporary social justice struggles in Chattanooga agitated several of the white participants, who saw themselves as anti-racists and felt unjustifiably criticized. But for other participants, Ervin's words resonated with feelings they had discussed only in private: that the growing social justice movement in the city, despite claiming to put the voices of the socially marginalized and oppressed at the fore, was being increasingly managed by white, predominantly male, activists. For still others, Ervin's words inspired deeper self-reflection about the roles of ally-ship and solidarity in promoting community autonomy and self-determination.

Despite these tensions, the event maintained a celebratory spirit. The training coincided with COA's First Annual Assembly, and the two day event closed out with an awards ceremony, a protest song sing-a-long, and a group photograph, which is depicted in Illustration 8.2 below.



Illustration 8.2: Participants of Let's Organize the Hood and Chattanooga Organized for Action's First Annual Assembly, July 26 - 28, 2012 (Source: Jared Story)

As it turned out, the Organizing the Hood training marked a significant turning point for Chattanooga Organized for Action. During the training and the First Annual Assembly, Ervin had called out unacknowledged elephants in the room and left the group unsettled. Over the next week, tensions escalated further in private, and by the following COA General Assembly meeting on [date], several members who were also affiliated with Concerned Citizens for Justice were considering stepping away from COA. These sentiments were exacerbated during that meeting, when a new CCJ member who was unfamiliar with COA's formal Consensus building process attempted to clarify a vote that was underway and got verbally shut out from the conversation.²⁰ Following that meeting, half a dozen activists who organized with both groups resolved to immediately quit collaborating with Chattanooga Organized for Action.

Interpretations of this dissolution vary depending on who is asked: some members attributed it to personality and ego conflicts; others to the dysfunctional intimacy of small town politics. Some members saw the formal Consensus process used during general assemblies as restrictive, as the majority of grassroots leaders relied on informal decision-making processes and were unfamiliar with the hand signals and other structured ways of participating. In this sense, the democratic mechanisms that COA employed to make group decisions actually seemed to work by creating new procedural rules of exclusion that limited newcomers' participation. It effectively worked against democracy in culturally and politically diverse settings by gentrifying the process whereby interested parties could have a meaningful say in the affairs of the organization.²¹

²⁰ COA based their decision-making process on Occupy Wall Street's model for consensus building. For more information, see: Graeber, David (October 29, 2011). "Enacting the Impossible." Accessed online: <http://occupywallst.org/article/enacting-the-impossible/>.

²¹ Lance, Perrin, personal communication, August 10, 2012..

Most compelling, and encompassing of the above critiques, is the interpretation that COA fell apart during the Fall and Winter of 2012 because its members had collectively realized that under its present structure, the organization could not possibly live up to the organizing principles it had articulated in its own “Principles of Unity.” The Principles of Unity had been developed during Spring 2012 through a collective visioning effort; more than forty members had participated in the process. Among other ambitious organizing goals, the Principles of Unity articulated the following vision in a section of the document entitled “The World as it should be”:

All power belongs to the people. All people have the right to actively work with others to determine the conditions of their own lives, communities, workplaces and identities. We commit to a just and egalitarian society based on solidarity and mutual aid, valuing cooperation over competition. We believe in grassroots democracy—where all people have a right to take part in, and have power over, decisions that affect them to the degree they are affected. We work to ensure that poor people and people of color gain the power of self-determination over themselves and their communities. We organize our communities to reflect the new values of the future society we are building together. We commit to acting together; not in sympathy but in solidarity; not in charity, but in mutual aid; out of co-operation and not in competition. We organize together to take action and move the world-as-it-is closer and closer to the world-as-it-should-be.²²

While in principle the organization’s members held one another accountable to these high standards of conduct, in reality the organization’s interpersonal tensions were already devolving into closed door gripe sessions and diminished dialogue between the different self-appointed leaders of the collaboration. Members now heard accusations of oppressive behavior, divisiveness, “poverty pimping,” and “manarchism” go back and forth.

By the time Co-Director Chris Brooks announced his plan to leave the organization for another position as a teacher’s union organizer and have Perrin Lance assume Executive Directorship in December 2012, the organization had become a shadow of its former self. By

²²Chattanooga Organized for Action (2012). “Principles of Unity.” Accessed online: <http://chattaction.org/principles-unity>.

January of 2013, COA and CCJ core members had entirely severed ties, and Lance, along with members of the COA board, were forced to undergo some deep soul searching about how Chattanooga Organized for Action should reorganize and operate moving forward.

Out of Crisis, Opportunity

As it happened I had arrived on the scene in Chattanooga in July 2012 intending to collaborate with COA on an urban planning-related dissertation project that we had co-developed over the previous year. Through participant observation, pro bono planning consulting, and a set of creative placemaking workshops, I had hoped to get a better understanding for how arts and culture-based revitalization efforts could work for or against social justice and equitable community development across the city.

One month into my stay, I attended the Organizing the Hood training and COA's First Annual Assembly, where I observed the fissures forming in the foundation of the coalition as Ervin and others called out the hypocrisies within the group. Although I was not fully aware of the magnitude of the breakup as it was unfolding—for reasons of pride and protection organizers on both sides had not explained the gravity of the situation until several months after precipitating events had transpired—it had become clear to me during those first months in Chattanooga that some fundamental changes in COA were underway. As the impacts of this fallout became impossible for COA organizers to ignore, my role in the action research partnership began to evolve from participant observation and low key planning consulting into serving as a key member of the COA Works team, a group of board members, interns and volunteers charged with thinking through and implementing Chattanooga Organized for Action version 2.0, leaving COA 1.0 politically past.

During its first two years, COA had been comprised of a broad, though somewhat tightknit, community of left leaning activists. Although interpersonal relations had not been perfect over the previous two years, the group considered themselves a large, if slightly dysfunctional, family, and organized together despite the conflicts in ego and occasionally, ideology. After the fallout described in the beginning of this chapter, those dysfunctions began to feel like irreconcilable differences. Between September and October 2012, COA lost much of its original leadership base, and its relevance as a broad-based grassroots organizing presence in the future was uncertain.

Throughout the fallout, COA remained relevant by continuing to support the initiatives it had helped launch over the past two years, especially the Westside Community Association. Remaining members of the team understood that it was not enough merely to help organize and launch a community based association but then leave it to fend for itself—COA must also continue to support them in their efforts to practice self-determination and imagine more equitable, sustainable futures for the city.

For two years, COA's members had organized defensively, using direct action techniques to voice dissent against unjust local plans and policies, bringing awareness to the issues and occasionally obstructing their passage. Their ability to draw people together presented a very real form of political power, but in terms of their ability to transform urban policy and development outcomes, direct actions had only gotten them so far. To be sure, gathering twelve hundred signatures, scaring away Purpose Built Communities and saving College Hill Courts was a remarkable win, especially considering how rapidly public housing was being lost across the urban core. But while green community organizers pointed to this victory as a turning point, residents of the Westside knew their security was tenuous and relative at best. The case of

Purpose Built had not been unique, but rather was the continuation of a legacy of racist and paternalistic planning in Chattanooga, where low income communities and communities of color were “planned for” rather than “planned with.”

Longtime Westside leaders knew that because they were constantly defending their community from outsiders’ visions and improvement plans, there had not been an opportunity for the neighborhood to plan proactively. For this reason, the WCA’s affordable housing ordinance marked an important step in the direction of exercising community self-determination. The municipal ordinance was researched and written by and on behalf of the city’s most economically vulnerable residents, and its language was modeled after dozens of similar inclusionary housing ordinances in cities around the United States.

Generally speaking, it outlined the real production of affordable housing units across Chattanooga’s designated urban core through a three pronged strategy: a mandate for mixed income housing, a one-for-one replacement of all low income housing lost to demolition or expiring use agreements, and blight reduction.²³ These tenets, which had formed the basis of the petition the WCA had previously launched and gained the support of from more than one thousand residents from, had not been articulated for selfish reasons. Rather, its development grew out of the recognition that there was widespread housing insecurity across the City of Chattanooga, and that low income residents historically had, and would continue, to bear the brunt of this burden.

Over the course of the Not for Sale Campaign, organizers had collected personal stories and anecdotes from residents across the urban core who were finding it difficult, if not impossible, to secure affordable, safe and decent housing in the city. COA and WCA organizers

²³ For a full copy of the ordinance, see: Westside Community Association (2011). “A Petition to the City Council of Chattanooga.” Accessed online: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B4fjKMoaaNLmZV9fVVlpR3RqT0k/edit>.

publicly highlighted these experiences to demonstrate how the Purpose Built plan for College Hill Courts would hurt the city's most economically vulnerable populations far more than it would help them, and that the displacement impacts would reach far beyond the boundaries of the Westside. This public storytelling had culminated in the march to, and presentations during, the City Council meeting on April 4, 2012, which effectively killed the project.

But in order for the WCA's ordinance to be taken seriously by local elected officials, they would need more than anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the widespread need for affordable housing in Chattanooga. They would also need numbers—statistical trends about the state of housing affordability in the urban core and data substantiating the claims that Chattanoogaans were in the midst of a housing crisis. With no official local affordable housing action plan in place and no city or county-wide committee charged with overseeing the production of new affordable units, research and popular education became very important to COA organizers during their period of organizational transition, as they, along with myself, worked with Westside leaders to legitimate the demands for inclusionary housing in an affordable housing report and advocacy tool entitled, *Chattanooga: A Home to All*.

The *Chattanooga: A Home to All* report analyzed housing market and affordability trends to paint a picture of housing (in)security in the various neighborhoods across the urban core (the area that would be covered by the WCA's inclusionary ordinance). By comparing the rate in change of Median Household Incomes to the rate in change of rent and mortgage by census tract, for example, the authors of the report were able to pinpoint the different areas in the city that were undergoing initial or full blown gentrification, as well as those neighborhoods that were continuing to decline economically.

Additionally, the housing report analyzed the affordability of the local housing stock according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's affordability thresholds: housing and associated housing costs which amount to less than 30% of total household income are considered "affordable" housing; housing plus related costs that amount to between 30% and 49% are considered a "moderate housing burden"; and housing plus costs totaling more than half a household's income are considered a "severe housing burden."²⁴

The housing report used census data and GIS maps to illustrate the housing burdens experienced by both renters and homeowners living in Chattanooga's urban core. Taken together, their analysis demonstrated how an unregulated, gentrifying urban housing market was already producing highly uneven socioeconomic landscapes within the city, resulting in a situation where "poor, working and middle class folks are pushed further away from the urban core, further from their jobs, neighbors, and familiar environments, while the downtown is transformed into a place where only the economic elite can afford to live, work and play."²⁵

The housing report concluded that the WCA's inclusionary housing ordinance provided a critical safeguard to ensure that affordable housing options exist for working class families who want to remain in their neighborhoods once the market begins pricing them out. "Stable homes means stable families, and a stable home is an affordable home," the authors contended. "Without affordable homes, our friends, neighbors, and our families will continue to suffer. That's not the Chattanooga way. We can do better."²⁶

²⁴ For more information, see: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (2014). *Glossary of Terms*. Accessed online: http://www.huduser.org/portal/glossary/glossary_a.html.

²⁵ Chattanooga Organized for Action (October 2012). *Chattanooga: A Home to All*, page 1.

²⁶ *Ibid*, page 1.

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Executive Director Perrin Lance began to meet with members of the COA board and informal support team, including Dr. Valerie Radu, Michael Gilliland, Gloria and Reverend Leroy Griffith, Dominique Pennington, and myself.

Initiate Process

By early January 2013, COA had canvassed and begun conversations about resident councils in two publicly subsidized housing developments: College Hill Courts on the Westside and Cromwell Apartments in East Brainerd which, located on the other side of Missionary Ridge, lies disconnected from the urban core. Additionally, COA staff began discussing a City Wide Tenants Council with several community leaders living in public and project-based Section 8 housing.

Based on community meetings and conversations door-to-door canvassers had with tenants at several of the Housing Authority-managed properties, it was obvious that subsidized housing tenants needed political space and structure not only to voice their issues and concerns, but more importantly, to collaboratively discover solutions to the problems they faced in common.

Support Process

The Support function of COA was organized to help neighborhood-based associations build personal and group capacity vis-à-vis Organizational Growth Plans (COA 2013). The Support team “develops and implements both individual and organizational support services and serves to connect the needs of the grassroots organizations with the resources of social service providers and COA volunteers” (“How Does COA Staff Work,” Jan 21, 2013). Since its early days, COA had had a relationship with faculty in UTC’s Department of Social Work, and by late

2012, COA was working closely with Social Workers at UTC and Southern Adventist University to develop a new framework for supporting grassroots movements during and after their period of enormous transition.

Dr. Valerie Radu, an Assistant Professor of Social Work at UTC and the founder of the Grove Street Settlement House, advised that COA engage in human needs assessments with its partner communities in order to maximize its ability to provide meaningful support. This assessment would measure the strengths, abilities and needs of the different grassroots communities through an “asset based community development” approach.²⁷

Launched in January 2013, the Support arm of COA began two data collection initiatives: one focused on gathering personal needs information from individual community leaders (“Individual Assessments”), and a second focused on group or “Organizational Assessments.” These assessments would provide capacity information about the human and social infrastructure in neighborhoods/ housing developments, which could serve as baselines for place-based strategies to increase leadership development and organizational strength across Chattanooga’s urban core.

Individual Assessments were conducted by Catharine Whiting, a UTC Social Work graduate student, and involved a series of interviews about the participant’s immediate, intermediate and long term personal needs; his or her use of social and public services; life goals and interests; and potential contributions to the COA Volunteer Corps team. Organizational assessments involved meetings with association leaders to discuss opportunities and barriers

²⁷ For more information about asset based community development, consult: Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: a path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. Evanston, Ill.: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Neighborhood Innovations Network, Northwestern University.

experienced while doing grassroots organizing in predominantly low income, politically marginalized communities.

At the same time that the COA Works Support team was collecting information about its partner communities, another tool was developed to measure the “strengths and abilities” of COA’s significant volunteer reserve. Having nearly 3,000 members subscribing to COA’s online Newsletter and blog updates, COA issued a call for its subscribers to join the Volunteer Corps. Literature was developed explaining the need for volunteers, a tool was created for assessing individual skills and potential contributions, and planning began for a Volunteer training workshop where volunteers’ “assets, talents and personalities [would be] uncovered and catalogued.”²⁸ Although it was decided volunteers would be assigned to initiatives individually rather than being treated as a collective entity or “Corps,” special volunteer cohorts were established for Social Services and Media. Out of these initial individual and organizations needs assessments, three initiatives emerged. The first was the development of an “Immediate Materials Needs List,” which COA uses for fundraising and donation drives. The second was an organizational “Ask List,” which COA used to establish collaborative projects for COA Volunteers to join. The third was a mentorship program intended to connect experienced and novice grassroots community leaders across downtown Chattanooga.

Additionally, the COA Support team decided to strengthen and expand the Westside Free Store—a free exchange market grounded in “radical hospitality” and launched by the Grove Street Settlement House in partnership with COA and the Renaissance Presbyterian Church. Finally, the Support team re-committed themselves to their original community partners: the

²⁸ Chattanooga Organized for Action (2013). Support Internal Plan.

Westside Community Association.²⁹ As previously discussed, during the later winter/ early spring, the Westside Community Association had been enduring capacity challenges, as some members had dropped out, others had less time to be involved, and the few remaining felt increasingly disempowered.

An important component of COA's Support agenda involved the establishment of neighborhood Free Stores. These bi-weekly swap meets are supported by volunteer labor and donated goods, but their value to residents should not be underestimated. In addition to giving low income community members a place to find gently used clothing, housewares and children's goods at no cost, Free Stores employ volunteers who help administer Resident Surveys, recruit participants to a Women's Support Group, and provide social service referrals.

As of this writing, two Free Stores operate in downtown Chattanooga. The original store on the West Side is managed by lifelong social justice activist Ms. Gloria Griffith along with Grove Street Settlement House interns, UTC faculty, and neighborhood volunteers. A second Free Store was set up in East Lake Courts, a historic public housing development located in Southeast Chattanooga. Presently, a third and fourth store are in the works for Churchville and Avondale, two historic African American neighborhoods on the east side of the city. Both neighborhoods are members of the East Chattanooga Improvement group and are participating in COA's Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative. Additionally, COA is working with local African American leaders to raise money to renovate a building into a new community center for Churchville.

²⁹ Grove Street Settlement House (2012). *Guiding Principles*. Accessed online: <http://grovestreetsettlementhouse.wordpress.com/our-guiding-principles/>.



Illustration 8.3: Westside Free Store (Photo Source: Courtney Knapp)

Essentially, the COA Works Support team flipped traditional, institution-driven social service provision on its head. Instead of defaulting to public bureaucracies and private charities to address basic social needs, COA’s asset based community development framework begins with an assessment of how residents living in low income communities across the urban core are *already* meeting certain needs indigenously.

These internal support networks, which include transportation, healthcare, food sharing, childcare and more, form the bedrock of COA’s Support framework. In emphasizing the existing relationships, outside volunteer and institutional service provisions assume secondary and tertiary roles. This is not to say public and nonprofit sectors don’t play critical roles supporting low income communities through a variety of social programs. Rather, COA’s process suggests that institutional and outside, charity-based solutions need not be the *de facto* approaches to social service provision in the 21st century. With a strong foundation in resident

cooperation and mutual aid, the COA Support framework allows volunteers to assume deeper, more focused roles, while public and private institutions potentially become enablers of social welfare and resident empowerment rather than (real and/or perceived) obstructionists.

Today, more than ever before, our society demands theories and practices of self-determination and cooperation. By flipping the traditional social service framework on its head, and constructing a framework for individual and organizational support that combines community organizing with social work and urban planning, new possibilities for citizen empowerment and grassroots power in Chattanooga are emerging.

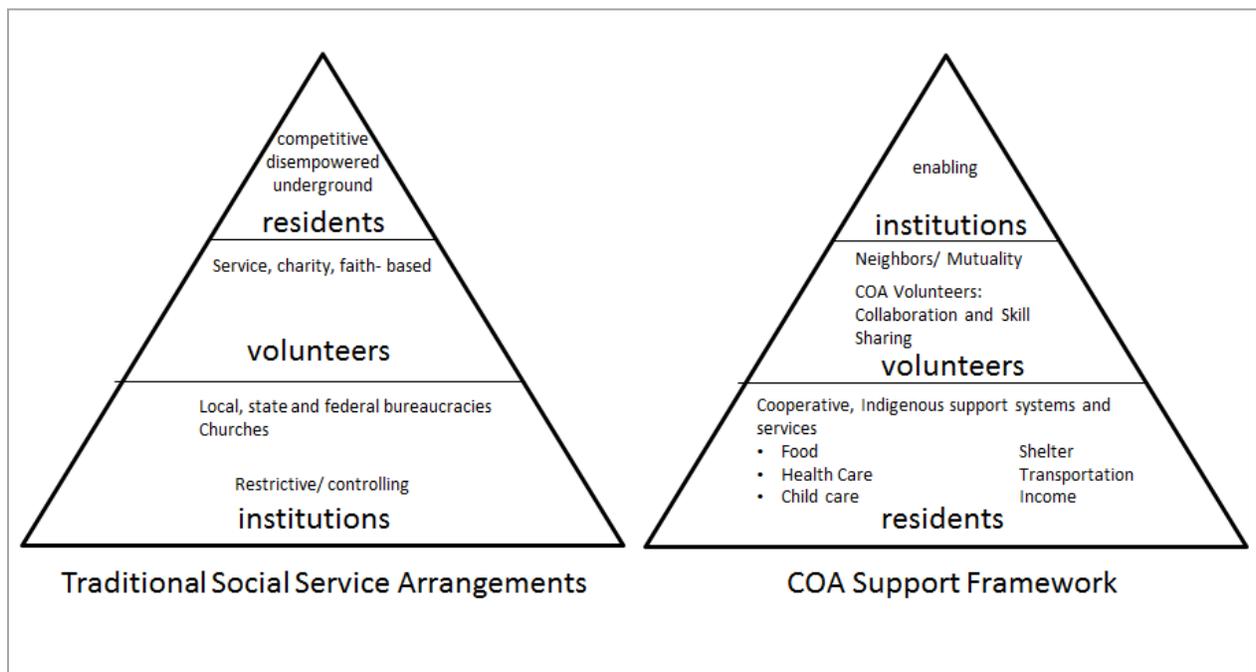


Figure 8.1: Comparison of Traditional Social Service Arrangements with COA Support Framework

Connect

The portion of COA’s new mission that I worked most directly with was their “Connect” agenda, which charged itself with “[Working] with membership to develop and implement the SPARC Initiative, a tool by which base membership organizations will arrive at a common

vision, goals, and a shared strategy for real material change in their communities.”³⁰ The Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative itself is a comprehensive, grassroots capacity building and community planning process that I worked on collaboratively with staff, board members and interns at COA who represented fields of popular education, traditional community organizing, urban planning and social work.

The Initiative involves a series of monthly trainings and information gathering sessions, whereby a cohort of neighborhood leaders (typically members of registered neighborhood associations) work with COA staff and volunteers to learn the skills necessary for developing a block leader network, collecting residents’ stories and concerns for the community, articulating a neighborhood vision, and action planning to achieve the visions and goals laid out in the neighborhood plan.

Importantly, the SPARC Initiative takes the time upfront to create (and/or support) the human infrastructure necessary for launching such a bottom-up, resident driven process. As Block Leaders are identified and trained to become community liaisons between their neighbors and neighborhood associations, they are also trained in the comprehensive neighborhood assessment techniques that undergird the SPARC planning process and ultimately the action plans. As the process progresses, the monthly trainings also provide a space for collaboratively analyzing the community data which has been collected and eventually exploring how the different neighborhoods might work together to achieve common visions and goals for equitable community development vis-à-vis a People’s Coalition Vision and Action plan for Chattanooga’s urban core.

The SPARC Initiative is an ongoing, iterative process anticipating that in the period between arriving at a COAlition plan and revisiting/updating neighborhood plans, resident

³⁰ Chattanooga Organized for Action (January 21, 2013). “How Does COA Staff Work?”

participants will dedicate time and energy to implementing demonstration projects, developing campaigns to build political and economic support for larger goals and initiatives, and benchmarking and evaluating the success of the neighborhoods in realizing their visions. These processes are illustrated below in Figure 8.2.

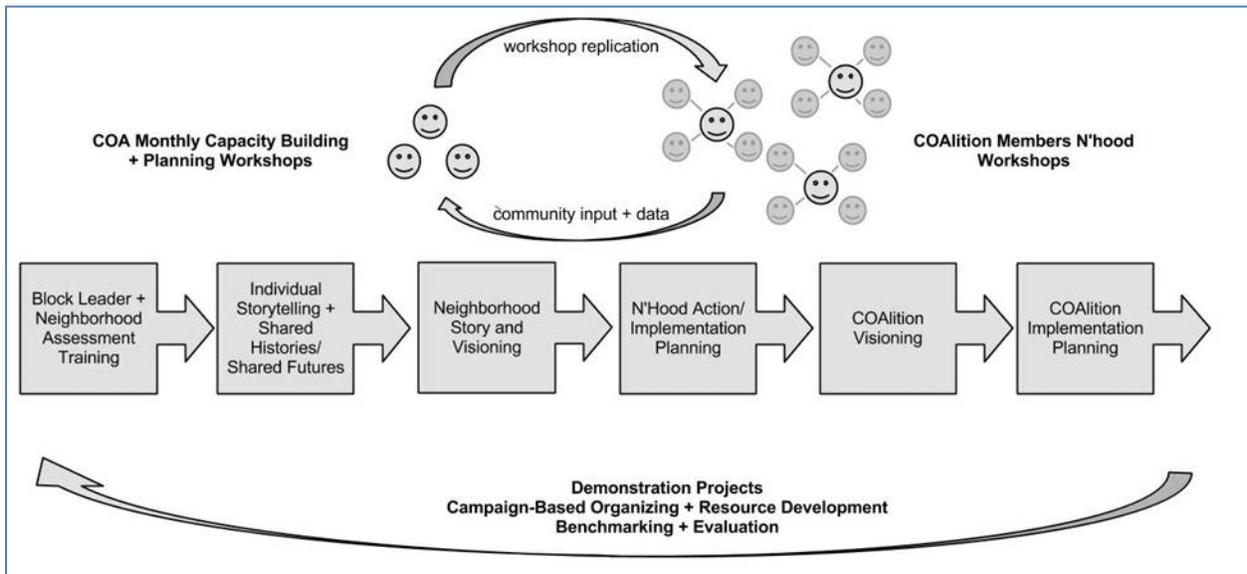


Figure 8.2: The Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative

So the SPARC Initiative differs from traditional neighborhood planning initiatives because it approaches comprehensive planning and community development through a resident-driven, collaborative and bottom up process. Rather than superimpose an expert-driven comprehensive plan *for* a community on a set of diverse urban neighborhoods, the SPARC Initiative trains and works with grassroots community leaders to facilitate neighborhood planning processes *with* the members of their own communities. By starting on the neighborhood scale and then by connecting these neighborhood plans together via the People’s Coalition and planning process, the SPARC Initiative offers a potential model for expanding the practices of community self- determination and negotiating neighborhoods’ interdependence across the city of Chattanooga and beyond.

Moreover, the SPARC Initiative takes a holistic and bottom-up view of community development, accounting for and cultivating not only the typical physical, social and economic development infrastructures in place, but also the human infrastructure (i.e. civic participation, the strength of interpersonal relationships, ability and willingness to offer mutual aid and neighborhood support) which sustains them.

The SPARC Initiative is closely linked to the Planning Free School of Chattanooga, which trained citizens in urban research and planning techniques and is described in the next chapter as an attempt to build an education and empowerment infrastructure to help communities exercise autonomy, enact self-determination, and navigate new forms of interdependence. An advertisement developed to attract neighborhood participants into the program describes the intent of the initiative accordingly:

The purpose of the SPARC Initiative is to partner with grassroots community organizations so that they can become powerful, sustainable, and capable of enacting their own visions for their communities. To accomplish this, COA will work with community leaders to produce Community Stories, Visions, and Plans that articulate the wishes of a community and turns them into tangible and achievable goals. These goals are then tracked to timelines, prioritized, and translated into accessible Community Organization Plans.³¹

Presently, there are three neighborhoods in East Chattanooga committed to developing community plans vis-à-vis the SPARC Initiative and People's Coalition: Lincoln Park, Avondale and Churchville. Each of these neighborhoods joined the initiative with a preexisting organizational capacity and need for a community plan: Glenwood, for example, was a highly empowered neighborhood, with nearly forty active block leaders and a recently updated neighborhood plan. Lincoln Park, in contrast, had a neighborhood association but no active block leaders, hadn't had a neighborhood plan update in decades and had chosen to team up with COA because it was facing an existential threat. Avondale and Churchville, both historic

³¹ Chattanooga Organized for Action (June 24, 2013). "SPARC: A Brief Intro."

African American neighborhoods, joined because they experienced the less immediate threat of gentrification creeping across the urban core and into East Chattanooga.

The varying capacity of COA's partner organizations created both complications and opportunities with respect to launching the SPARC Initiative in Chattanooga. One opportunity took the form of working with the Glenwood Neighborhood Association to develop the aforementioned Block Leader training module and integrating that capacity building session into overall SPARC Initiative structure. During the spring and summer of 2013, COA organizers worked with leaders from the remaining three neighborhoods to identify and train block leaders, and in the cases of Lincoln Park and Glenwood, to administer their Comprehensive Neighborhood Assessments.

During this period, however, it became obvious that in Avondale and Churchville, more basic community building activities and infrastructure would be needed before developing a block leader cohort. This led to the neighborhood associations' decisions to launch Free Stores. Although organizing the Free Stores has set both neighborhoods back in their overall community planning timeline, both remain committed to working with the People's Coalition to create neighborhood and community-wide visions and plans once a strong human infrastructure in the neighborhood is in place. Organizers within COA, this author included, along with members of the People's Coalition hope that as Lincoln Park proceeds through the SPARC Initiative—they had a stated goal of producing a draft neighborhood plan by May 2014—other inner core neighborhoods that have been historically left out of mainstream urban planning and revitalization schemas (and that, unsurprisingly, mistrust formal public planning processes) will recognize the benefits of participating in COA's capacity building and planning initiative—and

so, that as time goes by and more neighborhood residents join in, the more both inclusive and ‘comprehensive’ the bottom-up processes will become.

SPARCing a Transformative Planning Process

Organized in tandem with the Planning Free School of Chattanooga, the SPARC Initiative has helped to catalyze a transformative, citizen-led planning movement within the city’s underrepresented and marginalized neighborhoods. Through coordinated collaboration with urban planners, educators, librarians, community organizers and social workers, neighborhood associations and other grassroots community groups are starting to explore and exercise new forms of community self-determination and interdependence through the development of neighborhood and coalition-based community visions and action plans.

Residents and community activists who participated in the Free School were invited to join the SPARC Initiative, while existing SPARC neighborhoods attended Free School workshops to join discussion groups and get trained in information gathering and analysis. COA Director Perrin Lance described how his participation in the Free School helped him to rethink COA’s role as a local nonprofit dedicated to amplifying the voices of the city’s marginalized and oppressed and working to promote social justice across the city:

I’ll tell you how [the Free School] affected me personally... I’ve developed and designed, in collaboration with you and some other folks, the SPARC initiative... By participating in the Planning Free School...that helped us to see that you can look at what you’re doing in communities in terms of, “Well, I do environmental justice work”; OK, that’s great. “I do income inequality work,” or “I do anti-racism work.” But *no, it’s all the same damn thing. The problem is that people don’t own their own communities...* But here is where people get a little lost, and where you’ve got to be really politically and philosophically careful... *You arrive at a place of autonomy and self-determination through a process of mutual aid and mutual cooperation.* You arrive at this place by understanding how your needs are bound up with ‘the other.’

In the Free School, we created this assessment tool, and we were out the other day with it going through Glenwood, where we talked to a Block Leader, who is a component of the human infrastructure of that particular community... We talked to this woman, and she knew all of her neighbors; but when we asked her to describe the relationships between the neighbors themselves, she said that they don't do too much visiting; they don't really talk to each other; people just sort of go to their homes, and so forth and so on.

Well—if our goal is to go beyond, to break free and liberate ourselves and each other from, these oppressions, we're not going to do it individually, because our oppressions intersect. We need to do this... through a strategy of collaboration. You're not going to be able to do that unless you understand how your needs are bound up with one another's, that your needs can be met by the community.³²

Conclusion

This chapter explored the evolution of Chattanooga Organized for Action's from an issue based protest group into an incorporated nonprofit organization that today supports and enables diasporic placemaking by “initiating, supporting and connecting” grassroots community groups across Chattanooga's urban core. What began as a broad popular assembly of passionate idealists has transformed into a leaner community organizing and advocacy group who works with residents in historically uprooted and excluded neighborhoods to cultivate political voices and have direct influence upon the local issues that impact low and moderate income communities the most. COA's story illuminates the complexities of multiracial diasporic placemaking in a city that has yet to reckon deeply with its own legacies of racialized violence, distrust, and uneven geographic development.

By moving from the personal to the neighborhood-wide to the inter-neighborhood scales, resident driven community planning and development processes such as the SPARC Initiative have the potential to help community organizers further flip the scripts of mainstream comprehensive urban planning processes by working with directly impacted residents to develop

³² Lance, Perrin, personal communication, June 6, 2013.

capacity and ‘scale out’ the scopes of their analyses. The result is a form of bottom-up comprehensive planning. As residents in seemingly-disparate neighborhoods move through these processes together, we expect that they will be more likely to recognize social interdependence within and between grassroots communities and will be more likely to look inward and to their neighbors to help devise community-based solutions to community problems.

CHAPTER 9: THE PLANNING FREE SCHOOL OF CHATTANOOGA: AN EXPERIMENT IN TRANSFORMATIVE PLANNING EDUCATION

In the previous chapter, I described how Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA) evolved from a popular protest organization into an incorporated nonprofit working to initiate, support and connect grassroots social justice movements across the city of Chattanooga. An important aspect of this shift has involved COA's work with the Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative: a community planning process that works with historically underrepresented and marginalized communities to develop neighborhood and coalition-based stories, visions and action plans.

In developing the SPARC initiative, we realized quickly that it would not suffice to merely invite grassroots communities into a process without also working with them to develop the research and public engagement skills necessary to pull off a community-based-and-led neighborhood planning initiative. To this end, we collaborated with the Chattanooga Public Library to launch the Planning Free School of Chattanooga: an experimental planning education initiative dedicated to “coordinating action toward a just and sustainable city.”¹ Ultimately, the Planning Free School reached far more residents than those in the three neighborhoods

¹ Planning Free School of Chattanooga (2013). “Who We Are.” Accessed online: <http://www.freeschoolchatt.blogspot.com>.

participating in the SPARC Initiative. This chapter discusses the lessons that we learned about transforming participatory planning processes and outcomes through this experimental program.

The Planning Free School of Chattanooga complemented the SPARC Initiative (and citizen-driven planning in Chattanooga more generally) by offering planning education and engagement workshops to help neighborhood leaders build technical skills and engagement capacity to participate in institution-backed planning conversations and launch their own independent neighborhood and inter-neighborhood planning initiatives. I argue that planning free schools have the power to support and enable new forms of community self-determination and interdependence in historically marginalized communities because they offer a model for actively dismantling the walls between citizen stakeholders, trained/ professional urban planners, and political decision-makers.

In Chattanooga this dismantling was achieved through a variety of nontraditional planning and participation activities, including critical conversations, technical skill shares, transformative placemaking workshops and regular, ongoing issue-based discussion groups. Through these exercises, participants evolved from resident stakeholders into citizen planners by:

- 1) lending their insights and expertise to help others better understand the built and social environment issues impacting diasporic communities across the city historically and today;
- 2) further developing urban research and public participation skills so that they might launch and manage their own place-based storytelling, visioning and action planning processes (which are typically left to professionally-trained planners);
- 3) sharing community-based solutions they have encountered and used in their own neighborhood planning and community development work; and
- 4) collaboratively assessing alternative planning and development models through place-based power mapping and direct organizing.

This chapter explores the five month-long² Planning Free School of Chattanooga to make three important claims about how professional urban planners can better support and enable diasporic placemaking in the communities where they live, work, and play. First, as mentioned, planning free schools have the power to support and enable community self-determination and interdependence because they offer a model for actively dismantling the walls between citizen stakeholders, trained/ professional urban planners, and political decision-makers. Second, experimental planning processes that combine traditional grassroots organizing strategies, creative storytelling, and popular education can engage historically underrepresented populations in identifying, collecting, analyzing and creatively representing neighborhood and community level data. Finally, ongoing collaboration between planners, public librarians, social workers, and community organizers will be key to the substantive transformation of participatory planning and community development practice in twenty-first century cities.

An Evolving Agenda

The Planning Free School (PFS) was conceived as a popular education and community planning initiative between members of Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA) and an action researcher-planning doctoral student (this author), who created the school alongside the SPARC Initiative (see Chapter 8) over a three month period (October-December 2012). Interviews with local placemakers during the summer and fall of 2012 led facilitators to the idea of a free school curriculum.³

² The Planning Free School ran between late January and late May 2013.

³ Originally, we meant to organize a set of eight workshops over an eight month period (approximately one per month). These workshops would be geared toward historically underrepresented residents and introduce them to a variety of nontraditional, creative placemaking activities. After interviewing forty seven local placemakers and asking them about the barriers that they faced with their organizing work, it became obvious that the workshops could be better tailored to provide skill-based learning, spaces for sustained dialogue, neighborhood-based campaign

The school was structured with two primary goals in mind: to help historically underrepresented residents 1) develop technical capacity to participate in informal, institution-backed planning and development conversations and initiatives; and 2) use this new capacity to launch their own community-led-and-centered visioning and planning processes. Through their participation in the Planning Free School and SPARC Initiative, we hoped to support and enable new forms of neighborhood autonomy, self-determination, mutual aid, and community interdependence through the creation of neighborhood- and coalition-wide community stories, visions and action plans. Although the capacity building goals grew from the SPARC Initiative (see Chapter 8), the majority of individuals who participated in the Planning Free School were ultimately not residents from the neighborhoods participating in SPARC.

Over the course of the five month long ‘semester,’ nearly one hundred Chattanooga residents-- many of whom were unusual suspects to mainstream public planning processes-- participated in at least one of the Planning Free School’s fifty-two (N=52) workshops. These sessions were organized into four broad categories: issue-based discussion groups, skill shares, critical conversations, or transformative placemaking workshops. As reflected in its motto “coordinated action towards a just and sustainable city,” the Planning Free School tried to distinguish itself from other participatory planning processes underway across the city by being forthright about its commitments to local social justice and equitable development. To this end, we adopted a horizontal, participant-driven “free school” format⁴ as a way to signal a radical

work, and creative expression. For more information, see the Methodology section in the Introduction to this dissertation.

⁴ Free Schools emerged in the 1960’s as a community-based response to highly unequal educational opportunities for grade school students living in major U.S. cities. Initially a parent-led movement, free schools have adapted over the past fifty years to include not only K-12 education, but adult and community learning across a range of topics and disciplines. For more information about the decentralized, pragmatic organizing structure of free schools, see the Methodology section in the Introduction to this dissertation. See also Kozol, J. (1972). *Free schools*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

departure from the top down, paternalistic modes of planning that were typically experienced by communities of color and other marginalized residents living in Chattanooga.

We furthermore tried to distinguish the Planning Free School from other ‘participatory’ processes by engaging participants in all aspects of organizational goal setting, technical data collection and analysis, and curriculum development. Rather than limit participants to one-off visioning and goal-setting exercises or ‘toothless’ advisory board appointments, the Planning Free School consciously disassembled the walls between public input, data gathering, and analysis, and prioritizing/ decision-making. All workshops were open to the public and we recruited through several channels: a Planning Free School website and Facebook page, the Chattanooga Public Library’s online Public Events calendar, printed posters, and email invitations that we sent out to Chattanooga Organized for Action’s 2,500-plus member list serve.

Related to its motto was the school’s mission statement. Broadly speaking, we sought to bring residents and activists together to discuss critical issues affecting Chattanooga and to create opportunities for sharing skills and stories in the pursuit of a more just and sustainable city. Specifically, we did this by building a planning education and engagement curriculum with the following four objectives:

1. Engage organizations and individuals in critical discussions about Chattanooga and its socioeconomic issues;
2. Democratize technical planning and community development knowledge through participant-driven skill-sharing workshops;
3. Collect and produce publicly available, community-level data supporting social justice organizing across the city; and,
4. Catalyze a “people’s” planning process within and between neighborhoods that had been historically left out of citizen planning and development initiatives and reinvestment initiatives.

By framing our public initiative this way, potential participants came to see the school as an alternative educational space where the hopes and concerns of historically marginalized and underrepresented residents were welcomed, and where they might come to expand their technical skills and social networks to help them realize their visions for their neighborhoods and the broader community.

The Chattanooga Public Library: Enabling Opportunities

Librarians employed at the downtown branch of the Chattanooga Public Library were critical to the Free School's success. One motivation driving the free school experiment was an interest in assessing how much could be done with little to no money. In other words, we wanted to test whether a planning education and engagement initiative could be based on human and social capital alone. We initially expected to hold the workshops in one of the organizer's homes. However, during our kick off workshop, a special opportunity arose. That first workshop was a "critical conversation" held in late December 2012 entitled, "Where are we now? Where do we go from here?" Playing off a "New Year's Eve" theme, I asked the ten participants who attended to both "take stock of the past year's social justice organizing efforts" and make "resolutions" (i.e. personal commitments) related to advancing the local social justice movement in the coming year.

One of the participants at the session was Meg Backus, a recently hired Systems Administrator librarian at the Chattanooga Public Library. When it was Backus's turn to make her new year's resolution, she offered to convene a meeting between the free school organizers and the library's Director, Corinne Hill, to explore the possibility of hosting the free school at the centrally located main branch of the library. Less than a week later, Backus and I pitched the

Planning Free School to Hill, who offered to allow us to run the free school out of the just-opening 4th Floor.⁵

This potential collaboration made sense for several reasons. First, like many other urban public libraries devising strategies to stay relevant in the digital age, the Chattanooga Public Library (CPL) had begun exploring the interconnections between civic engagement, popular education, and new information technologies. A major element of the CPL's plan was to transform a 14,000 square foot space in the building from storage into a publicly accessible civic engagement and technology lab.⁶ In an interview about the 4th Floor, Assistant Director Nate Hill emphasized the flexibility of the space: "We have no preconceived notion of what this is going to be, other than what the community wants and how the community wants to use it."⁷

Second, hosting the free school in the downtown public library would help its organizers more easily reach their target populations. Currently, only the public library provides free computer and internet access to any resident of the city so the library's first floor computer stations are extremely popular among low and moderate income residents who cannot afford personal internet subscriptions and who use the computers to search for jobs and housing.

Third, moving the free school to the 4th Floor had the potential to bridge a growing patron-service divide between the low tech-high tech services available to patrons. There was an obvious difference between users of the computers on the first floor searching for jobs (i.e. low and moderate income residents and predominantly people of color) and those who participated in the high tech entrepreneurial trainings being offered on the 4th floor (middle/upper income and

⁵ The Planning Free School of Chattanooga was actually the first community program to run out of the 4th Floor.

⁶ Since those early days when the space was still partially being used for storage, the 4th Floor has evolved into major tech education and civic engagement convening space. The floor offers flexible meeting space, free access to, and training in the use of 3D printers; they host web application development workshops, public hack-a-thons, regional planning visioning sessions, Chattanooga Organized for Action's annual Justice School, and several other community events.

⁷ Hill, Nate quoted in Beringer (2013). "4th Floor Open."

predominantly white residents). When Backus and I pitched the program to the library's director, we emphasized the Planning Free School's potential to bridge this patron-resource gap.⁸

Finally, the third floor of the Chattanooga Public Library houses the Genealogy and Local History departments. The Local History department is a treasure trove for historical planning and planning-related documents. Moreover, the archives are well organized and detailed in their documentation. For example, library staff members have collected and organized daily local newspaper clippings since the original public library opened in the mid-nineteenth century. There are more than twenty file cabinets filled with these clippings, which have been carefully cataloged and organized by detailed subjects. The third floor also has a government documents repository, as well as original hard copies of every plan, study, and program evaluation written about Chattanooga and the surrounding region. They have a massive historical photograph collection and are in the process of digitizing it and making it available through their website. Finally, the third floor holds copies of all current planning studies open for public and review and comment.

Critical Conversations

Critical Conversations were facilitated public discussions focused on community-based organizing in Chattanooga. Their purpose was to convene a semi-structured space for dialogue among and between the different social justice organizations working in the city.

The idea for hosting Critical Conversations emerged after a diverse coalition of community-based social justice organizations dissolved in late 2012 (see Chapter 8). COA's doctoral student partner had spoken with members of the various organizations who had stopped working together and part of the reason for the coalition's dissolution seemed to be that there had not

⁸ Backus, Meg, personal communication, January 3, 2013.

been time during their regular membership meetings to hash out political and ethical disagreements.

The coalition had lacked formal space for critical dialogue outside of their daily organizing/ work routines. Clearly some uncomfortable conversations about power and privilege within the local social justice community needed to happen. Without them, disagreements and grievances festered. Rather than convene dialogues between the different activists, the various groups had retreated from the coalition and reverted to complaining about one another behind closed doors.

So free school facilitators organized three Critical Conversations as “talking circle”-based discussions (Table 9.1 on the next page).⁹ The first involved taking stock of the past year’s community organizing success and challenges, and setting personal commitments related to organizing during the following year. The two additional conversations focused on “Creating Safer Spaces for Social Action” and “Connecting Past to Current and Future Struggles for Equitable Development.”

Table 9.1: Critical Conversation Topics

Workshop Title	Number of Participants
Where are we now? Where do we go from here?	8
Creating Safer Spaces for Social Action	6
Connecting the Past to Current and Future Social Justice Struggles	6

Source: Planning Free School 2013

Though well intentioned, the critical conversations were the least successful of the four types of Planning Free School workshops. This assessment is based on the fact that few of the

⁹ Planning scholar Karen Umemoto (2001) employed talking circles as a way to encourage culturally appropriate communication between professional planners and the Papakolea people in Hawaii. Talking circles are structured so that participants each take a turn contributing their thoughts to the group’s conversation. Participants speak in a “round robin” format; each participant may add something new or respond to a previous comment, but must wait for their turn to participate. This structure avoids the tensions associated with interrupting, dominating conversational spaces, and lack of participation. Umemoto argued that such culturally sensitive methods are needed for planners to work in diverse communities and understand distinct and sometimes radically different epistemological frames.

community organizers who we sought to engage in the critical discussions (i.e. members of the former coalition) attended any of the events. This is partially due to the timing of the fallout relative to the launch of the free school. Although we advertised the Planning Free School as an autonomous initiative independent from Chattanooga Organized for Action, many of the organizers who walked away from the coalition still associated the school with COA. By the time we began holding the free school sessions, the bridges between COA and Concerned Citizens for Justice had been burned for several months, and neither group seemed interested in engaging with or reconciling with the other.

Despite these shortfalls, each of the Critical Conversations did attract a small group of participants who were eager to ask themselves and one another tough questions about social justice in the city. These cohorts were somewhat random in who attended and participated. Yet this randomness produced many learning opportunities for the participants who were willing to dig deep. In this sense, the critical conversations successfully opened up spaces to hash out differences and find new common ground—even if they failed to help the different activists in the city reconcile their differences and begin organizing together again.

Issue Based Discussion Groups

Issue Based Discussion and Research Groups were bi-monthly meetings organized around five community development issues: housing, employment and workforce development, the arts and cultural development, transportation and mobility, and reimagining community partnerships (Table 9.2). A total of thirty two (N=32) discussion group sessions were held between January and May 2013.

Given the ongoing local public debates about affordable housing, education, jobs, and public art happening in Chattanooga, it was little surprise that the most popular and successful

groups were the Housing and Employment/Workforce Development groups, which met a total of eight and nine times each, respectively. Typically, these meetings attracted eight or more participants per session. The Arts and Cultural Development group had lower participation rates, but also met nine times over the course of the five month period. The Transportation and Mobility and Re-Imagining Community Partnerships groups were both suspended after a month and a half due to low turnout. Despite their suspension, dynamic and spirited conversations occurred on both of these topics during the first month. Some excerpts from these meetings are integrated into the next chapter.

Table 9.2: Issue Based Discussion Group Topics

Program Name	Total Number of Workshops	Range of Participants
Housing	8	2-12
Employment + Workforce Development	9	2-10
Arts and Cultural Development	9	2-6
Transportation + Mobility	3	2-4
Re-Imagining Community Partnerships	3	2-4

Source: Planning Free School, 2013

The Housing, Employment and Workforce Development, and Arts and Cultural Development groups were organized with a common three-part structure. During the first three sessions, participants focused on identifying issues. The second third of the ‘semester’ was spent collaboratively mining and assessing local data. During the final three sessions, participants explored alternative planning and development paradigms through a Chattanooga-centric, place-based lens.

For example, over the course of the nine Employment and Workforce Development meetings, participants spent the first three sessions identifying the following issues and questions to guide the remaining workshops:

- What are good, empowering jobs?
- How does employment fit into community self-determination?
- There are many innovative programs and solutions being developed, but they often aren't taken seriously or funded. How can we build support for these initiatives?
- How do we address bureaucracy as we move toward new principles and practices of work?
- How has racism interacted with (produced?) spatial development along highly uneven lines?
- What role does information play in "breaking through the spell" of disempowerment?
- How can we redefine successful economic development into terms of equity and empowerment and not merely more minimum wage jobs?
- What opportunities can be developed for homeless residents to help them "cut through the despair of their situations"?
- Identifying our own problems and our own solutions
- Building opportunity structures (training and incentives) for the un/deremployed
- Is it about working with existing or creating new institutions around work and creative production?
- How can we build an economy around human flourishing!?

During the second third of the sessions, participants examined historic and contemporary employment, wage, education and underemployment data for Chattanooga and the surrounding region. During the final three, participants explored alternative work and economic development paradigms including community benefits agreements, workers' cooperatives, and time banks.

For each alternative development model participants asked themselves what it would take to implement in Chattanooga. These conversations encouraged widespread participation by creating a learning environment where everyone in the room had expertise to share. Moreover, the presence of community organizers helped the group assess the overall feasibility of a range of equitable development tools, by working with participants to map the political and economic landscapes of local development decision-making.

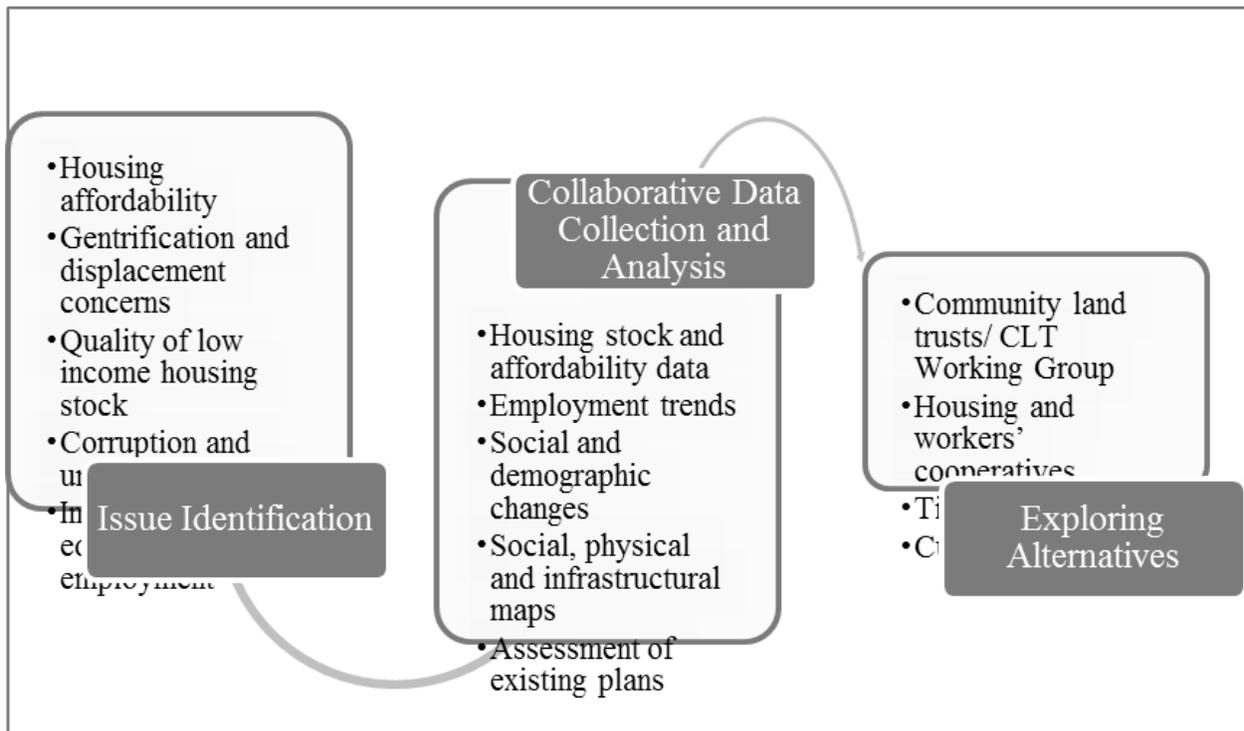


Figure 9.1: Structure of Issue Based Discussion Groups

Naming the Other Chattanooga

At the beginning of each discussion, I would briefly describe the purpose and structure of the Planning Free School. Doing so reminded participants that they were in charge of agenda setting; that the purpose of the conversations was to explore the urban social issues that *they* considered most urgently needing attention.

What emerged from these conversations were deep, pointed analyses of the ‘other Chattanooga’—the neighborhoods and people who had not been prioritized for resources by the city, county, and local philanthropic and nonprofit development institutions. Staff and volunteers with Chattanooga Organized for Action had been calling out the “other Chattanooga” since they had begun organizing in 2008. The discussion groups allowed participants to share stories and experiences with one another to further contextualize and humanize the claims they made about social and spatial inequality across the city and region.

During an Employment and Workforce Development discussion, for example, two middle aged African American men who had been organizing a Gang Truce anti-violence day together offered insight into how and why gang violence manifests itself in Chattanooga. To these two men, who both live in neighborhoods with high levels of gang activity, the gangs are not the root of the city’s social problems; rather, they are symptomatic of the intergenerational poverty and despair that arises from structural inequality and the historical neglect and exclusion of low and moderate-income communities from urban investment and amenities.

...Well, if you look at Chattanooga on a cycle—you’ve got the start of the baseball season; you’ve got the start of Riverbend; and the other tourism-related stuff they’ve got going. Then come September, you have the football and the basketball games and the spring sports. So it goes like that. Nothing ever changes.

Periodically—we don’t know why, but—there’s an anger that’s underneath all this wealth and commerce and tourism. There’s anger underneath and it’s been building for years. Every now and then it will erupt. [The anger is rooted in] poverty. The foundation is poverty. It’s like a volcano. It builds up until it can’t anymore and then ka-boom.

When you have a lack of youth programs in the summer; when you continue to allow unemployment to exist in the twenty-percent range; when you still have the commercials on and you still have Christmas coming; and these kids, they want to be happy!... And so is it up to us to demand, when we have so little? Or do we continue to wait for those who have, to become benevolent enough to say “ok, we’re not going to spend money

downtown for tourism—we're going to spend it in the neighborhoods on some of these social deals. We haven't come up with that balance yet.

GW: The real root is basic needs. Even if I work forty hours a week, fifty weeks a year, I'm still not making more than fifteen grand. You know? But Section 8 housing has taken over my neighborhood. The apartments that used to go for \$500 or \$600 are now going for \$700 or \$800 because of Section 8 housing. That's what they're doing. You can't expect people not to want to make a profit. In other words, the people who rent now are renting based on Section 8 tenants or UTC students, because they can afford to pay. Everybody else, well—where are you going to get an apartment for \$350? East Lake... or any neighborhood where after dark it's like Dodge City.

Then the Federal Government has food stamps at \$200 per month. It's not keeping up with the cost of living. So you get \$200 per month—that's roughly \$6 per day. So in other words, if I'm not wise I'm going to go hungry. That means I'm going to have to go knocking on someone's door and invite myself to dinner [laughter].

People are so apprehensive about believing the truth. They're wondering, "Where do we fit into the City of Chattanooga itself?" I thought that maybe if I can back up and start with a basic thing—art and culture—I could stimulate the minds of both the seniors and the kids.¹⁰

Through these discussions, participants drew important connections between different urban issues that are usually assessed in isolation from one another. For example, the conversation above began on the topic of inner city violence but moved to a deeper place where participants began naming the structural inequalities (in education and job training, employment, and access to the arts) that impact their neighborhoods. This discussion provided further context to urban change in the city by relating histories of neighborhood neglect to contemporary gentrification trends that affect low and moderate income residents living in the urban core.

During a Housing discussion group meeting, for example, a resident from Patten Towers (a notorious subsidized housing development located across the street from the library) who had seen a poster for the session joined the group. For the first half hour, he sat silent, observing the

¹⁰ Planning Free School of Chattanooga (February 18, 2013). Employment and Workforce Development Workshop.

conversation. When he finally spoke up it was to share a deeply personal story about how his residential address acts as a stigma when he tries to find employment.

M: From my standpoint, not doing anything—sitting around sitting on my butt—was not the game plan that I had. But because of Patten Towers, my chances for education have been [diminished]. My chances to have an actual standing job have been [wiped out].

[It's the] stigma of the address. I just picked Patten Towers, and now I'm mad. I'm mad because...look, I'm just throwing this out there, so correct me if I'm wrong—but some of these people who I've encountered while trying to get a job, some of these people have a *thing* and a *funk* about Patten Towers. They pretty much don't want anything to do with anyone from Patten Towers, even if they're honest people.¹¹

The storytelling that occurred during these sessions seemed to have a therapeutic effect on some participants: several regulars noted that the free school meetings were the first times in their lives that anyone had asked them about their experiences in and opinions about development in the city.¹² The library's willingness to host the school was invaluable in this regard, because residents who might never have heard about the meetings were able to walk in off the street and participate in the sessions.

Contextualizing and Substantiating Claims

The purpose of the discussion groups was to do more than share experiences or air grievances: free school organizers also wanted to work with participants to collect and analyze

¹¹ Planning Free School of Chattanooga (January 21, 2013). Housing Workshop.

¹² Karen Umemoto (2001) reminded her readers about the many impediments to public participation in planning deliberations, noting that “the lasting legacies of colonialism, immigration, slavery, political domination, and socioeconomic stratification survive either in the realm of lived experience or collective memory” (page 19). Similarly, Forester (1999) argued for moral improvisation in planning, stating that “The morally improvising planner should counteract exclusionary power by working to include representative voices of affected stakeholders; by anticipating the self-protective behavior and claims from powerful actors; by exposing the systematic suppression of data; by resisting rationales of resignation and invoking potentially radical, if also traditional, values of agency, respect, dignity, and so on. The morally improvising planner who ignores the suppression of citizens' voice or data weakening the claims of the powerful would be willfully blind, hardly responsible to the basic obligations of public-service planning” (236).

existing community reports and demographic data so that they could substantiate their claims with concrete evidence. During the first Transportation and Mobility session, for example, participants were shown a map of the existing bus routes and asked to compare service quality and accessibility of the different routes.

A participant whose disabilities prevent him from having a driver's license stood up, approached the map, and began describing inconsistencies in service. As an individual who relies exclusively on the bus and walking to get around the city, he had firsthand experience riding almost every one of the bus routes. Pointing to a portion of the St. Elmo neighborhood in South Chattanooga, this participant emphasized the social immobility and isolation of a low income, primarily senior population living outside of the bus service area.

They're trapped. You've got about three miles in St. Elmo where a lot of elderly people live, and they will have to walk all the way up here to the edge to catch the bus; this is where the incline is located. They have service to the Incline and that's it. The St. Elmo bus doesn't run often, and if you go out to St. Elmo you've got to walk up and over to here, to where the Alton Park bus picks up, because that picks up more often. And as it gets later in the day, the more chance there is that the Alton Park bus won't come at all. The later in the night time—if the bus breaks down or it's having problems—they won't send a new bus out. They'll just haul the bus back to the depot. You're standing there waiting for the last bus and the bus never shows up. You pretty much have to make other arrangements to get home.¹³

After making his point, the facilitator of the meeting showed participants how to use an online census mapping program to collect the demographic information for the St. Elmo neighborhood in question. The group also discussed tools for evaluating discrepancies in public transit service access and quality.¹⁴

¹³ Planning Free School of Chattanooga (January 18, 2013). Transportation and Mobility Workshop.

¹⁴ We drew inspiration from the Straphanger's Campaign (NYC), an annual assessment and comparison of public transit services in New York City. Straphanger's is sponsored by the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). Each subway and bus line receives a letter "grade" (based on a report card model), which transportation



Illustration 9.1: Participants discuss the criminal justice system during an Employment and Workforce Development meeting

Skills Shares

Skill-Shares were workshops designed to cultivate urban research skills and community development capacity among residents and neighborhood activists living and organizing across downtown Chattanooga. In total, eleven (N=11) skill shares ran over the five month period. Three census analysis workshops (housing, employment and workforce development, and urban economics) worked with participants to locate, download, and analyze neighborhood-level census and American Community Survey (ACS) data. Another session focused on identifying community assets through transect walks. Another session involved a librarian-guided tour of the

justice advocates then use to apply pressure to transportation planners and policymakers to improve the equity of the transit system. For more information, see: <http://www.straphangers.org/>

Local History Department’s planning and community-development related archives. Several participants joined a four part mini-GIS course entitled “Mapmaking for Social Change.” Finally, nearly twenty people participated in a two-part collaborative “Developing a Comprehensive Neighborhood Assessment Tool” program, which is detailed at length in Chapter 10.

Table 9.3: Skill Share Workshops, Spring 2013

Workshop Title	Total Number of Sessions	Range of Participation
Census Workshops (Housing, Employment, Urban Economics)	3	3-6
Transect Walk	1	4
Mining the Local Archives for Planning Data	1	3
GIS Mini Course: Mapmaking for Social Change	4	5
Developing a Neighborhood Assessment Tool	2	6-16

Source: Planning Free School of Chattanooga

Mining and Representing Community Data

The analytical skills shared during these sessions were meant to help transform community members from lay citizen ‘stakeholders’ into burgeoning citizen planners. Through guided, interactive research sessions, participants practiced mining, analyzing, representing and communicating the urban social and spatial data. During the “Mining the Local Archives for Planning Data” session, for example, three participants—a community organizer, an undergraduate student from the University of Tennessee Chattanooga, and a Southside business owner with an interest in local transportation planning—explored the Chattanooga Public Library’s extensive Local History and Genealogy department through a guided tour provided by Mary Helms, the head librarian in the Local History department.

During this tour, Helms showed participants how to use the online catalogue to locate historic maps, planning documents, evaluation reports and newspaper clipping files. Highlights

of the session included viewing the original Golden Gateway Urban Renewal Project architect’s model and a 1938 Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Mortgage Securities Rating (“redlining”) map for the city of Chattanooga. Both of these artifacts helped participants visualize how racism has taken place in Chattanooga via coordinated housing and economic development policy and planning.

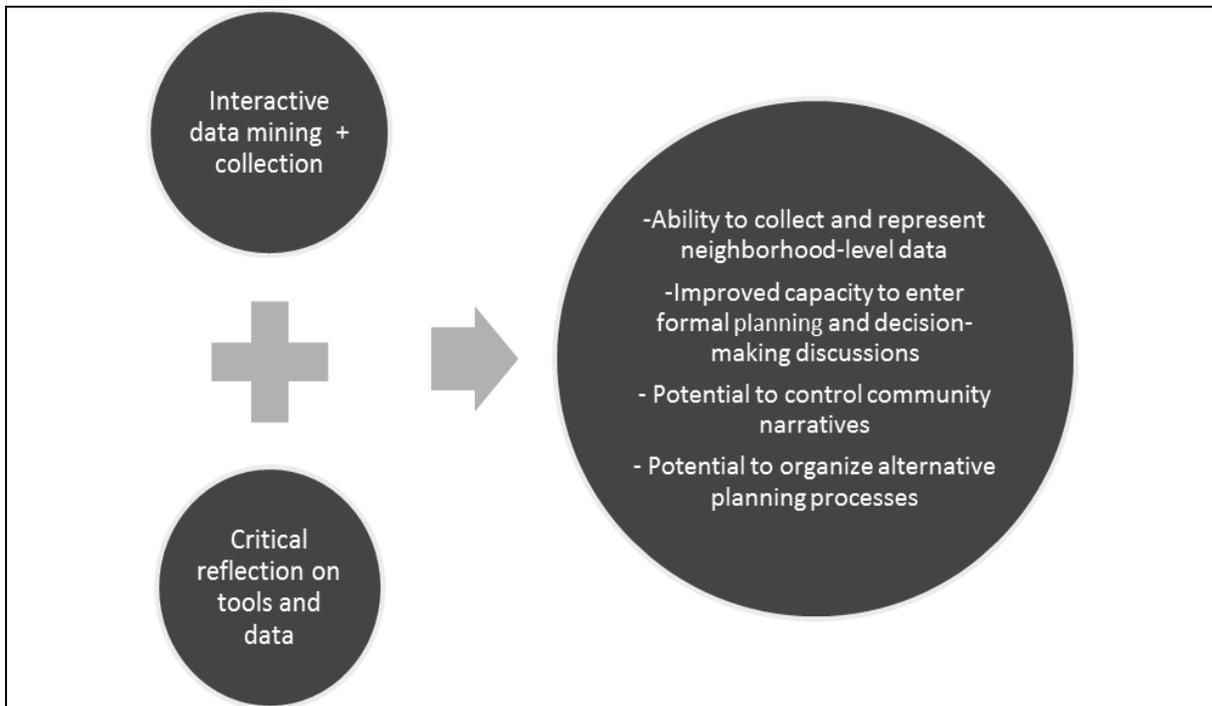


Figure 9.2: Skill Share Learning Goals and Outcomes

Skill shares also allowed professionals to further cultivate their technical skills and professional development. For example, a registered Landscape Architect employed with the City of Chattanooga attended the four-part GIS course in order to gain basic mapping skills so that she could make a case to her department to have geographic information software installed on her work computer. Another participant enrolled in the course to learn GIS in anticipation of applying to graduate programs in urban planning.

Transformative Placemaking Workshops

The transformative Placemaking workshops were interactive, hands-on activities meant to introduce participants to nontraditional public engagement methods. One of the overarching goals of these sessions was to push the boundaries of ‘placemaking’ beyond superficial landscape and built environment improvements and to ask how creative and cultural expression might be better integrated into equitable community development planning. To this end, workshops were designed as input sessions as well as methods trainings. Participants both generated their own stories about place and cultural belonging by participating in the exercises and critically reflected on the tools themselves, asking in each case how the exercise might be integrated into their own neighborhood visioning and community planning initiatives.

In total, five transformative placemaking workshops were held over the five month period (Table 9.3). Two sessions involved James Rojas’s “The City as Play” model- building exercise. Another involved a Shared Histories, Shared Futures timeline activity. A workshop entitled “Storytelling the City,” examined artistic representations of Chattanooga throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.¹⁵ Another discussion focused on opportunities to integrate cultural organizing into economic justice planning.

Table 9.4: Transformative Placemaking Workshops

Workshop Title	Total Number of Workshops	Range of Participants
The City as Play: Model Building	2	8-10

¹⁵ This workshop is discussed at length in Chapter 10.

Storytelling the City (through photo, film, music)	1	8
Shared Histories, Shared Futures	1	4
Beyond Tourism: Integrating Heritage and Cultural Development into Economic Justice Planning	1	5

Source: Planning Free School of Chattanooga

Each of the five workshops followed a similar format, combining a creative, hands on activity with a critical question (or questions) about daily life in Chattanooga. As a result of this structure, several learning outcomes were achieved (Figure 9.3 on the next page). First, the placemaking workshops provided a space for historically underrepresented residents to share personal testimonies about daily life in Chattanooga. Relatedly, the activities allowed participants to engage in critical, sometimes controversial dialogues in low pressure, creative ways. Third, training the participants in the tools themselves improved the capacity of grassroots community leaders to organize and facilitate community dialogue and planning processes in their own communities. Finally, emphasizing the replicability of these activities and providing copies of all workshop materials to participants potentially added several creative, nontraditional tools to the participants’ community organizing toolboxes.

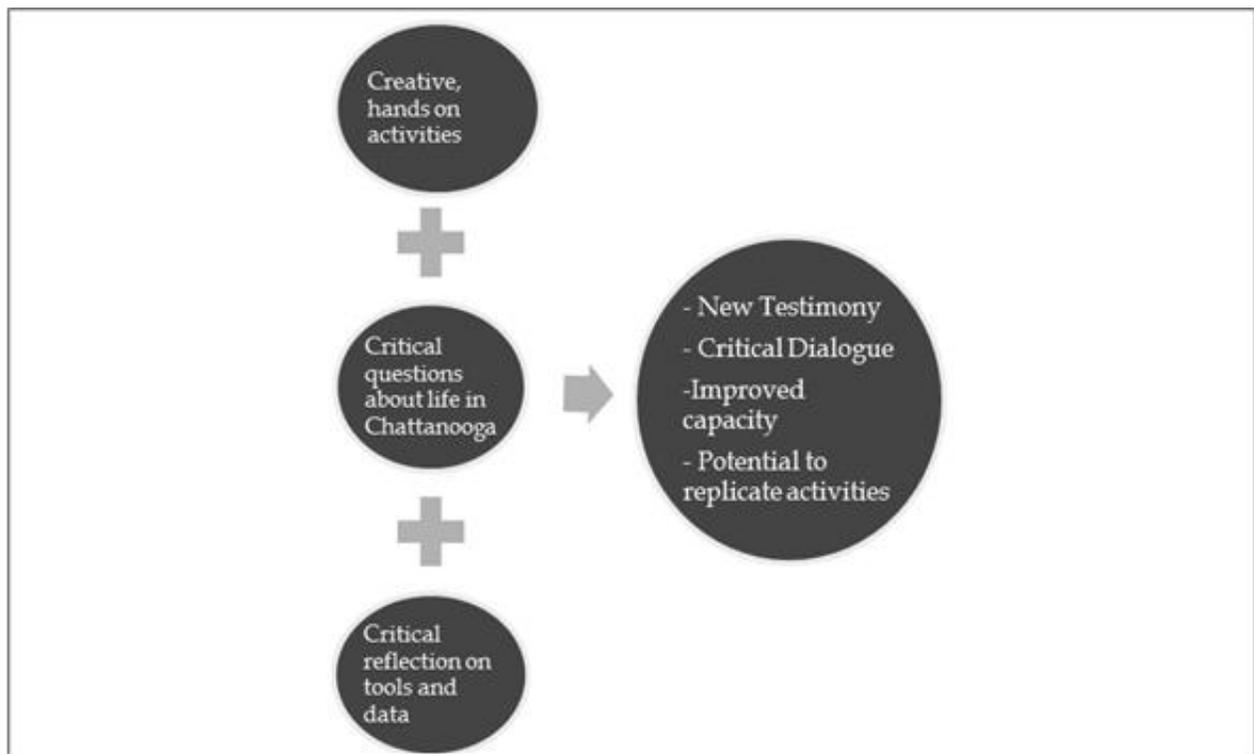


Figure 9.3: Learning Goals and Outcomes of Transformative Placemaking Workshops

Limitations of the Experiment

Certain technological requirements made many of these sessions prohibitive. For Census and GIS workshops, for example, participants were required to supply their own laptops for the training. Furthermore, the GIS mini course used ESRI ArcView software, which requires a Windows-based operating system. Additionally, the transect walk exercise assumed a certain degree of physical mobility and fitness from participants, which made them inaccessible to several of the physically disabled residents who attended workshops on a regular basis.

Although the skill shares didn't attract as broad participation as some of the other workshop topics, the folks who did participate tended to be community organizers (with Chattanooga Organized for Action and elsewhere) who are now committed to further democratizing the skills

they picked up at the Free School through capacity building processes such as the SPARC Initiative and COA Justice School. Additionally, COA hired a planning graduate student intern from the University of Florida to create a workbook of all free school workshops so that they could be easily replicated in the future.

Conclusion: Deep Reckoning

Chattanooga is a city full of possibilities. It is also a highly segregated city, where the benefits and burdens of urban revitalization are unequally distributed along racialized and gendered cleavages. The Planning Free School provided an open, nonjudgmental, nonhierarchical space for residents with diverse backgrounds to come together to share stories about their lives in the city. Through these conversations, participants shared skills, tapped into their values, discovered new common ground, and identified promising next steps of action to consider. Rather than simply absorb and/or comment on data, as is typically the case with ‘participatory’ planning processes, the Planning Free School approached all aspects of engagement and curriculum development through a resident driven, popular education lens.

This grassroots, popular education approach to data analysis was compelling for several reasons. First, the workshops enabled participants to collect and represent their own community information on a micro-level scale. During one of the placemaker interviews conducted for this project, Glenwood Neighborhood Association President Dr. Everlena Holmes stated that in Chattanooga, community data is typically aggregated and represented in ways that make it difficult to understand localized needs, concerns and social disparities. The lack of

disaggregated data makes it difficult to devise sensitive, place-based solutions to the issues at hand.¹⁶

By training neighborhood activists to collect and represent their own community datasets, the skill share workshops improved these residents' capacity to enter into formal planning and political decision-making processes. More importantly, these skill-shares enabled participants to move beyond formal processes and initiate community planning and development initiatives of their own. In so far that knowledge and relationship building is power, the skill sharing exercises opened up the possibility for neighborhoods to articulate and control their own community narratives—both crucial elements of practicing community self-determination.¹⁷ One frequent Free School participant described the power of the instrument to facilitate community control as such:

I believe the [neighborhood assessment] can be very useful in terms of mapping... and getting a more realistic view of the neighborhoods. When we go online and look at something that the City put together, it's a little bit skewed in the city's favor. The city doesn't want to include that it has a slum here, or broken sidewalks, or that the streetlights are out, or the roads need better signage... The power [of the tool] lies in having an independent data pool out there, so that people can go to the city council and tell them the stuff that's needed right here in Chattanooga. They will be able to pull up each street intersection and see what's needed. You can even go so far as to say, "Well, this block right here has four disabled people and there's no sidewalk. It needs to be handicapped accessible in this area."¹⁸

Relatedly, another frequent PFS participant, a self-ascribed "homeless journalist" and public access talk show host, offered the following comments about his participation in the two-part Neighborhood Assessment Toolkit session:

¹⁶ Holmes, Everlena, personal communication, April 23, 2013.

¹⁷ John Forester (1999) made the following powerful claim about participatory action research (PAR) in a planning setting: "PAR processes may enable participants to learn not only from arguments about possibilities, but from allusions to what is relevant in the first place, especially when arguments, issues, alternatives, and concerns are multiple, ambiguous, and conflicting" (135).

¹⁸ Nix, William, personal communication, June 4, 2013.

So you can call it the [Free School] but I want to label it as the “social means” for being able to get your city on track... This is a city that is... one-sided; that has its development in one specific area, which is the downtown... Allowing a person like me, with a need, to be able to express the concerns that we are facing on the ‘other side’ of the political spectrum in my city... Teaching me how to survey... to be able to go down each street, any segment or neighborhood of my community, and show street by street, neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block, an assessment... I am able to determine how many properties are owned by a particular person... how many of those properties have broken windows; whether there are any city planted trees; whether there are any directional signs. We can go between neighborhoods in the community, and not just downtown, and determine whether these facilities are accessible to people restricted to wheelchairs. See, to be able to not only voice a concern, now, because of the [Planning Free School], I will be able to provide them with a written assessment and data of the damages. This is... what I consider to be the most valuable thing that the PFS taught me.¹⁹

To conclude, planning free schools like the one organized in Chattanooga offer a promising model for transforming community engagement and planning in the twenty-first century. This chapter described and analyzed the Planning Free School of Chattanooga in order to better understand how professional planners and other urban professionals (policymakers, social workers, librarians) might better support and enable diasporic placemaking in the cities that we serve by devising initiatives that actively dissolve the boundaries between citizen participants, professional planners, and political decision-makers. As they currently stand, the majority of past and present public engagement techniques are inadequate for facilitating transformative social change and equitable community development. We need more planning experiments that consciously dismantle citizen stakeholder—technical expert—political decision-maker divides by working to develop capacity among ordinary residents to research, assess, and make informed recommendations about their communities.

This chapter has also tried to make the case for increased collaboration between planners, librarians, social workers and community organizers. For reasons outlined in the beginning of

¹⁹ Bell, Monty, personal communication, June 11, 2013.

this chapter, planners and librarians in particular stand to benefit from ongoing, deep collaboration. As twenty-first institutions dedicated to improving public welfare, planners, librarians and social workers and have much to teach and learn from one another on the topics of assessment, capacity building, democratic practice and equitable community development.

CHAPTER 10: STORYTELLING THE CITY: DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVES

This chapter explores two Planning Free School workshops in detail to illustrate the transformative potential of a free school model that uses creative, nontraditional engagement techniques to help members of historically underrepresented or marginalized communities enact their own stories, visions and action plans.¹ The first, a session entitled “Storytelling the City,” engaged participants in discussions about urban development and change in downtown Chattanooga through interactions with popular representations of the city in music, literature, and film. The second, a two part participatory exercise that resulted in a comprehensive neighborhood assessment tool, involved the participation of more than thirty residents living in neighborhoods who had been largely left out of mainstream revitalization initiatives across the city. This final chapter expands the conversations raised throughout this dissertation about the

¹ In the context of urban planning education and capacity building, the Planning Free School was an attempt, as discussed throughout the previous chapter, to transform the participatory context and tangible outcomes of engagement through the active dismantlement of the citizen-expert planner- political decision maker divides found in most mainstream urban planning initiatives. In a very real sense, the Planning Free School was a response to Jonathan Kozol’s (1972) challenge to use free schools to revolutionize (in its most “sacred” sense of doing one thing that really matters and makes a difference in peoples’ lives) the means and ends of (in this case, planning) education systems in the United States. Regarding alternative education in the late 1960’s/ early 1970’s, Kozol wrote: “To plant a bean seed in a cut down milk container and to call this “revolution” is to degrade and undermine the value of one of the sacred words. To show a poor black kid in East St. Louis or in Winston-Salem or in Chicago how to make end runs around the white man’s college entrance scores—while never believing that those scores are more than evil digits written on the sky—to do this, in my scale of values, is the starting point of an authentic revolution. It is not to imitate a confrontation, but to engage in one. It is not to speak of doing “our own thing,” but rather to do one thing that really matters and can make a visible difference in the lives of our own brothers in the streets that stand about our school... There has to be a way to find pragmatic competence, internal strength and ethical passion all in the same process. This is the only kind of revolution that can possibly transform the lives of people in the land in which we live and in the time in which we are now living” (44-45).

transformative potential of participatory action research and planning education initiatives to help professional planners become better enablers and supporters of diasporic placemaking in complex urban environments. No longer limited to questions of allocation or (re)distribution, the workshops developed and run through the Planning Free School sought, and arguably, achieved, broader goals connected to transforming interpersonal relationships, expanding technical capacity, and helping participants find new and unexpected common ground.²

Workshop 1: Storytelling the City

One of the most illuminating placemaking discussions took place on March 10, 2013, when eight local residents gathered for a conversation entitled “Storytelling the City.” The purpose of the workshop was to collaboratively experience and explore several pieces of popular art produced about the city of Chattanooga. The group was comprised of local community organizers, a teachers’ union representative, a college student, several visual and performance artists, and two media and communications freelancers.

During introductions, the diverse group of individuals stated many different interests in and reasons for attending the discussion. One social media specialist, for example, hoped to get beyond the “whitewash” of mainstream urban storytelling to a place where cultural development is linked to local social justice organizing and both are understood as prerequisites for urban sustainable development. Another artist and self-identified “gay, Native American, and disabled” community activist developed his predecessor’s comments by contending there are vastly underutilized opportunities for linking social justice work with artistic and creative

² John Forester (1999) discussed transformation and participatory action research methods, arguing, “The process of deliberation and participation is better seen not only as argumentative or dialogical in terms of who knows what, not only as allocative, in terms of who gets what, but transformative too, in terms of who comes to create new relationships and act on new commitments in actual practice” (144).

expression through social media. This participant's comments led to several others' points that storytelling has the power to help seemingly dissimilar individuals build relationships with one another as well as foster emotional connections to the places we call home.³



Illustration 10.1: Finding Common Ground through Art and Performance (Source: Courtney Knapp)

A freelance video editor and communications professional described his motivation accordingly:

I've had a long running passion for community communication: basically, helping each other learn, create and share more efficiently and more effectively with the various ways

³ Leonie Sandercock (1995) is one of the foremothers in the planning profession calling for a reorientation away from the modernist narratives of progress and development and toward "insurgent" planning historiography (for more information, see the Introduction and Chapters 1 and 5 of this dissertation). She contended that insurgent planning histories have transformative potential in so far that they "underscore ways in which, through resistance and acquiescences, the subaltern confronts the world and may transform it" (53).

of communicating. And of course, storytelling's a large part of that. Because it actually underlies how we're able to share with one another.⁴

Lastly, a community activist with a passion for local history stated that he was attending because "Chattanooga has done a horrible job of telling its own story." This participant longed for a time when Chattanooga's 'stories' were no longer dominated by public relations firms and the Chamber of Commerce; when historically underrepresented perspectives become "commonplace." "Storytelling offers new perspectives," he explained to his peers, "and helps us complicate ourselves. By complicating ourselves, we become more effective [organizers]."

Workshop Structure

Although participants' stakes in the workshop varied, the dialogical process of sharing their motivations for attending helped them see their interests and experiences in relation to others'. As the facilitator of the session, I explained to the group that we would be reviewing several pieces of popular art and asking ourselves in each case "what this particular story tells us about daily life in Chattanooga?" Organized chronologically, the group interacted with and performed six pieces of art: Bessie Smith's "Backwater Blues" (1927); Hugh Blair's (1967) poems "Midnight on a Georgia Road" and "When I get to Heaven,"; the Glenn Miller Orchestra's famous television performance of the "Chattanooga Choo Choo" (1941); the poem "Chattanooga" by African American playwright, poet, novelist, and essayist Ishmael Reed, who was born in the city in 1938 and titled his 1973 collection of poems by the same name; and finally, a contemporary example: local rapper Big Mike Mic's song and Kickstarter™ campaign City without Tears (2012). The full text version of each of these selections is located in Appendix E.

⁴ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Storytelling the City workshop. March 15, 2013.

Comparative Mobilities

The conversation that evolved from this interactive format far exceeded the original goal to explore creative representations of Chattanooga through popular music, film, and poetry. By asking themselves and one another what the different performances taught the group about daily life in Chattanooga, the exercise prompted a discussion about the intersections of race, class, cultural belonging and physical/social mobility in a creative and highly accessible format.

To begin, the group listened to a recording of “Empress of the Blues,” Bessie Smith’s 1927 hit song “Backwater Blues.” Smith opens the song with the lyrics, “When it rains five days and the skies turn dark as night/ When it rains five days and the skies turn dark as night/ Then trouble's takin' place/ In the lowlands at night.”⁵ These lyrics prompted a spirited discussion about physical and social mobility relative to the topographies of the city, and how race and class divisions have impacted life in the “lowlands” and “highlands” of Chattanooga, both historically and today.

Bessie Smith was born on the Westside of Chattanooga on April 15, 1894 and raised in Blue Goose Hollow, a low-lying riverfront neighborhood on the backside of Cameron Hill. With its topography and proximity to the river, Blue Goose Hollow was highly prone to floods during the pre-Tennessee Valley Authority era of the city’s history.⁶ Between 1875 and 1938, for example, the Tennessee River exceeded Chattanooga’s 30-foot flood stage more than 70 times, with the most devastating floods occurring in 1867, 1875, 1886 and 1917.⁷

⁵ Smith, Bessie (1927, 1992). “Backwater Blues” in *The Complete Recordings, Volume 3*. New York, NY: Columbia Records.

⁶ The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was authorized in 1933, and the Chickamauga Dam, located ten miles north of downtown Chattanooga, was completed and opened on January 15, 1940. The completion of this dam had a profound impact on the local environment, opening up swaths of previous undevelopable land and increasing physical and economic security for thousands of lowland dwelling households living in the city.

⁷ Govan, G. E., & Livingood, J. W. (1977). *The Chattanooga country, 1540-1976: From tomahawks to TVA*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

Although Smith's lyrics were not written specifically about Chattanooga,⁸ surely, she would have had personal experiences while living in Blue Goose Hollow that were similar to the ones she described when she sang the lyrics to her hugely popular blues song:

Then I went and stood upon some high old lonesome hill
Then I went and stood upon some high old lonesome hill
Then looked down on the house
Where I used to live
Backwater blues done call me to pack my things and go
Backwater blues done call me to pack my things and go
'Cause my house fell down
And I can't live there no more.⁹

Placing the lyrics of "Backwater Blues" in a local historical context allowed participants to explore issues of race, class and uneven development in Chattanooga in deep but highly accessible and non-confrontational ways:

PL: I found it telling that when she talks about the lowlands... if you live in the lowlands you're in danger of getting washed out. Through this song I had a heightened sense that their location was not their own choice. She is distraught over weather, having to "go up on some lonesome hill" and look down at [her] home as it washes away... [Speaking of the 'lowlands'] Highland Park was built in the 1920's. At that time, the area was still considered the suburbs, and real estate agents advertised the neighborhood as uphill, i.e. safe from flooding

PL2 : No one wants to live in Lowland Park. Can't live there and settle and accrue resources, because they'll inevitably get washed away. The poorest and most marginalized always bear the brunt of our ecological disasters.

The other participants in the room assented to these comments and developed the analysis further, going so far as to connect the devastating floods described by Smith to Urban Renewal

⁸Musicologist David Evans (2005) argued that "Backwater Blues" was written about the flood in Nashville on December 25, 1926, but resonated with people across the Mississippi Delta and Southeast following the Great Mississippi River flood of 1927, which submerged 27,000 square miles of land under as much as thirty feet of water. The Great Mississippi Flood displaced many southern African Americans living in the delta region and prompted a wave of migration into northern industrial cities. For more information, see Evans, David (2006). Bessie Smith's 'Back-Water Blues': the story behind the song. *Popular Music*, 26, pp 97-116.

⁹ Smith, Bessie (1927, 1992). "Backwater Blues" in *The Complete Recordings, Volume 3*. New York, NY: Columbia Records.

Planning during the 1950's and 1960's, which razed Smith's Blue Goose Hollow neighborhood along with much of the city's working class Black neighborhood on the Westside for the sake of large-scale economic development. A fellow participant also connected Chattanooga's industrial working class physical marginalization to historic environmental pollution and injustice claims:

MG: Blue Goose Hollow was the literal margin of society...

CK: I read that this song was so popular because it resonated with hundreds of thousands of people who had experienced ecological disaster around the US. Two months after the song was written, the great Mississippi Flood of 1927 occurred, affecting people from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Michigan.

PL2: When reading the Urban Renewal propaganda, public narrative discussed how the Westside was just too poor to be saved and couldn't take care of itself. But what do you expect when you force a community into one of the most vulnerable areas of the city and fail to improve their infrastructure?

MG: Tannery plants on the right. Stink horribly. Noxious air...The photo reminds me of the physical look of how these houses had just grown up haphazardly on these margins. The photo of Blue Goose Hollow shows how the urban poor can appropriate space when they're pushed to the margins.¹⁰

The stories of Chattanooga told through Smith's personal biography and the lyrics to "Backwater Blues" underscored an important aspect of diasporic placemaking: the affirmation of life through art despite its apparent unfairness and cruelty. Following Clyde Woods's (1998) here, one can see how a diasporic artistic consciousness, or blues epistemology, has undergirded African American placemaking for more than three centuries. In this sense, Smith's "Backwater Blues" helped participants understand the historical and human geographic contexts of diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga at the height of the Jim Crow period.

In contrast to Smith's lyrics, two poems written by Hugh Blair, a white news reporter and political activist who spent his adolescence in and around Chattanooga during the 1920s, offered a much different perspective on the social and physical landscapes of the "Dynamo of Dixie."

¹⁰ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Storytelling the City workshop. March 15, 2013.

Far from being stranded on some “high old lonesome hill,” Blair’s experiences coming of age in the city were marked by his sense of personal freedom and physical mobility. Blair’s poem “When I get to Heaven” (1967) recounted his youthful years spent exploring the Chattanooga’s various neighborhoods-- including Smith’s childhood neighborhood of Blue Goose Hollow. He wrote:

That summer I was free as a wandering bird.
To avoid being lynched I had dropped out of high school.
(I had tried to organize an atheist club the winter before).
I left home and was living by myself in a room over
a hardware store.

It cost me five dollars a month
Which I paid easily from my earnings working two or three
days a week in the brewery.
I didn’t devote too much of my time to working.
Sometimes I camped out in the mountains for weeks at a time.
I visited every lake and pond around Chattanooga,
And traced the course of every stream
And swam in most of them.

I explored every swamp, every hill and mountain
And, of course, I explored the streets -
North Chattanooga . East Chattanooga , Orchard Hill,
St. Elmo , East Lake -
Even Goose Hollow , where all the children were bastards
and all the girls were whores.
There were no old people in Goose Hollow -
they didn’t live that long.¹¹

As participants took turns reading aloud the verses in Blair’s poem, a tension began to mount in the air. When subsequently asked what Blair’s narrative taught the group about life in 1920’s Chattanooga, one participant quickly juxtaposed Blair’s account against Bessie Smith’s, arguing

¹¹ Blair, Hugh Edward (1967). “When I Get to Heaven” in *Poems by Hugh E. Blair*. Chattanooga and New York City.

that the “fact” of African American “disenfranchisement” was evident in both pieces. He explained his position:

OK, Blue Goose Hollow—“where are the children are bastards and all the girls are whores.” Well, [remember that for a long time] African Americans could not go and legally register their marriages at the court house. There were issues with birth certificates and marriage licenses.¹²

This participant’s comments added important historical context to Blair’s depiction of Blue Goose Hollow as a neighborhood full of “bastards” and “whores.” His contribution helped participants cut through the racialized subtext of Blair’s observations and have a frank discussion about the structural inequalities affecting working class Black families throughout the city.

Another participant took the analysis a level deeper, challenging the rest of the group to put Blair’s poem in the context of Chattanooga’s long history as a regional prostitution hub. Clarifying and providing local historical context proved to be a significant aspect of storytelling the city: participants seemed eager to apply their outside knowledge and expertise about local history to bear on the works of art that we collaboratively explored.

Blair continued his poem by describing the vibrant African American cultural district on East 9th Street (now East Martin Luther King Boulevard) where Smith rose to fame performing with her brother on street corners.

Ninth Avenue was the commercial center of the Negro section.
Many of my Jewish friends had stores there.
Wandering one day along Ninth Avenue
I heard the sound of singing and turned the corner.
A small crowd had gathered around an old blind preacher -
A tiny, shriveled-up, white-haired Negro man.
He looked inexpressibly old and weary; his voice was
weary but earnest.

¹² Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Storytelling the City workshop. March 15, 2013.

A little boy was with him to serve as his eyes.
The boy played the tambourine during the singing,
and later passed it around for coins.
I liked what I was hearing, so I dropped in half a dollar -
Most of my personal fortune at the time.
I have never heard that song again or read it in a book.

Here is what that weary earnest voice sang:
When I get to heaven gonna sing always -
Sing always - Sing always -
When I get to heaven gonna sing always;
I wanna go to heaven when I die.
When I get to heaven gonna pray always -
Pray always - Pray always -
When I get to heaven gonna pray always;
I wanna go to heaven when I die.
When I get to heaven gonna dance always -
Dance always - Dance always -
When I get to heaven gonna dance always;
I wanna go to heaven when I die.
When I get to heaven gonna preach always -
Preach always - Preach always -
When I get to heaven gonna preach always;
I wanna go to heaven when I die.¹³

The differences in physical and social mobility between African Americans and whites living in Jim Crow-era Chattanooga appeared obvious to the participants. In the text of the poem they found rich detail about the differences in daily life for blacks and whites. Despite these differences, they also noted the potential for empathy and solidarity between overlapping diasporic communities. The conversation continued:

PL: [It is] interesting to read a poem where a young man explores the different neighborhoods. When he encounters the man singing “when I get to heaven”—well, this wasn’t too far off in terms of reality. Blair senses resignation [powerlessness]... to social and economic injustice, and living “separate ways.” Blair is an observer and a writer; the old

¹³ Blair, Hugh Edward (1967). “When I Get to Heaven” in *Poems by Hugh E. Blair*. Chattanooga and New York City.

man is a performer; both are bringing forms of artistry to bear on their personal experiences and ways of dealing with their situations.

CB2: Same poet who wrote about swimming in the Tennessee River and hanging out with the Wobblies. Reminds me of the distance between the white left and the black left: the former comes from an atheist, materialist tradition, where religion was a tool for oppression, while the latter appropriated and reinterpreted Christian stories and narratives as lessons in liberation and freedom. Blair seems to align himself with both sides of that.

Participant 3: Both author and man on the corner are dissatisfied. Blair was young and without real purpose; spent time exploring and worked occasionally. Seems like heaven on earth. The older African American, in contrast, must wait to get to heaven before he can enjoy life. Prayer / song becomes a substitution for what he cannot experience on earth.¹⁴

In other words, the shared experience of art opened up new possibilities for understanding and social togetherness which transcended the spatial confines of a racially segregated city. In a sense, the workshop enabled a space for what Forester (1999: 210) termed “storytelling rituals,” which are crucial to participation because “(s)omewhat... deliberative encounters that [probe] personal experiences in a protected space [allow] the workers not only to verbalize painful experiences, but to recognize the similar experiences of others, and thereby to become less isolated and less alone, to support one another, to recognize one another’s pain and vulnerability.”

The Politics of Nostalgia

The conversation about race and space continued after the group moved on to view the Glenn Miller Orchestra’s famous live performance of “Chattanooga Choo Choo” (1941).¹⁵

While few people can claim never to have heard the famous song, the same cannot be said for the corresponding theatrical performances.¹⁶ The eight minute long performance was originally

¹⁴ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Storytelling the City workshop. March 15, 2013.

¹⁵ Miller, Glenn, Beneke, Tex, and Claire, Dorothy (1941). “Chattanooga Choo Choo” in *Glenn Miller Masterpieces—Volume II*. Camden, NJ: RCA Victor.

¹⁶ Only one participant had viewed the film prior to the workshop, and that had been an edited version with Dandridge and the Nicholas Brothers.

part of the film *Sun Valley Serenade* (1941) and starred Tex Beneke (a white actor), Dorothy Dandridge and the Nicholas Brothers (African American performers). As the orchestra performs the song, two separate, racially segregated acting performances accompany the music. In fact, the song is actually performed twice in its entirety—although the lyrics change slightly between the white and black versions.

After viewing the excerpt, participants reviewed detailed racial demographics maps of downtown Chattanooga in 1950. When asked to reflect on the story told in the “Chattanooga Choo Choo,” one participant quickly pointed to the “blatant racism and sexism” in the song and video. Noting that the first line of the song is “Pardon me, boy,” he went on to point out the racially segregated performances and the overt sexualization of Dandridge (especially compared to the prim and proper white female actresses in the film).

Another participant-- an undergraduate student studying Sociology at the University of Tennessee—Chattanooga, connected the song and performance to a white cultural nostalgia for the “good old days”—a mythological period that typically coincides with the legal segregation of Chattanooga and cities like it across the South. Importantly, he carried his analysis forward to the present day by connecting this racialized nostalgia to the tourism agenda that drives economic development in the city today.¹⁷

CB: Glenn Miller symbolizes a time period: the height of Jim Crow, when everybody had their place; nostalgia for the “good old days.” The problem with tourism in Chattanooga is that much of it caters to an older crowd who may remember Glenn Miller. When they come to Chattanooga for that experience, they get exactly what they want culturally. They’re getting the whitewashed version of history that was promised to them. Chattanooga Choo Choo has been instrumental in getting our city’s name on the map. Is the Choo Choo being used as a tool to centralize that culture? Yes. When your premiere nightclub is named after a

¹⁷ The Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel is a restored train terminal located on Market Street. Completed in the 1970’s, the “Choo Choo” is popularly considered to be the first redevelopment projects to transform the city’s tourism industry.

lyric in this song (Track 29), and basically every other nightclub in the city gets shut down because “someone brought a gun,” it becomes problematic. It’s like they’re using the arts to control culture, in a way.¹⁸

In other words, the “Chattanooga Choo Choo” appeals to the sentiments of those who long for a “simpler time” (i.e. a period when racial and spatial orders were clearly delineated): to a time when African American placemaking and community building largely happened outside of mainstream political and economic institutions.

Moreover, this nostalgia, which at the Choo Choo Hotel takes form as Victorian-era sleeper cars converted into hotel rooms, a light filled dining room complete with well-tailored Black wait staff, and a dimly lit bar with clarinet music and costumed cocktail waitresses, harkens to a time when mainstream (i.e. white) society valued African American artistic expression (i.e. Dandridge and the Nicholas Brothers’ performances) as little more than flashy entertainment to be consumed by liberal (and not so liberal), middle class whites. Arguably, these expressions of cultural be/longing, in so far that they undergird the story of Chattanooga bought and sold to nostalgic consumers, are not merely desires for a distant past, but concrete enactments of racial inequality and segregation which persist through the tourism and service-based economic structures in the city today. Walk into the Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel on any given Saturday night, and you will think you’ve been transported onto the set of the Glenn Miller Show almost seventy years prior.¹⁹

¹⁸ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Storytelling the City workshop. March 15, 2013.

¹⁹ Writing about the commodification of popular culture, Stuart Hall (1997) argued that, “culture is essentially concerned with the production and exchange of meaning and their real, practical effects. It is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them—how we represent them—that we give them a meaning (Hall, 1997, p. 3). For more information, see Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage.

Placemaking as Stake-Claiming

The conversation about the politics of tourism in Chattanooga quickly turned into a discussion about urban storytelling as a form of political stake claiming. One participant stated that the person or group who controls the narrative of a place has the power to control the space itself. In other words, there is a political currency to placemaking: he who shapes identity has an upper hand in shaping the underlying material conditions of a person or place.²⁰

On this note, another participant acknowledged the complex relationship between place attachment, memory and cultural identity. On the one hand, he argued, the Chattanooga Choo Choo tells a story of ‘home’ that all Chattanoogans can relate to. On the other, the story that is told is written neither by nor for everyday local residents. To the contrary, it has been written for outsiders by insiders who wish to profit from nostalgic sentiment.

PL2: I love the song and the video; it’s great. But it definitely portrays that sort of ritzy, fun, pop life in Chattanooga. It tells a part of the story—but it’s not all of the story.

MH: It’s written for outsiders.

PL: In terms of storytelling the city, this video depicts Chattanooga as the ‘destination.’ And so it’s implied that you’re passing through all of these local places and having a great time, just to get home where things are even so much better. So there is a whole lot of implied storytelling that the film and song don’t get in to. The Chattanooga Choo Choo—it will take you back home.²¹

To participants in the workshop, the significance Chattanooga’s ‘story’ should be understood in the context of storyteller and audience; so too must one figure out who or what is being written over or out through the process of public telling. One participant noted, “I would like to see a

²⁰ For more information, see Chapter 1’s discussion of Nick Blomley (2007) on the difference between cultural processes of placemaking/displacement and physical processes of dis/possession.

²¹ Ibid., March 15, 2013.

series of PFS workshops that take these counter-narratives and the Chamber's narrative and deconstruct them. It's important to do this because it shows people that the story is manufactured. [The mainstream story is] not reality and it's not history. They're manufactured talking points."

It seemed apparent to the group that the story being bought and sold vis-à-vis the "Chattanooga Choo Choo" is not written for a homegrown audience. On the contrary, powerful economic and cultural institutions have always been more concerned about appealing to outsiders than appeasing their own citizens, many of whom are low or moderate income and African American. To this point, the very definition of urban cosmopolitanism in Chattanooga has rested on the exclusion of African American placemaking and creative expression.²² The dialogue continued:

MG: Chamber and Business Bureau are going to say that regardless, these changes have occurred. But the narrative isn't crafted to solve problems. It benefits the folks who are involved with the aquarium, but the reality of the city is so much deeper than that.

MH: Is it even their/our job to tell people's stories?

CB: There is a long history of writing people of color out of history; so and so and his Black servant.

CB: Go to the Hunter Museum and there's the photo of the happy white couple on Lookout Mountain. Look more closely: there is a young African American man standing there holding the drinks. They mention the name of the couple but the youth is never mentioned.

PL: Hunter Museum is a monument to the Chattanooga aristocracy.

²²Brian Graham (2002) extended Hall's ideas into the realm of heritage planning, contending that "Heritage is a knowledge that constitutes both economic and cultural capital, and one that is of central importance in an age in which ideas of multi-scalar space rather than time constitute the dominant paradigm of analysis in cultural theory...Heritage does not engage directly with the study of the past. Instead, it is concerned with the ways in which very selective material artefacts, mythologies, memories and traditions become resources for the present. The contents, interpretations and representations of the resource are selected according to the demands of the present. It follows too that the meanings and functions of memory and tradition are deemed in the present, albeit constrained ultimately by the adage that 'one sells what one has'" (1003). See Graham, B. (2002). Heritage as Knowledge: Capital or Culture? *Urban Studies*, 39(5-6), 1003-1017

Though most participants agreed with the terms of the discussion, others complicated the conversation by raising questions about political responsibility, agency and vision. One artist at the table challenged her fellow participants to ask how impenetrable Chattanooga's mainstream historical narrative was and what roles local activists and artists might assume to disrupt these short-sighted stories.

MH: Or is it a conversation—a question?

CB2: [MH] is right in the fact that I don't expect it to be the responsibility of the Chamber of Commerce to tell those stories. But to [MG]'s point, we're not doing our job of passing on those legacies. Telling the stories of those who came before us, and validating those stories. It's hard to break through the noise and accomplish this sort of counter-narrative building.²³

The conversation that evolved around the Chattanooga Choo Choo raised questions about the contestability of place narratives, as well as the importance of self-determination when it comes to writing underrepresented/ marginalized perspectives back into urban landscapes through historical and cultural-based tourism. Participants ultimately agreed that they should not expect the Chamber of Commerce to complicate its own progress narrative; nor should they really *want* the Chamber getting into the business of telling (i.e. 'whitewashing') the story of Chattanooga's 'other side.'

Diasporic Be/Longing and Alternative World-Building

While the Chattanooga Choo Choo invokes a world lost but not forgotten, the final two creative pieces assessed in the workshop focused on worlds yet-to-be-seen. Ishmael Reed's poem "Chattanooga" (1973) and Big Mike Mic's multimedia project "City without Tears"

²³ Ibid., March 15, 2013.

(2012) helped participants further understand the gravity of self-determination when it comes to supporting and expanding diasporic placemaking.

Commenting on Reed's optimistic depiction of Chattanooga, a place where "I knew I/ Had to have you Chattanooga/ When I swam in Lincoln Park/ Listening to Fats Domino sing/ I found my thrill on Blueberry/ Hill on the loudspeaker/I knew you were mine Chattanooga,"²⁴

one participant made the following observations about how racial identity and subjective experience both mediate and are mediated through every day acts of space and place-claiming.

PL2: Long narrative poems like this give readers opportunities for many different sorts of conversations about class, race, geography... I've read this poem before, and I really want to find this 1870's Knoxville editorial, which talks about how Chattanooga has as many lives as a cat; and as for killing her, well, even the floods have failed. They have knocked the crap out of her, but she will refill her lungs and draw a longer breath than ever before. That's a really touching and beautiful description of the city and its history and its people; our resilience.

The participant's comments opened further space to discuss the politics of ownership in the context of urban storytelling, prompting several others to develop a theory about how the contestability of space and place is what constitutes a "Southeastern state of mind."

MH: [Reed's poem] seems to go beyond its [own geographic] boundaries... There's something magical about it-- like a Southeastern state of mind.

CB2: Everyone wants to own Chattanooga but nobody really does. Everyone wants to control it, but nobody can.

MG: The most powerful thing about this poem to me is what it says about race and the subjective experience. Chattanooga is "something you can have—any way you want it/ it's the summation of what you are." He wants to tell the story and experience of Chattanooga *as he sees it*. Like, he's done his time and he wants to be able to say what he thinks. Also, the lines about avoiding Confederate sharpshooters and "brothers with tomahawks"... he recognizes that as an African American, what happened to the

²⁴ Reed, Ishmael (1973). "Chattanooga" in *Chattanooga; Poems [1st Edition]*. New York: Random House.

Cherokee—he identifies with that history and considers them his brothers, even though they’re wielding tomahawks at him.²⁵

While participants interpreted Reed’s poem to underscore narrative control and self-determination, so too did they discover that urban storytelling can be used to work through a range of internalized and externalized social inequalities. The last piece of art discussed was Big Mike Mic’s (Michael Kelly) “City without Tears” project.²⁶ Kelly, a native Chattanooga rapper and performance artist, attended the workshop and generously offered to discuss his motivations for launching the “City without Tears” project. To quote at length:

I wrote the first version of the song in 2011, and it was just an extended verse. There were a lot of things going on around me; people I knew were dying, and some folks I was really close with—we almost lost them, too. I was going through a lot: couldn’t sleep, etc.

I realized there were all these issues but nobody was talking, so... Me being an artist, this is how I communicate: through music. So the words just came [to me]. And then it sat for a year, until Terry Davis heard it. He was like “you have to do something with this.”

And then I met T-Ran Gilbert... we started talking about our common goals for the community. And it sort of went from there. I dug deeper...I was thinking about all these issues and how they impacted me. I was like “Man!”

I think part of what the issue is in the communities I’m connected to is that we’ve lost our connection to our culture... Even when I was in school, I started out attending school in these wealthy urban communities, but then I got switched to Hixson, and it was like culture shock. I had to face many things I hadn’t before, and it was “*damn.*”

You have these experiences but you don’t know your own history so you have a harder time saying “This is not how it’s supposed to be.” People look at you like they don’t want you in their school... I had a friend, she was a girl and was white, and I used to ride with her sometimes out of the school, and she told me “We can’t ride like this all the time because you know what people will say. It’s just how it is.”

So that kind of hit me. I was like, dang! Even though she liked me and we were cool, it was just the way it was. So like I said, back then, we didn’t really know what was going

²⁵ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Storytelling the City workshop. March 15, 2013.

²⁶ Kelley, Michael (2012). *City Without Tears*. Chattanooga: UniverSoul Records.

on. Once I got older I started doing some research to understand why we were in the state we're in, as a people and a community... Anyway, fast forward to this project: I just felt like there were so many issues, and a lot of the time, people are forced to be on the defense... We don't get the opportunity to get all these different views from different cultures, people in different positions with different labels... so the idea is to gather all these people up and come up with a plan for our future.²⁷

For Kelly, musical and lyrical storytelling offered a creative outlet for grappling with the “culture shock” he experienced attending high school in a predominantly white, conservative suburb of Chattanooga. Though only in his early twenties, Kelly had encountered a range of stereotypes and sociocultural exclusions left over from the days of de jure racial segregation. As an adult, this frustration-driven creativity translated into a drive to work with like-minded people to devise community-based solutions to the problems plaguing his neighborhood, including interpersonal violence, police brutality, and racism. In this sense, *City without Tears* is an example of a twenty-first century project rooted in Wood's (1998) blues epistemology. By collaborating through art, Kelly, Gilbert and Davis at once 1) rejected the racial exclusions they encountered and saw in their home neighborhoods; 2) affirmed local the struggles for racial and social justice that had preceded them; and 3) articulated their own visions for a more equitable, peaceful world.

Subverting and Reframing Narratives of Place

Through this workshop, participants came to better understand the politics of urban storytelling in downtown Chattanooga that were discussed at length in the first several chapters of this dissertation: a place they all love and consider to be their home. Historically, this politics has involved writing African Americans over or out of the picture—but as is true for all processes of displacement/placemaking, there are opportunities to subvert and reframe

²⁷ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Storytelling the City workshop. March 15, 2013.

narrative(s) of place. Fortunately, as several participants were quick to point out, the opportunities for crafting, collaborating, and for connecting people and places are greater than ever before. One participant contended that the “City without Tears” project was an:

Example of how the media and the arts are put together today... people have the ability to work together to put together videos and other projects that bring together the voices of lots of different people. Now so more than ever, we should feel empowered to create works like that.²⁸

Social media and user friendly technologies have the potential to transform communities by connecting diverse people together and enabling them to problem solve and broadcast their solutions to potentially wide audiences. As Kelly and others observed, an important aspect of this work involves drawing connections between past and present experiences and struggles, and assigning new meanings to these links. In line with principles of self-determination, this meaning should derive from the interpretations of those individuals who were directly engaged in or impacted by the history. As several participants demonstrated to the group, the potential political and cultural capital gained through such collaborations is substantial:

Participant 1: When we first started, it was important to keep in mind that if you don't have that history, when you don't have that sense of rootedness, it's hard to understand what's happening today. You are more susceptible to the stories the Chamber tells you. And I think art can be like that. It can be rooted and it can be real, or it can be abstract and fanciful things that keep us blind. In Chattanooga, we've seen both. We've seen art used as a method of gentrification, a way to lure tourists... Have you seen the blue rhino?²⁹ Moving forward, we've really got to use art as a weapon.

²⁸ Ibid., March 15, 2013.

²⁹ The Blue Rhino is a sculpture located in the gentrifying neighborhood on the Southside of Chattanooga and is regarded as one of the original symbols of the district's economic and cultural revitalization. During the early days of revival, newcomers to the neighborhood used the rhino as a wayfaring device to help others navigate the 'no man's land' of the Southside (which, ironically, was far from an uncharted frontier, but rather was a longstanding working class Black neighborhood). In this sense, the Blue Rhino represents a form of art as stake-claiming among urban “pioneers.”

Facilitator: And folks already are. City without Tears is a great example. William's work is a great example. We need to bridge these movements that make explicit connections between art and politics.

Participant 2: Through creating projects like this, you can build a social network... [in a sense] you become a broadcaster, and your voice has the potential to become louder. You have the potential to overpower those master narratives, such as are found in Glenn Miller's Chattanooga Choo Choo, and even the current "Chattanooga Happens Downtown" Campaign, based on the social credibility you're able to create through networking.

Workshop 2: Developing a Comprehensive Neighborhood Assessment Tool

The most fruitful Skill Share workshop, both in terms of its appeal to a broad, diverse group of participants, and its ability to produce tangible and intangible community-based outcomes, was the two-part "Developing a Neighborhood Assessment Tool" session. On the afternoon of Saturday, March 30, 2012, fifteen participants gathered for an extended session focused on exploring the uses and benefits of neighborhood assessments. Participants included neighborhood association leaders, professionally trained planners, retirees, community activists, artists, workforce development specialists, and a formerly incarcerated individual looking for ways to plug back into his community.



Illustration 10.2: Participants during the initial Neighborhood Assessment Tool workshop (Source: Courtney Knapp)

A draft tool had been constructed prior to the meeting based on assessment categories and measurements outlined in a standard community development textbook. To begin, participants systematically reviewed the indicators and were encouraged to discuss, refine, add to, or replace existing categories. The resulting conversation, which lasted more than three hours—more than twice as long as it had been scheduled for-- succeeded in fine tuning these measurements—and much more: fostering new personal and professional relationships between neighborhood activists, developing an easily administered template for assessing community infrastructure, reframing the metrics of community infrastructure through a diasporic perspective, and setting the ground for an additional action research partnership between Chattanooga Organized for Action, the Glenwood Neighborhood Association, and Southern Adventist University’s graduate program in Social Work.

The assessment was organized into four broad infrastructure categories: physical, social, economic development and human (the final version of the document can be found in Appendix F). The social infrastructure indicators were the most comprehensive, including housing characteristics, schools and education, open space and recreation, and health care infrastructure.

Participants quickly pointed out relevant measures that were missing from the list.³⁰ One participant noted the inaccessibility of many sidewalks in Chattanooga, and suggested that all of the streetscape amenity indicators be assessed in the context of their accessibility to differently-abled residents. His point prompted a response from another participant, who had visited a public park in Florida designed for wheelchair-bound users. In this sense, the conversation that developed revolved around identifying potential planning and development solutions as much as it did on diagnosing community problems.

During a review of the housing indicators, one participant suggested that “tent cities,” or homeless camps, be added to the housing stock assessment checklist, arguing that hidden, informal means of shelter are as important to account for as the ones in plain sight:

Speaking about housing stuff, maybe there should be some kind of taking account of homelessness in the communities, specifically tent cities, campsites. Not that I would encourage anybody to disturb anybody who's there, leave them alone, but if you know something, if you see something, that should be taken into account too. Often times they're very, very well hidden, but in plain sight.³¹

³⁰ This process of refinement, though messy, produced a far more valuable product than what would have been developed using non-participatory means. On the messiness of participation and deliberation, John Forester (1999) wrote: “Participants may come to see that what *seemed* unimportant is important, what seemed *not* feasible is feasible after all. This “coming to see”...is a matter of recognition—quite literally, re-cognition, that is, coming to see the very same thing in a new light, with new significance...Decision-making, planning, and participatory processes are dances in which the initially relevant can become irrelevant and apparently irrelevant can become relevant...As participants realize the limits of their knowledge, realize that they have to learn about relevance and significance, that all issues involved with practical options are hardly labeled ahead of time, they can begin to appreciate in new ways aspects of decision-making and participatory processes that appear at first to be needless preludes, ritualistic wastes of time, or even distracting preliminaries” (133, 135).

³¹ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Developing a Neighborhood Assessment Toolkit Workshop, Park 1. March 30, 2013.

In other words, while housing assessments typically focus on measures that can be easily quantified, a more socially responsible assessment must also account for the intangible, extra-market factors contributing to housing (in)security in the city, including homelessness, the prevalence of informal housing settlements (“tent cities”), and illegal squatting. This participant went on to acknowledge the complexity of assessing social life in marginal(ized) spaces, stating that part of their invisibility is intentional because it offers a degree of protection from revanchist urban policymakers. He stressed the importance of treating vulnerable populations with humanity and respect, and taking their lead with respect to whether and how their communities are accounted for.

Debating and Discussing High Stakes Issues in a Low Stakes Setting

The initial assessment tool workshop also provided space for participants to discuss and debate contentious social issues like squatting. Early in the workshop, one participant, the president of a neighborhood association in a predominantly middle class neighborhood in East Chattanooga, suggested that “vandalism” be added to the housing stock assessment checklist. Her point was that community assessors should account for vacant homes that have been broken into and/or damaged by illegal tenants because these properties have a negative impact on the surrounding environment.

At the time of her suggestion, the point hadn’t seemed debatable. However, several minutes later when the issue of squatting arose in the context of Chattanooga’s large homeless population, the following conversation took place:

CB: When Hamilton County released the list of houses that they were putting on the sale block, [my partner] and I went around and looked at a lot of them and almost 100% of the ones we looked at had squatters in them that you totally would have no idea about [if you didn’t visit the property].

EH: That's the vandalism I was talking about.

CB: I don't think that's vandalism. I think that's people appropriately using housing that is just left. When people just abandon these properties and they live out of state and people are using them in their community, because we have a lot of folks who don't have access to any sort of emergency shelters or any sort of temporary housing. I don't have any moral problem with it. I'm just saying, you know, but that's a big thing that I didn't realize was there until I went to the actual houses and looked inside of them because you wouldn't have any idea.

EH: We had one on Derby Street. We called it vandalism, went to environmental court and as a result that property was sold and...now...they have people living there.³²

What is notable about this conversation is not just that the two participants had different opinions about the moral acceptability of illegal squatting—though the workshop did provide an important space to allow ethical disagreements to be collaboratively explored without pressure to reach consensus. More importantly, the conversation illustrates an attempt by [CB] to go deeper—to understand the issue of illegal squatting in relation to the local housing affordability crisis, absentee landlordism and class politics.

Their discussion led to the refinement of the assessment tool, but it also illuminated how illegal squatting, which many people consider outright vandalism, is a symptom of the grossly inadequate stock of emergency, temporary and very low income housing. Finally, this conversation is significant because it illustrates how peer-to-peer education can aid grassroots communities in diagnosing and solving their own problems. Rather than wait and see if further damage occurred, [EH], the leader of a highly active and empowered neighborhood association, chose to take action on the “vandalized” house on Derby Street and work with the City of

³² Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Developing a Neighborhood Assessment Toolkit Workshop, Park 1. March 30, 2013.

Chattanooga to get the property sold to an individual who could rehabilitate the structure and lease it out to new tenants.

Connecting the Personal and the Political

The conversations that produced the neighborhood assessment tool allowed participants to explore complex dimensions of urban social life in highly personal and affective ways. During a review of public health infrastructure, for example, one participant proclaimed that mental health was crucial indicator of urban health and sustainability, particularly in communities where people have endured generations of racist and sexist exclusion, violence and trauma:

I was at a community get together Thursday and there was a young woman who was part of a violent crime. She was shot twice in the stomach, her sister was shot in the wrist. It was a violent crime. She's a mother of seven. She has four biological children, she has temporary custody of two relative children that's in her family and legally adopted child that's in her family. She's a mother of seven, single parent and she is been denied disability twice.

Also, I talked to her about her kids because her kids had witnessed the shooting. They were at home, but neither one of those individuals has received counseling. I think that's a very important aspect of it because you've got to be able [cope] mentally-- maybe make it available as support counseling. At least in the urban areas where we shelf counseling and put it on the churches, but I think professional counseling should play a part.³³

This participant had built his career around helping formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate into society. In his view, it is impossible to devise sustainable solutions to deep-seated social and cultural urban problems until we're willing to deeply reckon with the daily realities experienced by society's most economically and socially vulnerable community members. Participants seemed to agree that this reckoning must involve acknowledging that centuries of

³³ Ibid., March 30, 2013.

racist violence and exclusion have produced deep inequality as well as personal wounds in dire need of attention, care and healing.³⁴

This participant's observations also underscored how faith-based institutions are being pressured to fill social service gaps which have been widened by austerity and gentrification-oriented planning and development. His point led to a lengthy discussion about the roles of churches and other religious institutions in the city; some participants even argued that "faith based infrastructure" should become its own overarching "infrastructure" category in the assessment tool.

PL: Well, Chattanooga is [known as] the four corners and five churches. [Laughing] Four corners and five churches and like I said, they occupy a lot of land in this city, a lot. I don't mind them having it. I don't mind them having it all, but I'd like to know what are the services those churches are rendering to their communities, specifically the ministries. What ministries exist within those churches? The reason I asked that question is because we do have these mega-churches and they have a lot of money and they're sending money out of Chattanooga, people missionary and other things to other countries.

WM: This is their mission field right here.

EH: This could be a mission right here and we aren't even charging them taxes.

WN: It starts at home.

³⁴ Leonie Sandercock (2003) discussed planning as a potentially "therapeutic" and humanizing practice, reminding her readers that "it is an extraordinary and bizarre feat to talk about diversity or urbanity without talking about memory, desire, spirit, playfulness, eroticism, and fantasy...To talk about community without talking about longings and belongings, losses and fears, guilt and trauma, anger and betrayal...To talk about sustainability without talking about hostility and hope, compassion and caring, greed and nurturing. There is an ethics of city life and city death, a series of both every day and long-term choices that get made and reproduced, and there is an ethical language of emotional acknowledgement. I want to suggest that more and more of our efforts, if we want to work toward sustainable cities, will be bound up with organizing hope, negotiating fears, mediating memories, and facilitating community soul searching and transformation" (153). For more information, see Chapter 6: "Dreaming the Sustainable City" in Sandercock, L., & Lyssiotis, P. (2003). *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel cities in the 21st century*. London: Continuum. See also Herman, J. Lewis. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. [New York]: Basic Books and Forester, J (1999) "Chapter 7: On Not Leaving Your Pain at the Door" in *The deliberative practitioner: Encouraging participatory planning processes*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

WM: It does, but I think even Christ himself said that it's the local, the regional and international.

PL: This is real talk right here. I like this.

EH: Take care of home first. I like that.

One agreed-upon addition to the survey was an assessment of the different faith based institution, including summaries of the various local, regional, and international ministry programs sponsored by each religious association. Driven by a common belief that service “starts at home,” these participants commended the efforts made by local churches to provide basic services like food, temporary shelter, and moral counsel in the absence of robust social service programs. But they also conceded that the larger churches in town might well reexamine their financial and missionary priorities, and invest more deeply in local programs instead of international missionary work.

Re-Framing Economic Development from a Diasporic Perspective

The most compelling aspect of the discussion occurred when the group moved from reviewing social infrastructure indicators to discussing those listed under “economic development infrastructure.” As the facilitator, I had begun the conversation by introducing some standard measurements of economic development, such as local crime rates, utilities and infrastructure, business mix and diversity, and private relocation incentives. But the participants, many of whom represented the communities which have been left out of traditional economic development and reinvestment plans, preferred to take the conversation in an entirely different direction and focus on the structural and sociocultural barriers that preclude their full participation in traditional economic opportunity arrangements and create a “vicious circle” of social inequality.

- WM: This may not fit but if we're talking about crime prevention, I think we should just talk about crime as well. What are the gangs? Who's there? What's their presence? Talk about crime and organized crime as well, there's a key difference. Really the organized; well it's all a form of economic development I suppose, just where is it developing to, but that organized crime piece especially is huge because you've got to measure not only the legitimate markets, but the illegitimate markets as well. The drug trades... They're selling drugs because of poverty.
- EH: Yes, that's right.
- WM: These young black men are making rational, economic choices because this is the best alternative they have.
- EH: Survival.
- WM: Here they are and now we're having a situation where so many of these black men who have left prison are trying to get started to have these families and now they're being thrown in jail for lack of child support.
- EH: That's right. It's a vicious circle.³⁵

Specifically, the barriers that participants highlighted included an unequal public education system and limited access to technical training; transportation and mobility (physical and social) issues; the prevalence of drugs, prostitution, and other informal local economies in the absence of formal opportunities; the impact of the criminal justice system on community vitality and sustainability (including how the county, juvenile, and private prison systems specifically contribute to the underdevelopment of communities of color in Chattanooga); and the roles that police brutality and corruption play to exacerbate social violence and inequality in the city.

- WM: Yes, you'd really attract a lot of attention if communities came out and said we're against drugs and we're against guns. In fact we're so much against drugs and guns, we're going to go after who is supplying it and we want answers now. That's the only way you'll get it done because marginalized communities and minority communities are kept in states of

³⁵ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Developing a Neighborhood Assessment Toolkit Workshop, Park 1. March 30, 2013.

chaos by police entities and by powerful entities like that because they supply them with drugs and with the guns. Cocaine was introduced by the CIA in the 1980's. Now I'm just going to get off and that's crazy.

There's a really important aspect here that covers all of this and that is that a lot of this is being done to men, especially black men... I think that that's really important because we hear a lot about how there's a breakdown in the family and black men should be more involved in their families and all of that. There's a failure to understand that they are the victims of direct...

PL: There's a coordinated effort.³⁶

Speaking the Unspeakable

The conversation turned to a discussion about brutality and corruption within the Chattanooga Police Department. Upon making this shift, several participants appeared to become more reserved. Beneath their reservations was an obvious subtext: as African American males living in a city known for its racism and police brutality, they face greater risks of retribution than others for choosing to call out inequality, corruption and racism in public settings. These risks are further heightened when the person doing the telling has been directly impacted by the policies and practices called into question.

Despite the inherent risks, participants persisted with their conversation. As they discussed current crime and poverty trends, an elderly African American participant helped younger generations put their problems into historical context. To him, racism and brutality within the Chattanooga Police Department were symptoms of an “entire evil octopus” that controlled property and wealth in the city. To quote at length:

WM: There's something really wrong about just saying we need to hold these men accountable. In some respects, it goes back in an historical overlay, a lot of the urban African-Americans are there primarily from a migration from the farms in the 1950s and a failure of our society to train these people for new jobs. Then we have the great society were families,

³⁶ Ibid., March 30, 2013.

especially women, are paid not to have men in the household, so you get welfare only when men were not in the household. Phase two is you separate men out of these families and then phase three is you have a war on drugs that incarcerates most of these young black men...

...When you try to educate and really intervene with public enemy number one, which is the young black man, when you try to educate him and work with him and get him the resources, then you are messing with that entire evil octopus's target market. That's what they feed on. That's their turf.

That's their turf. It's really interesting. The young black man will oftentimes form gangs. Well, where are they learning that pattern for it? That pattern is a reflection of the very institution that is controlling them. There's something really weird happening there.

When you start to do this kind of stuff, when you start to really organize and try to work with the young black men and try to take away these things from this corrupt system, it's going to get you because you're messing with its money.³⁷

Importantly, this conversation proposed a radically different framework for understanding local and regional economic development planning. Typically, when planners and community stakeholders get together to discuss how to make a community more economically vital and competitive, they focus on infrastructure, finances, and aggregated demographic data--the very metrics that this group migrated away from. Much more important to the participants than the quantifiable indicators were the stories which illuminated the daily experiences of people bearing the disproportionate burdens of uneven geographic development in 21st century Chattanooga.

One participant who had remained silent throughout the discussion began to fidget in his chair. Sensing the growing empowerment in the voice of his elder as he named unspeakable contradictions within the city, this gentleman eventually raised his hand and spoke up. He

³⁷ Ibid., March 30, 2013.

himself had spent time in prison for a felony that he committed as a young man and was now experiencing barriers to community reintegration:

I just want to add something to the reentry [discussion]. What's very important is we send these guys to prison, what have you, under the very system that's supposed to provide rehabilitation. These guys get released, and they've committed violent and non-violent. There should be grace and time period of reward of good behavior to restore citizenship, to restore citizenship on the state level and federal level, to the city level. I should be able to protect my family. The last time I had an offense was 2000 and here it is, 2013, I'm a felon. I'm a felon, but I'm a man of moral character. I was then; I was just providing for my family, but no reason should it be that I can't protect my family with gun rights. It's been a long time. I didn't have a violent offense. There should be no reason why my gun rights are taken from me. There shouldn't be a reason why I shouldn't be able to vote.

The simple reason there should be a grace period that I shouldn't have to pay for my expungement. It should be a reward for my good behavior that should erase all that without payment. Now I've got to pay \$350 per charge. That is ludicrous when I've got to provide for a family. I've got the one college student graduating from [college] May the 6th and two high school students graduating this year and I am a father providing for my family and raising good, moral characterized people. It doesn't make sense... I was a victim of my environment. I've always been of good moral character, but I've done what I thought I had to do to survive in which that was only trick-- because I wasn't aware of the resources about people like IBEW in my high schools that I was talking about earlier.³⁸

A crucial difference between this assessment workshop and those found in traditional planning and community development processes lay in this discussion's movement beyond typical quantitative and descriptive measures and toward a conversation about how deep underlying pressures reinforce and exacerbate socioeconomic inequality across the city. Through this exercise of mutual, collaborative reckoning, greater clarity about barriers and potential solutions to equitable development in Chattanooga surfaced.³⁹

³⁸ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Developing a Neighborhood Assessment Toolkit Workshop, Park 1. March 30, 2013.

³⁹ Of particular relevance to the Free School's mission is Leonie Sandercock's (2003) dream for a 21st century sustainable cosmopolis. On the topic of planners facilitating urban transformation, she wrote: "I want a city

Really what we're talking about is like, institutionalized forms of power. We're talking about institutionalized form of power which can almost be its own assessment. I'm coming up with something. I can't quite get it out, but it's almost like we want to measure and quantify power and institutions and how it controls our communities.... What I think we should do in this new assessment is we should measure the institutionalized and decentralized power like you've written up there because this power, of who has the power to call shots and things in your community and who has that decision. It could be people in your community. It could be people outside of your community, but that needs to be addressed and it's in churches, it's in police, it's in government. This shadow deep state needs to be looked at as well.⁴⁰

Participants understood that it was necessary to have context about how exploited African American labor has contributed to the historical development of the city; how cultural myths about social welfare programs developed; and how racism is/has been legally codified over time. Myths needed to be debunked and broad demographic trends localized and humanized. Fortunately, several participants had years of personal and professional experience and were willing to provide these contexts to the younger generations in the room.

Through Talk, Commitments to Action

Following the initial assessment workshop, the tool was pretested in three urban core neighborhoods and furthered refined.⁴¹ In June 2013, graduate students enrolled in a Master's of Social Work (MSW) practicum course at Southern Adventist University partnered up with Chattanooga Organized for Action (COA) to implement the neighborhood assessment in the Glenwood neighborhood in East Chattanooga. Additionally, COA enlisted their MSW intern

where...city planning is a war of liberation fought against...the multiple sources of oppression, domination, and violence; where citizens wrest from space new possibilities and immerse themselves in their cultures while respecting those of their neighbors, collectively forging new hybrid cultures and spaces. I want a city that is run differently than an accounting firm, where planners "plan" by negotiating desires and fears, mediating memories and hopes, facilitating change and transformation" (144).

⁴⁰ Planning Free School of Chattanooga. Developing a Neighborhood Assessment Toolkit Workshop, Park 1. March 30, 2013.

⁴¹ The pretesting sites included the block surrounding the downtown public library, Glenwood and Lincoln Park (both located in East Chattanooga).

Katharine Whiting to develop a resident survey to help measure the Human Infrastructure of neighborhoods. These collaborations are significant because they underscore the interconnections between urban planning and social work. In a sense, we treated the collaborations as an attempt to get back to our collective professional roots and today point to the relationship as a call to renew our commitment to a holistic approach to cities.⁴²



Illustration 10.3: Free School Participants Pre-testing the Comprehensive Neighborhood Assessment Tool (Source: Courtney Knapp)

Conclusion: Lessons in 21st Century Planning Physics

⁴² Susan Wirka's (1996) work on the settlement house movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries provides important historical context to this claim. Wirka demonstrated the common historical roots of urban planning and social work, which broke when planners formed their professional organization, which emphasized the design and physical aspects of planning above the social development dimensions of community development. For more information, see Susan Wirka. 1996. "The City Social Movement: Progressive Women Reformers and Early Social Planning," in Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver. *Planning the 20th Century City*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

CONCLUSION: OPEN ENDS AND NEW BEGINNINGS

In this concluding chapter, I synthesize the major theoretical and practical contributions of this dissertation project to three broad areas. First, I discuss what the history of diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga teaches us about overall processes of urban development and change. Second, I summarize what diasporic placemaking shows us specifically about the professional field of urban planning, including our work connected with citizen participation and planning education in historically underrepresented and marginalized communities. Finally, I discuss what diasporic placemaking reveals about participatory action research as a set of collaborative inquiry methods that might help city planners better support and enable multiethnic placemaking in complex urban environments where we work, live, and play.

Diasporic Placemaking: A Practical Theory to Understand Development and Change in Diverse Communities

The history of urban development and change in Chattanooga is long and complex. At its core, it has involved different historically uprooted and migratory populations working to carve out every day places of material security and cultural belonging from shared and often contested urban spaces. From Dragging Canoe and the Chickamauga confederacy's struggle to preserve Cherokee landholdings against encroaching white settlers prior to and during the American Revolutionary War to the Black-Native Shoeboots family's efforts to maintain their kinship and land ties in the post-blood quantum era of Cherokee citizenship; from blues singer Bessie Smith's childhood spent in Blue Goose Hollow and along the Big Nine to poet Hugh Edward

Blair's youth spent scaling the banks of the Tennessee River alongside anarchist and communist labor organizers; from both the scrimmages and instances of multiracial solidarity during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements to contemporary struggles over the right to the city, including, but not limited to, access to affordable housing, a clean environment, and safe, creatively fulfilling, living wage jobs—in all of these historical moments the stories of urban development and change in Chattanooga have been propelled by spatial collaborations and contestations between different diasporic citizens who at their core have wanted the same thing: places of security and belonging to call their own.

People, regardless of their migratory patterns, want to live in communities where they feel safe and secure and where they see their personal and shared values represented in their local sociospatial landscapes. For this reason, diasporic placemaking—as a set of sociospatial practices whereby uprooted people plant new cultural and material roots—offers a conceptual framework to help us better understand how Chattanooga and cities like it have evolved historically and will continue to evolve in the future. What unites disparate experiences and encounters is the common desire to forge new home-spaces. In this sense, diasporic placemaking is an almost universal human impulse toward place-based sociospatial development. It can be understood as transcultural, translocal and transhistorical.

However, despite the near-universality of diasporic placemaking, the history of development and change in Chattanooga also provides examples of how space has been and continues to be highly racialized. Political and economic power in Chattanooga, and within many cities and regions across the New World, appears distributed along a spectrum of privilege and sociospatial opportunity stacked almost exclusively in the favor of property owning whites.

Although we should acknowledge exceptions to this trend, they certainly provide no proof that our cities—or for that matter, our society as a whole—are equal, fair, or post-racist.

To the contrary, this dissertation joins a growing body of historically-grounded literature demonstrating how liberal multicultural politics and placemaking efforts typically do little to change unequal, racist social structures, instead reinforcing that spatial power and privilege as it remains concentrated in the hands of middle and upper class whites. In some instances, such as with the Cherokee and African American placemaking that occurred as part of Chattanooga's twenty-first century riverfront revitalization, multicultural placemaking actually exacerbates racialized inequality by creating illusions of tolerance and historical reconciliation while failing to enact substantive changes toward the redistribution of cultural and material power and resources into the hands of historically excluded and exploited communities of color. In such cases, culture-based placemaking distracts or detracts from, rather than counteracts, racialized inequities.

For these reasons, diasporic placemaking is an analytical frame to better understand how urban development and change evolves according to patterns of development and stories of place that have been racialized and otherwise differentiated and partitioned across a hierarchy of spatial accesses and outcomes. Diasporic placemaking demands that our analyses go deeper than the cosmetic or surface levels of urban multiculturalism and identity work, that we focus instead on the collaborations and contestations that conceive and create ever-evolving networks of place-based, racialized inclusion and exclusion. To say that cities evolve through multiracial/multicultural diasporic placemaking is to demand that we take seriously the “-making” in “diasporic placemaking”: that we value actions at least as much as we do the artifacts produced through them. I emphasize diasporic “place” and “making” in the context of urban development

and change to underscore how unique local and regional environments evolve through complex social interactions, even as they are certainly not limited to transformative multiracial alliances.

In this sense, assessing urban development and change through a diasporic placemaking lens helps to do more than contextualize present-day patterns of social inequality and uneven geographic development. It also helps one uncover and understand place-based legacies of resistance and alternative world-building which may inspire hope and provide wayfaring, if not blueprints, to guide radical community planning and direct social action in the present day. From Jewish communists organizing alongside African Americans in the 1930's to Chattanooga Organized for Action's alliance with the Westside Community Association and Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association today, this dissertation has presented cases of diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga over the past three centuries to reveal deeply rooted, complex histories of multiracial solidarity that both confirm and defy stereotypes about race, place, and multiethnic social togetherness in the city and across the U.S. South.

Reconstructing place-based narratives of diasporic collaboration and contestation involves the cultivation of political power. In very tangible ways, urban storytelling—both its discursive and material forms—is political praxis, for he or she who controls the narrative of a place is more likely to influence and control the structures that undergird the stories. In Chattanooga, excavating and reconstructing spaces of multiracial togetherness can help community-based organizers wrestle local legacies of antiracist practice away from city boosters who, whether intentionally or not, use overly optimistic narratives of political liberalism and racial tolerance to conceal ongoing racialized exclusion and growing social inequality.

Related to this point, diasporic placemaking as urban development and practice extends mainstream definitions of placemaking by demanding that cultural processes of storytelling be

treated as inseparable from material processes of socio-spatial transformation. In the context of twenty first century urban revitalization, this study has demonstrated how creativity and cultural development are foundational to both local social justice *and* sustained inequality. In this sense, placemaking involves much more than inscribing space with a particular history or cultural identity: it is, quite literally, social in/justice in action. Placemaking has the potential to radically transform communities in directions both closer to and further away from social equity and substantive historical reconciliation. In order to understand the trajectories and consequences of different efforts, a diasporic placemaking frame demands that one ask herself who owns and controls specific urban storytelling practices, as well as who benefits from or is burdened by them. Often times, the answers to these questions are more complex than what is apparent at first glance. Understanding the politics of multiracial diasporic placemaking on a deeper level thus requires that we investigate processes of community agency-making, self-determination, cooperation and interdependence, paternalism, co-optation, and commodification which are often subtle and not easily apparent, if not hidden from plain view.

In short, despite unequal and uneven politics of diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga and other places whose populations are comprised of multiple, overlapping racial and cultural groups, the impulses that have driven different people in different places at different periods of time remain, at their core, the same. Diasporic placemaking, in the sense that it accounts for both particular and common processes and experiences of forced, induced or voluntary migrations, can therefore be used as an organizing frame to unite otherwise vastly heterogeneous historical conditions and experiences. It provides a place-based, action oriented analytical frame to help us all better understand and reckon with our own communities' interracial and intercultural relations, prompting us to ask how we've come to where we currently are, how we

interact—or don't interact-- with one another in the present, and where we might be capable of evolving together in the future.

Lessons for Urban Planning Practice

The lessons that diasporic placemaking teach us about urban development and change in general are extremely relevant to the fields of urban planning and community development. Planning is one of the few spatial professions with a code of ethics that explicitly links our work to the advancement of socially just and socioeconomically equitable places. Despite this ethical mandate, many professional planners are left scratching their heads or pointing to cosmetic (as opposed to substantive) urban improvements when asked how the field might play a more proactive role in advancing racially diverse and socially equitable communities.

In Chattanooga, the contestations and collaborations between different historically uprooted and migratory actors have been shaped by a deeply racialized paternalism enacted through place-based public policies and urban development plans. Communities of color living downtown, and working class African American neighborhoods in particular, have endured more than three centuries of expert driven, rational(ized) policymaking and planning *to* and *for* as opposed to *with* their communities. The paternalism through which powerful white actors, including and perhaps especially professional urban planners, relate to communities of color in Chattanooga stand in stark contrast to the more participatory, citizen-driven initiatives which have catered to middle and upper class, predominantly white, residents over the past six decades. To understand these disparities in civic treatment, one must ask how the very ideas of humanity and citizenship have been and continue to be race and place-based. Diasporic placemaking, as an analytical frame for understanding sociospatial development and change in racially and

culturally diverse cities, is well poised to help us make sense of these contradictions and double standards as they play out over the course of history.

Despite the myriad experiences of and attitudes toward Chattanooga's present day urban renaissance, local planning and development arenas continue to operate according to narrow definitions of gentrification and placemaking. When asked to reflect on the unevenness of the city's revitalization, these leaders often plead ignorance about how to actively mitigate displacement and dislocation—or they argue that the ends of gentrification (i.e. a revitalized local economy and vital local culture) outweigh its means: the forced and induced relocation of residents who cannot afford to participate in this new, much more expensive urban structure.

As a result of these narrow understandings, urban inequality in Chattanooga and cities like it continue to grow, taking form as highly uneven investment patterns and sociospatial opportunities structures vis-à-vis housing, education and workforce training, economic development, and arts and culture planning priorities. When seemingly disconnected disparities are explicitly linked together, as this dissertation has attempted to show, troubling patterns of environmental, economic, and cultural inequality emerge. Unsurprisingly, working class communities of color have borne disproportionate burdens from shortsighted and narrow minded planning and development decision-making since the city's earliest days.

To be sure, professional planners are culpable in the making of uneven access and development. We are responsible insofar as we develop and facilitate the participation processes meant to generate public interest, foster capacity building, and ensure buy-in. We analyze community data and write up normative planning documents meant to serve and justify community development interventions in the cities and regions where we're employed. In Chattanooga, local planners and elected officials operate according to narrow and historically

racialized definitions of public participation and stakeholderhood. These views severely limit the potential for citizen-based community development movements to transform the city into a more just and sustainable place for all its residents. For historically marginalized and excluded Chattanoogaans, time has demonstrated repeatedly that just because a person figures out how to navigate public and/or institutional bureaucracies does not mean she or he will get a fair share in the benefits of planning and development decisions.

This dissertation has argued that so little has changed in Chattanooga because existing participation methods don't transform engagement, analysis, and political decision-making processes. While participation methods like town hall meetings and charrettes usually afford some degree of citizen input, they do little to ensure fair and widespread civic representation. With some important exceptions, most of which involve some degree of participatory action research (more on this in the next section), public participation schemes rarely put the powers of data collection, summary and analysis into the hands of directly impacted and historically marginalized residents themselves. In many cities, including Chattanooga, new participation technologies and techniques actually inadvertently exacerbate social inequality by further empowering the already-engaged, obscuring inequities with respect to access, capacity and political power, and creating the illusion of more widespread democratic decision-making. (Cite GIS efforts??)

Over the course of this project, if and when Chattanooga's urban practitioners did recognize racialized sociospatial inequalities as urgent social problems, they typically proposed run of the mill, market-based policy and planning solutions which did little to attack unequal opportunity structures and uneven development at their structural levels. Although some fissures

seem to be forming in Chattanooga's mainstream planning and development structure, for the most part, business continues as usual.

The consequences of this status quo, non-experimental approach to citizen participation and planning education and capacity building are manifold. Today, after one hundred years of "progressive" urban planning interventions, planners in Chattanooga and cities across the United States struggle to plan for and develop equitable and socially just communities. Social inequality continues to be racialized and gendered. Poverty is rising and wealth continues to be concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people. In the words of Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick (2007), popular sociospatial or "geographic desires" seem to be moving further in the direction of "conquest."¹

Fortunately for local social justice advocates, Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE), the leading nonprofit housing developers in the city, hired a new Executive Director in late 2013 who has previously worked for a community land trust and has extensive knowledge about and connections to the community benefits agreement movement. Although it is still too early to evaluate the effects of this hire, the new Director's seat at the helm of CNE may have a transformative effect on local planners' and policymakers' attitudes toward supporting deep and widespread affordability within the local housing stock and equitable community development practices in the city more generally.

In an effort to rise to Woods and McKittrick's challenge to reimagine placemaking as "spatial liberation," this dissertation proposes that we ask ourselves how we, as urban planners, might come to better support and enable diasporic placemaking. Analyses of diasporic placemaking can identify common processes and conditions uniting historically uprooted and

¹ The notions of placemaking as both conquest and spatial liberation are discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. For more information, see "Introduction: Nobody Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean" in McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. A. (2007). *Black geographies and the politics of place*. Toronto, Ont: Between the Lines, page 5.

migratory populations of all races and cultural backgrounds. These analyses seek to reckon deeply with how local histories of labor, economic development, housing and urban expansion have produced vastly unequal landscapes of urban and regional opportunity.

In the first section of this dissertation, I explored the construction of Chattanooga's public urban cosmopolitanism narrative, paying special attention to how local histories of Native American and African American placemaking have been differently incorporated into—or against—mainstream discourses about cultural diversity and interracial harmony. In doing so, I illuminated how the history of urban development and change in downtown Chattanooga has been propelled by processes of collaborative and contestatory community building that inform urban planning and creative/cultural development-based revitalization initiatives today.

In the second section, I explored three contemporary case studies of diasporic placemaking in downtown Chattanooga: the city's return to the Tennessee Riverfront, the ongoing revitalization of the East Ninth Street/ East Martin Luther King Boulevard corridor and neighborhood, and the history of community organizing and planning in Lincoln Park. This section explore ideas of racial reconciliation and justice vis-à-vis placemaking and urban development to further illuminate how historic patterns of racialized paternalism both persist, and are challenged by, culture-based revitalization projects across the city.

By exploring creative placemaking and cultural development programs in these three neighborhoods, I hope the case studies will contribute to a growing subfield of planning scholarship which explores how creative and cultural development can have restorative and reparative as well as damaging powers in historically marginalized communities. The most important lesson from this section is that in order for creative and cultural development to have transformative effects on sociospatial development, directly impacted and historically excluded

citizens should have as close to total control over the planning and creative process as possible. This imperative should hold whether the project involves public art, cultural events, or historic preservation.

Asserting the imperative of community self-determination is not akin to saying that so long as a struggle is place and consensus-based, anything goes. Chattanooga's own history has shown how suburban priorities and struggles over space and place, for example, often differ from inner city ones. But it is here that the near universal impulses of diasporic placemaking become crucial to remember. At our cores, we share similar desires to create home spaces of cultural belonging and material security. And as much as we sometimes like to think that we operate independently and from those who are different than us, we are fundamentally psychically and socio-spatially interdependent beings. Our communities evolve according to how we negotiate (i.e. avoid, deny, or embrace) our interdependencies with one another across social and spatial differences.

An important consideration to these effects is geographic scale. While most of the cases explored in this dissertation focused on micro or neighborhood-level politics in Chattanooga's urban core, other examples, including the recently formed city-wide Coalition for Affordable Housing, the Sustaining People and Reclaiming Communities (SPARC) Initiative, and the growing Free Store movement, demonstrate that it is possible to connect seemingly isolated struggles across space. The SPARC Initiative's community planning efforts in particular tried to understand and leverage the scaling up and out of community self-determination qua interdependence. By starting with personal stories, visions, and plans and using facilitated dialogue and creative expression to help individuals connect their stories to others in the room, we initiated a process that honored the personal while also honoring the social or collective. We

then used this interpersonal recognition to cultivate solidarity and political power so that neighborhoods could develop and implement both community and coalition-based visions and action plans.

The Planning Free School of Chattanooga was designed to help SPARC participants and other underrepresented residents develop the capacity to see their planning processes through to implementation. To this end, the Free School focused not only on skill sharing and technical capacity building, but also less quantifiable storytelling rituals, such as music, poetry, art, and play. We worked with participants from a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to identify and connect with their shared histories and shared futures. We offered regular, sustained, action oriented exercises where participants controlled the ways and means of storytelling; where mutual understanding, not group consensus, was the end goal. These nontraditional techniques allowed participants to tap into both intuition and intellect, and ultimately, helped them reckon more deeply with local legacies of racism, sexism, and uneven geographic development in the city.

The SPARC initiative and Planning Free School began in Chattanooga, but they need not be limited to it. One can imagine how it would be possible to create visions and action plans that encompass ever-increasing scales of community, from neighbors to neighborhoods, urban cores to cities, and ultimately regions that transcend superficially imposed political boundaries such as county and state lines. In this sense, planners have much to learn about how better to support and enable processes of diasporic placemaking, which are themselves trans-local and even transnational in nature. In doing so, we stand to learn more about planning across and in concert with cultural and racial difference.

When self-determination within interdependence is situated within historical legacies of place-based resistance and alternative world-building, contemporary struggles for social justice and equitable community development come to be understood not as anomalies or aberrations, but rather as links in a complex chain of diasporic placemaking which can, in the case of Chattanooga, be traced back more than three centuries. Given these long histories, the challenge for social justice-minded planners shifts from imagining entirely new modes of urban spatial consciousness, to locating, excavating, cultivating and enabling the critical spatial awareness which has been present and active in historically uprooted communities since the dawn of modern colonialism and the ‘discovery’ of the New World. The diasporic placemaking approach warrants inter- and trans-disciplinary scholarship as well as a commitment to collaborative, popular education. When together we reconstruct stories of urban diasporic placemaking, long and instructive histories of anti-racist and anti-colonial practice emerge.

When planners fail to place current struggles over space and place in their local historical contexts, they run the risk of missing profound opportunities to enable and support culturally relevant, citizen-driven equitable community development. Jenny Lightweis-Goff (2011) reminds us that placemaking involves processes of forgetting as much as it does processes of remembering. In this sense, anti-racist legacies that contradict mainstream narratives of progress are often buried beneath existing status quo development and must be collaboratively excavated. This was certainly true for Ross’s Landing and is also true for the case of Lincoln Park. The stories of diasporic placemaking in Chattanooga explored in this dissertation suggest that planners and policymakers would gain much from reevaluating the metrics they use to determine the historical and cultural significance and integrity of properties in communities of color. Many of these places have been redeveloped or reconfigured after experiencing decades of physical

deterioration and institutional neglect. Lincoln Park, now a shadow of its former self, is experiencing extreme development pressure from the Central Avenue extension project. These pressures will no doubt increase once rehabilitation commences on the Cumberland Corporation property located directly to the north of the neighborhood. Ironically, this mid-twentieth century structure was determined to be eligible for historic preservation status by planning consultants while the Lincoln Park neighborhood and public space were determined to be ineligible according to state requirements related to structural integrity.

In the case of Lincoln Park, hospital administrators and city planners have largely aligned themselves with narratives about improved transportation efficiency and expanded status quo economic development, rather than having chosen to celebrate the park and its adjacent neighborhood as critical spaces of African American placemaking during the city's extensive Jim Crow period. In choosing to make these associations, planners and city officials send a strong message to the local Black community in Chattanooga: it is preferable to control the terms and limits of cultural development and historical significance rather than to loosen their grip and actively grapple with legacies of racism in the city. It is undeniable that Lincoln Park has been altered significantly over the past five decades, but it is also undeniable that the space (or what is left of it) retains its historical significance within Chattanooga's Black community. As such, local planners stand to squander the visions and plans that historically marginalized residents have conceived to use the park to catalyze tourism and economic development within Chattanooga's Black community in the future.

This point raises another important lesson for urban planners who want to better support and enable multiracial diasporic placemaking: the goal of cultural recognition projects like the Passage and the revitalization of Lincoln Park is not about the feelings of reconciliation that they

might produce in mainstream (i.e. white, property owning) society. The goal of supporting and enabling diasporic placemaking is not to make white residents and urban professionals feel more comfortable or at ease with local histories of racism and uneven geographic development. To the contrary, in many cases, the end result of public art and cultural development initiatives may be precisely to achieve an opposite effect.

Most fundamentally, the value in these projects lies in the sense of belonging and possible justice that gets cultivated by and for the directly impacted population whose story is being told. In the case of the Passage at Ross's Landing, the Cherokee artists who designed the space focused on their people as strong and resilient despite the Trail of Tears. In Lincoln Park, resident activists emphasized the significance of the park to the United Negro baseball league as a Jim Crow-era cultural institution despite protests from hospital administrators who did not want to be associated with the racially charged language of the Jim Crow period. These stories teach planners who are committed to expanding multiethnic placemaking in complex urban environments to strive to help realize cultural development projects that produce dissonance and even discomfort among locals and visitors to their cities at the expense of anesthetized narratives of racial harmony and urban progress.

Participatory Action Research

Diasporic placemaking challenges planners and other urban practitioners to integrate social justice and equity into all areas of planning and development. Rather than treat equity as the third "e" of sustainable development (after the environment and economy), we should operate from a position where an equity agenda is worked into all aspects of city planning and

policymaking, from the arts, housing and economic development to transportation, land use, and environmental management.²

Though this may seem like an overwhelming task, this dissertation has demonstrated how much is possible when one full time academic researcher with urban planning experience partnered with a small social justice organization, which was offered free meeting space and minor publicity assistance by a generous downtown public library, as community leaders volunteered several evening and occasional weekend hours to participate in workshops, and as social work graduate students used their summer session credit hours to help develop and administer neighborhood surveys. Through this collaboration, we managed over a twelve month period to ask how urban planners and placemakers might come to better support and enable multiracial diasporic placemaking in a small but infinitely complex city.

Through this dissertation initiative, we discovered that it is not only possible to launch initiatives based on just sustainability, it is imperative to do so. Failing to consider how urban development and change evolves out of struggles and collaborations between groups over space and place threatens the possibility or probability of reinforcing deep social divisions and unequal opportunity structures.

This project also quickly confirmed my prior suspicion that transformative planning and community development goes well beyond the scope urban and regional planners' and policymakers' expertise. Understanding the politics of diasporic placemaking and the roles that planners play enabling and supporting just sustainability required knowing about popular education, grassroots organizing, workforce and economic development, public space, cultural

² This is the central argument of urban planning scholar Julian Agyeman, who called for a reorientation of planners' work away from compartmentalizing equity and toward a "just sustainability" approach to urban and regional development. For more information, see Agyeman, J. (2005). *Sustainable communities and the challenge of environmental justice*. New York: New York University Press.

and creative development, public health and social services, information technology, archival work and historiography, program development and education, and more.

Fortunately, Chattanooga is a city full of passionate individuals who feel deeply connected and committed to their city. Even without an operating budget, we were able to design an action research project which involved librarians, social workers, artists, academics, students, community organizers, and interested residents. Together, we realized that developing programs to support and enable historically marginalized and excluded residents to exercise self-determination and interdependence vis-à-vis community planning doesn't require much money, but it definitely requires personal commitment and time. By the end of the year, I believe we were all left wondering how much more would be possible if planning free schools grew and SPARCS flew on a critically massive scale.

In their influential *Collaborative Inquiry in Practice*, Bray et al (2000) asserted that “effective collaborative inquiry demystifies research and treats it as a form of learning that should be accessible by everyone interested in gaining a better understanding of his or her own world.”³ Likewise, participatory action research (PAR) gurus Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (2006) claimed that PAR “encourages us to consider the validity claims of the different forms of knowing in themselves and the relationship between different ways of knowing.”⁴ Diasporic placemaking as an action-oriented theory of sociospatial development demanded that we (the co-inquirers) take seriously the plural ways that residents in Chattanooga have known urban planning and change in the city, including those experiences that contradict progressive

³ Bray, J. N. (2000). *Collaborative inquiry in practice: action, reflection, and meaning making* [sic]. Thousand Oaks [Calif.]: Sage Publications. Page 3.

⁴ Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2006). *Handbook of action research: the concise paperback edition*. London: SAGE. Page 12.

narratives of urban progress. In order to validate the plural ways of knowing, we experimented with several forms of resident driven, horizontal collaboration and co-inquiry.

The SPARC Initiative and the Planning Free School of Chattanooga can teach us several important lessons about participatory action research as a set of methods for expanding equity-oriented planning and community development work. First, this dissertation confirmed what other PAR scholars have asserted about the need to keep research processes open to improvisation. It was only out of Chattanooga Organized for Action's (COA) organizational crisis that the opportunities to develop and launch the SPARC Initiative and Free School arose. Had COA's membership not fallen apart, there would not have been the urgency to ask how the organization was failing to abide by its Principles of Unity. Had there not been such a strong need to ask tough questions, it is likely that the original plan to run eight somewhat disconnected placemaking workshops would never have evolved into the full-fledged planning curriculum that the Free School became.

Today, COA's organizing strategy combines tools and assessment measures found in popular education, urban planning, social work, media arts, and communications. This unique framework allows COA organizers to approach their planning and community development work creatively, holistically, collaboratively, and through an asset-based community development lens. Through the SPARC Initiative and People's Coalition for Affordable Housing in particular, COA's work offers important lessons about how community organizers and professional urban planners might work together to better support and enable diasporic placemaking through social justice oriented planning and equitable community development projects. In short, the action research elements of this project confirm that in moments of crisis there are always opportunities for experimentation.

This project also confirmed the importance of developing participation initiatives that are independent from mainstream planning and community development institutions. Most of the skepticism and distrust that working class communities of color in Chattanooga feel toward city government is based on historical experiences of unequal treatment between themselves and their white neighbors. Had the SPARC Initiative and Free School been designed merely to bring historically underrepresented residents into mainstream planning discussions, we never would have had the levels of participation that we did. Our experiments helped to equalize political power by facilitating a space for storytelling and research where marginalized residents themselves were in control of all aspects of agenda setting. City and institutional actors were invited to participate by listening to residents' perspectives, but they were never in control of convening or managing the process.

The goal of both experiments was to understand how autonomous and nontraditional planning processes might help transform citizen planning by breaking down real and perceived barriers between citizens, planning experts, and political decision makers. Over the course of the free school's fifty two issue based discussion groups, skill shares, transformative placemaking workshops, and critical conversations, more than one hundred participants, many of whom represented working class communities of color from across the urban core, shared stories and developed capacity as citizen planners. They carried these lessons and research and assessment skills back into their own communities, including the neighborhoods currently involved with COA's SPARC community planning initiative.

Urban planners tend to privilege the technical aspects of their work about the soft, interpersonal dimensions of community-building. Had this dissertation been based exclusively on traditional, non-participatory methods, an entirely different (and I believe, less meaningful)

project would have taken place. We sought not only to understand how participation and education in planning occurred in downtown Chattanooga; more importantly, we desired to push at those boundaries and try to change them. Through the PAR elements of the project, we worked with residents to develop capacity to both participate in mainstream planning conversations *and* launch community planning initiatives independently. These conversations and instances of collaborative inquiry arguably produced deeper accountability and impulses toward reciprocity between individuals who had not considered themselves as having common interests or stakes in the city.

Through their participation in the Free School, workshop participants came to better understand their own urban experiences and spatial desires, as well as those of their neighbors, in deeper and more empathetic ways. As participants seized these new capacities, mainstream planners and policymakers felt pressure to respond in ways that they hadn't before. This pressure produced several unanticipated outcomes. Several members of the Housing discussion group, for example, went on to form a city-wide community land trust (CLT) working group. Together, the group has been exploring neighborhood-based and scattered site CLTs as strategies for producing long-term affordable housing across the urban core. The working group included former city council members and a senior staff planner from Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise, who was able to arrange to have staff from the Durham Community Land Trustees in Durham, North Carolina, speak to Chattanooga's local housing development community as part of its City Share series. Presumably, the conversations that happened in the CLT working group also informed CNE's decision to hire a former CLT director as their new Executive Director.

Relatedly, employment data analysis and discussions about first source hiring and community benefits agreements has helped local community organizers launch several labor and

housing-related campaigns around the city. For example, the People’s Coalition for Affordable Housing endorsed a community benefits agreement for any redevelopment of the former Harriett Tubman public housing site. Although no formal CBA has been negotiated, this pressure did compel the City of Chattanooga to announce a first source hiring program, which will ensure that East Chattanooga residents receive a percentage of all temporary and permanent jobs connected with any redevelopment of the site. Equipped with analysis skills and the ability to discuss a range of progressive urban policy tools, social justice advocates today are better equipped to participate in and critique local planning and development initiatives.

They also have increased capacity to launch their own visioning and action planning processes. For example, the Planning Free School, in collaboration with COA, helped resident leaders from the Coalition to Save Lincoln Park develop a strategy to halt the allocation of state and federal transportation funds for the Central Avenue extension. As discussed elsewhere in this dissertation, the Free School dedicated several workshops exclusively to planning and development issues in Lincoln Park, including discussions about participation laws, neighborhood assessments, land trusts, historic preservation, tourism, and community economic development. Out of these conversations, neighborhood leaders decided to adopt the “No to Central Avenue/ Yes to Lincoln Park” campaign.

One of their central demands involved having the remaining historic park land put into public trust and used as the basis for African American tourism and economic development. The City of Chattanooga’s land swap with Erlanger Hospital late last year has yet to demonstrate whether all of the Lincoln Park neighborhood’s demands for the space will be realized. What *has* unequivocally changed is the direction in which this engagement happens. Rather than wait for the city to outline an engagement plan and invite residents to their decision-making table,

Lincoln Park residents are at the helm and have invited professional planners and institutional representatives to participate in *their* process. With several months of the SPARC initiative under their belts, the Lincoln Park neighborhood should have a community action plan in place long before the regional planning agency gets around to beginning their neighborhood planning process, which is slated for 2017.

Interestingly, this project also underscored the importance of public libraries as crucial sites of diasporic placemaking—a role that distinguishes them from most other public urban institutions. For nearly two decades, scholars have discussed the importance of public libraries to rural community development. However, literature exploring the mutual interests and potential collaborations between planning organizations and libraries in urban areas is virtually nonexistent. In Chattanooga, the public library was patronized by many of the very people considered to be “unusual suspects” to citizen-driven planning processes. Although there will always be more work to be done, public libraries often have the potential to provide democratic civic spaces, where knowledge and information science can be accessed freely and without the fear of paternalistic condescension or exclusion based on socioeconomic standing.

Like city planning organizations, public libraries are civically-minded municipal institutions that must continuously evolve and adapt themselves to remain relevant to the communities that they serve. Rapidly shifting demographics, rising social inequality, and advances in technology and information science significantly impact public libraries’ professional identities, organizational structures, and service missions. As urban planners, public librarians and other civic minded institutions practice critical self-reflection, the Planning Free School of Chattanooga suggests that both planning and library institutions stand to benefit from conversations about how they might collaborate to achieve their common goals of popular

education, engaged citizenship and improved community development. To this end, this dissertation is in part meant to spark an overdue dialogue about how librarians and planners already collaborate in cities, and how the two professions might build more substantial and sustainable relationships with one another in the future.

In closing, urban development and change in complex, multiracial urban centers needs to be examined through critical, interdisciplinary and action-oriented lenses. This project proposes that diasporic placemaking, as a theory and practice of sociospatial development, should be incorporated into mainstream citizen planning and equitable community development discussions. The history of multiethnic placemaking in Chattanooga provides keen insight into how collaborations and contestations between historically uprooted populations have generated local urban social and spatial orders. Assessing other cities in the same light may help planners and other urban professionals understand how to integrate anti-racism values and practices into urban planning and redevelopment in more substantive and transformative ways.

Given the challenges to supporting and enabling multiethnic diasporic placemaking, this dissertation proposes that a new era of citizen planning for community self-determination and interdependence lies before us. This updated mode of placemaking should understand how formal politics operate and help residents learn how to navigate public bureaucracies, but it must be ultimately concerned with shifting the powers of urban storytelling, analysis and decision-making power into the hands of society's most underrepresented and marginalized residents. For all of these reasons, diasporic placemaking is a compelling organizing frame for thinking about the ways that planners might better support and enable the pursuit of just sustainability in complex urban environments.

APPENDIX A:
PLACEMAKER PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERVIEW GUIDE AND LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Background and History

- Please share a bit of personal background information (whatever you'd like to share —hometown, education) and your connection to Chattanooga.
- What were the factors that contributed to/inspired you to become a [type of placemaker] working in [community/initiative/department, etc]?
- How has [the community you work in] and the city more generally changed since you began living/working here?
- Are there particular moments in Chattanooga's history that have lasting effects on how you think about the identity of the city?

Practice Stories

- How did [you/your organization] get involved in [community/initiative]? What role(s) have you assumed over the course of initiative?
- How do [you/your organization] reach out to [residents in the neighborhoods/students, etc]? Walk me through, step-by-step, your community outreach process for [the project]?
- How does your organization think about and form coalitions/ community partnerships? With whom do you partner? Who typically initiates the relationship? Walk me through, step-by-step, the partnership-building process for [project/initiative]? What were the outcomes?
- How do local politics impact [your/your organization's] work? Walk me through a time you had to deal with a challenging political situation. How was the issue/case resolved
- Please talk about your messaging process. Why have you/ your org. chosen the messages/narratives that you have to describe life in Chattanooga?
- What has been the role of the arts and cultural development to the revitalization of the city? What additional opportunities exist for expanding an arts and culture-based economy in Chattanooga?

Reflection on Meaning

- What does community history mean to you and to your organization?
- Reflect on a professional mistake. What happened and what did you learn from it?
- What kind of 'place' is Chattanooga? How would you describe the city's 'culture'?
- What are the biggest barriers/challenges to your placemaking work?

Wrap-Up Questions

- Are there other placemakers with whom I should speak?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION/ VOLUNTEER LIST

Organization
Chattanooga Organized for Action
Westside Community Association
Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association
Occupy Chattanooga
Idle No More! Chattanooga
Concerned Citizens for Justice
Chattanooga City Council
Chattanooga Housing Authority
Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise City Share
Thrive 2055 Regional Planning Initiative
Grove Street Settlement House
Coalition to Save Lincoln Park

**APPENDIX C: CHATTANOOGA ORGANIZED FOR ACTION’S INITIATIVES:
DECEMBER 2010—APRIL 2012**

Initiative	Location	Timeframe	Organizers	Outcomes
Food March	Westside to Beuhler’s Market (Market Street)	December 18, 2010	Westside residents, COA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spurred public dialogue about food insecurity in Chattanooga \$700+ raised to support Angel Food Ministry (Renaissance Presbyterian Church) 100+ participated in 3-mile march Community grocery opened in early 2013
State of Labor Forum: Labor has a Face	Camp House: Southside	February 5, 2011	COA, 11 Local unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 120 participants Initiated dialogue between public and private unions Produced coalition that went on to help organize: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rally for Teachers Rally for Good Jobs Chattanooga Solidarity Campaign
Vigil to Stop Velsicol	South Chattanooga	January + February 2011; February 9	South Chattanooga residents, religious leaders, Cherokee Sierra Club, Stop Toxic Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 residents and allies collected 1,000+ signatures and comments on petition Persuaded the State of TN to enforce stricter clean up and environmental management of site
Rally for Teachers	Nashville, TN	March 15, 2011	Unions, teachers, students, COA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two busloads of 100+ teachers, students and organizers attended a statewide lobbying day
State of Education Forum: Not Waiting for Superman	Camp House: Southside	April 2, 2011	COA, Hamilton County Democratic Party, Hamilton County Young Democrats, coalition of parents and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 participants in a city-wide dialogue about education inequality Panel of representatives from 7 community based organizations
Dogwood Manor Residents’ Council	Westside	March 2011	Dogwood Manor residents, COA, County Election Review Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised funds to cover official election supervision Organized tenants’ council according to HUD guidelines Elected 5 member Council with 50% voter turnout rate President Roxann Larson went on to serve on the Board of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants
People’s History/ Social Justice Bus Tours	CARTA bus route: downtown to Alton Park	May 4, 2011 + September 2012	COA, Valerie Radu (UTC-Social Work), Mike Feely (UTC-History), Bethlehem Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75+ attendees on multiple tours Popular history of social justice organizing in Chattanooga: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlement House, Labor, Bethlehem Center

Initiative	Location	Timeframe	Organizers	Outcomes
Rally for Family Planning	City-wide; County Commission building	May 2011	COA, Coalition of concerned residents, religious leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coalition pressured County Commission to revote Rally (50 participants) and march (100 participants) County Commission voted unanimously to restore funding for family planning
Chattanooga Solidarity Campaign	Ross's Landing/ riverfront	June 2011/ Riverbend Festival	COA, 13 local unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60 union volunteers distributed 20,000 fans with labor solidarity message Public education about importance of organized labor
Defend, Don't Defund Campaign/ Cutting Deep Forum	Camp House: Southside	June and July 2011; June 27, 2011	Valerie Radu (UTC-Social Work), COA, Southern Adventist University- Social Work, National Association of Social Workers, Religious leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum featuring 6 panelists 100+ participants, including City Councilors Increased funds in City of Chattanooga budget for nonprofit agencies
Chattanooga Justice: History of Local Working Class Struggles	IBEW Local Chattanooga Chapter	July 13, 2011	Mike Feely (UTC-History), COA, Chattanooga Buildings and Trade Council, Chattanooga Area Labor Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative archival project Popular education and dialogue
Coalition to Keep the Promise	Hill City, North Chattanooga	October + November 2011	Hill City Neighborhood Association, COA, elected officials, SEIU Local 205	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County School Board voted to keep their original promise to zone the students living in Hill City back into the Normal Park Middle Magnet district As of November 2013, nothing has been enforced
The Westside is Not for Sale! Campaign	Westside/ Public and subsidized housing across urban core	December 2011- April 2012; April 4, 2012	Westside Community Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized Westside Community Association 1,200+ signatures on Petition to Save Our Homes 100+ participant march City council demonstrations Council hearing on the state of public housing in Chattanooga Purpose Built Communities abandoned plan for College Hill Ct Westside Community Association researches and produces Inclusionary Housing Ordinance

Source: Case Study Material retrieved from www.chattaction.org. Compiled and summarized by the author.

APPENDIX D: PLANNING FREE SCHOOL OF CHATTANOOGA PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

The Planning Free School of Chattanooga | Coordinated Action Toward a Just and Sustainable City

The Planning Free School of Chattanooga, working in partnership with the Chattanooga Public Library, welcomes you to participate in its Spring 2013 Semester of Community Workshops!

Who We Are

Launched in early December 2012, the Planning Free School of Chattanooga (PFSC) is a volunteer-based planning and community development initiative conceived through a participatory action research partnership between several local social justice organizations, The Chattanooga Public Library, and [Courtney Knapp](#), a doctoral candidate from [Cornell University's Department of City and Regional Planning](#).

The Planning Free School is based on the decentralized format of the [US](#) and [World Social Forums](#). Its purpose is to *bring residents and activists together to discuss critical issues affecting Chattanooga and share skills and stories in the pursuit of a more just and sustainable city.*

The Planning Free School is organized around four types of public workshops: Critical Conversations, Community Discussion and Research Groups, Transformative Placemaking events, and Skill Sharing workshops. All of these events are **free and open to the public**.

Critical Conversations are community-based and driven conversations about important issues related to social justice and equitable development in Chattanooga. Examples include “Creating Safe Spaces for Social Action” and “Organizing Across Differences to Produce a United Social Justice Movement.”

Community Discussion and Research Groups are bi-monthly meetings focused on particular community development issues, including Housing, Workforce Development, Arts and Culture, Expanding Opportunities for Youth, and Re-Imagining Community Partnerships. The goals of these groups include identifying key issues affecting residents in Chattanooga and producing a series of Community Reports (white papers) with baseline data to support the advancement of a just and sustainable city. Residents are welcome to join these groups even if they cannot commit to the research component of the groups!!

Transformative Placemaking workshops are creative, hands-on activities intended to introduce residents to nontraditional public engagement methods and expand opportunities for integrating arts and culture into equitable community development. Examples of workshops include “Using Public Space to Advance Social Justice in the City” and “Beyond Tourism: Cultural Heritage Planning and Urban Justice.”

Skill-Shares are workshops intended to build research and community development capacity among social justice organizers living and working across Chattanooga. Examples include “Digging through the Local Archive for Community Development Information” “Using the Census for Housing Analyses” and

“Developing a Neighborhood Assessment Toolkit.” There will also be a five week mini-course in March/April on Community Mapping, leading to a Certificate Program in Community GIS (Geographic Information Systems software).

For the most up to date information about the Planning Free School and to access a full calendar of events for the Spring 2013 semester, please visit the [Planning Free School website!](#)

You can also [like us on Facebook](#) to access information about events and to register/ RSVP for workshops!

UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL WORKSHOPS WILL BE HELD ON THE 4TH FLOOR of the CHATTANOOGA PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1001 BROAD STREET.

For more information, please contact Courtney Knapp at cek77@cornell.edu or 617.755.8412.

Dates and Descriptions of Community Discussion and Research Groups

Housing

Meets every other Monday from 6:00- 7:45pm

Dates: 2/25, 3/11, 4/22, 5/6, 5/20, 5/27, 6/3

Are you interested in discussing and learning more about the state of housing in Chattanooga? Do you want to talk about housing affordability, foreclosures, public housing, neighborhood change or some other issue related to housing in the city? Then please join the Planning Free School of Chattanooga's Housing Community Discussion and Research Group. The Community Discussion Group provides a space for Chattanooga residents to share their ideas about housing justice and learn from others across the community. Additionally, over the course of the Spring 2013 semester, the discussion group will research and produce a "State of Housing in Chattanooga" report.

Employment and Workforce Development:

Every other Monday from 6:00-7:45pm

Dates: 3/4, 3/18, 4/1, 4/15, 5/13, 5/27

Do you care about jobs, economic development, education and creating more equitable and just workforce opportunities in Chattanooga? Should creative work be restricted to the “Creative Class” or can we imagine an employment economy where every worker feels creatively fulfilled? Additionally, over the course of the Spring 2013 semester, the discussion group will research and produce a "Re-Imagining Work in Chattanooga" report.

Arts and Cultural Development

Every other Wednesday from 6:00-7:45pm

Dates: 2/27, 3/13, 3/27, 4/10, 4/24 5/8, 6/5

How can the arts and cultural development be integrated into an overall strategy and program for equitable community development and urban social justice in Chattanooga? How do we work to make sure all of our citizens have opportunities to develop and express themselves creatively, and to access the benefits of the city's art and culture-based revitalization? If you are an activist, an artist, a history buff or just interested in art and culture in the city, then please join the Planning Free School of Chattanooga's Arts and Cultural Development Community Discussion + Research Group. Additionally, over the course of the Spring 2013 semester, the discussion group will research and produce a "Re-Imagining Arts and Cultural Development" report.

Re-Imagining Community Partnerships

Every other Tuesday from 6:00- 7:45pm

Dates: 2/26, 3/12, 3/27, 4/10, 4/24, 5/8, 6/5

How do we work together as individuals and members of organizations to expand opportunities around the city for social justice and equitable community development? Are 21st Century community partnerships built on the same values and practices as past efforts? How can we re-imagine community partnerships and coalitions to reflect values of mutual stakes/benefit, solidarity and allyship? The PFS Community Partnerships Discussion Group provides a space for Chattanooga residents to share their ideas about partner-and coalition building and learn from others across the community who have experience building those relationships. Additionally, over the course of the Spring 2013 semester, the discussion group will research and produce a "Re-Imagining Community Partnerships in Chattanooga" report.

Transportation and Mobility

Every other Friday from 10:00am-11:45am

Dates: 3/1, 3/15, 3/29, 4/12, 4/26, 5/10, 5/24

At the heart of a just city is a safe, affordable and accessible transportation system. If you're interested in urban transportation (rapid transit/buses, bikes, walking, driving) and understanding better how folks move around and access the benefits of the city, please join the Transportation and Mobility Discussion and Research Group to connect with like-minded activists and collaboratively explore issues related to urban transportation justice and mobility in Chattanooga! Additionally, over the course of the Spring 2013 semester, the discussion group will research and produce a "Re-Imagining Transportation in Chattanooga" report.

Storytelling the City (through photo, film, music +) (Transformative Placemaking series)

Tue, March 5, 6:00pm – 7:45pm

There are many creative ways to document, share experiences and tell stories about urban life. While planners and policymakers typically emphasize the quantitative dimensions of city-dwelling, the qualitative experiences are as if not more important than general demographic trends. Join the PFS for an interactive, multimedia exploration of urban storytelling!

GIS/ Map-Making for Social Change: Community GIS Mini-Course

This five-part skill-share series will introduce participants to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software and public datasets that are relevant to social justice organizing in the city. Part 1 will provide an overview of several important online mapping sites. Parts 2 through 5 will focus on Demographic Change, Property + Land Use

Planning, Housing, and Transportation, respectively.

Participants must supply their own Windows-based laptops and request a 60-day trial version of Arc GIS prior to enrollment. The trial disc may be requested here: <http://www.esri.com/software/arcgis/arcgis-for-desktop/free-trial>. If you are interested in participating but do not have a laptop, please let us know and we'll try to accommodate you or pair you up with a participant who does.

Participants who attend all five workshops will receive a "Certificate of Completion" in Community GIS from the Planning Free School of Chattanooga. For more information, please email Courtney Knapp at cek77@cornell.edu.

Photovoice for Asset Based Community Development

Tuesday, March 19, 6:00-7:45pm

Photovoice is a method mostly used in the field of community development, public health, and [education](#) which combines [photography](#) with [grassroots](#) social action. Participants are asked to represent their community or point of view by taking photographs, discussing them together, developing narratives to go with their photos, and conducting outreach or other action. Asset-based community development (ABCD) is a methodology that seeks to uncover and use the strengths within communities as a means for [sustainable development](#). Join the Planning Free School to explore integrating these two methods together as another creative way to assess strengths and opportunities existing across the city!

The City as Play

Saturday, March 30, 11:00am-12:45pm

The goal of James Rojas's "City as Play" work, which includes interactive model and diorama building, is to translate "the impenetrable maps and language of land use planning into a activities that are visual, tactile, and playful" (Rojas 2010). The goal of these exercises is to engage people in a process of developing their values about the built environment. Participants will transform random found, abstract objects into places, effectively making these values explicit. This strategy is also a good way to get people politically engaged in neighborhood or community change, offering an alternative way of submitting input into 'official' planning and placemaking processes.

Developing Neighborhood Assessment Tools: Part 1 + 2

Saturday, March 30 1-2:45pm, Saturday, April 20 1- 2:45pm

How can we creatively, collaboratively, and systematically assess our neighborhoods and communities? What, if anything, are the built and social 'elements' of a just and sustainable city? How can we evaluate our progress toward these goals? In Part 1 of this two-part skill-share, participants will draft a neighborhood assessment toolkit for evaluating their neighborhoods. In Part 2, participants will share and analyze and compare the results of their own neighborhood assessments with others in the group.

Everyday Mobility: Using Cognitive Maps to Understand Urban Access and Mobility

Saturday, March 30, 3:00- 5:00 pm

How do residents move through and access resources within the city? This workshop will engage participants in a creative cognitive mapping exercise aimed at understanding every day mobility patterns and sites of cultural/ community significance.

The purpose of producing and analyzing cognitive maps is to understand how people relate to and understand some specific aspect of their local environment (Lynch 1960, Downs and Stea 1973, 1977, 2005). Through these visual

representations of space, participants convey key interpretations of the built and natural environment, including land uses, scale, threats and opportunities.

Critical Conversation: Connecting the Past to Current and Future Social Justice Struggles

Saturday, April 20, 11:00am- 12:45pm

It is often said that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to *repeat* it." Yet the fields of urban planning and community development, with their emphasis on 'progressive' and 'highest and best use' development often fail to recognize the importance of community history to current and future visions for the city. In this intergenerational workshop, participants will critically reflect on what they see as the relationships between historical urban development, the present state of the city, and where we'd like to move from here.

Beyond Tourism: Integrating Heritage and Cultural Development into Economic Justice Planning

Saturday, April 20, 3:00- 5:00pm

Is local history and culture only to be accessed and enjoyed for tourism's sake? Whose stories are represented through these processes and who benefits from this inscription? How can we better integrate heritage- and cultural development-based planning into our everyday urban fabric? Join us for a conversation about democratizing heritage and cultural development in Chattanooga.

Insurgent Placemaking: Using Public Space to Advance Social Justice

Saturday, April 27: 11am- 12:45pm: Historically, the public square was a space for political, cultural and economic expression, regardless of politics. Today, we see our public spaces rapidly transforming into private and semi-private spaces. This privatization directly impacts who can access these spaces and what they can be used for. In this transformative placemaking workshop, participants will explore historic uses of public space for advancing social justice and imagine new opportunities for using 'public' space to advance justice and equitable development goals.

Art, Space and Revolution

Saturday, April 27: 1:00- 2:45pm: W.E.B. DuBois once stated that "all art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists." Do you agree? How do people interpret the various functions that art and public art in particular serve in urban development and revitalization? Is public art art for art's sake, to be patronized and enjoyed as it is in a museum? If not, what are the social and political possibilities suggested by urban public art movements? Come share your ideas and learn from other artists and residents living, working and creating across the city.

Planning Free School of Chattanooga

Community Discussion + Research Group:

housing



Spring 2013 Semester: 2nd + 4th Mondays

6:00–7:45 pm

4th Floor | Chattanooga Public Library | 1001 Broad Street

1/28 | 2/11 | 2/25 | 3/11 | 3/25 | 4/8 | 4/22 | 5/6 | 5/20

For more information and a full calendar, visit: www.freeschoolchatt.blogspot.com!

APPENDIX E: STORYTELLING THE CITY WORKSHOP SOURCES

What do these stories tell us about the places we inhabit and inherit?

Bessie Smith - Backwater Blues Lyrics (1927)

When it rains five days and the skies turn dark as night
When it rains five days and the skies turn dark as night
Then trouble's takin' place
In the lowlands at night

I woke up this mornin', can't even get out of my door
I woke up this mornin', can't even get out of my door
There's been enough trouble
To make a poor girl wonder where she wants to go

Then they rowed a little boat about five miles 'cross the pond
Then they rowed a little boat about five miles 'cross the pond
I packed all my clothes
Threw them in and they rowed me along

When it thunders and lightnin' and when the wind begins to blow
When it thunders and lightnin' and the wind begins to blow
There's thousands of people
Ain't got no place to go

Then I went and stood upon some high old lonesome hill
Then I went and stood upon some high old lonesome hill
Then looked down on the house
Where I used to live

Backwater blues done call me to pack my things and go
Backwater blues done call me to pack my things and go
'Cause my house fell down
And I can't live there no more

I can't move no more
I can't move no more
There ain't no place
For a poor old girl to go

Hugh Blair-- MIDNIGHT ON A GEORGIA ROAD. September, 1927. (1967)

Bone-weary one warm September night
I stepped off the Chattanooga–Rossville trolley.
Midnight. No more cars would run.
I was 18, a student at Chattanooga High.
I had just wound up five hours typing at the Chattanooga Times
Writing my weekly column, High School News.
Proud but weary – mostly weary
I dozed intermittently during the eight-mile street car trip.
End of the line.
Only two more miles and home.
I would take a long drink of milk,
Shuck off my clothes.
Stretch out and rest my bones.
A car pulls up besides me.
Perhaps a neighbor offering a lift?
No.
A blue uniform.
A hard right to my cheek and a left to my jaw.
A strong reek of whisky breath.
‘Whaddye think you’re doing out here
Raisin’ hell on the public road at midnight?
Ye’r drunk and disorderly.
Yes, drunk and disorderly.
I’m running you in.
Git in the car.
That’ll learn you to raise hell when decent people are asleep.’
As always, I stood apart within myself
And watched curious at what was happening to me.
Oh yes, I have heard about these things.
I spent the rest of the night in a smelly can of a jail,
Not in meditation, however,
But in singing ribald songs with my cellmates,
Two old-timers, drunk as the cop, but rational and good company.
Morning came. The turnkey let me go.
I staggered home, more amused than resentful.

WHEN I GET TO HEAVEN. June, 1927.

That summer I was free as a wandering bird.
To avoid being lynched I had dropped out of high school.
(I had tried to organize an atheist club the winter before).
I left home and was living by myself in a room over
a hardware store.

It cost me five dollars a month
Which I paid easily from my earnings working two or three
days a week in the brewery.
I didn't devote too much of my time to working.

Sometimes I camped out in the mountains for weeks at a time.
I visited every lake and pond around Chattanooga,
And traced the course of every stream
And swam in most of them.

I explored every swamp, every hill and mountain
And, of course, I explored the streets -
North Chattanooga . East Chattanooga , Orchard Hill,
St. Elmo , East take -
Even Goose Hollow , where al l the children were bastards
and all the girls were whores.
There were no old people in Goose Hollow -
they didn't live that long.

Ninth Avenue was the commercial center of the Negro section.
Many of my Jewish friends had stores there.
Wandering one day along Ninth Avenue
I heard the sound of singing and turned the corner.
A small crowd had gathered around an old blind preacher -
A tiny, shriveled-up , white-haired Negro man.
He looked inexpressibly old and weary; his voice was
weary but earnest.

A little boy was with him to serve as his eyes.
The boy played the tambourine during the singing,
and later passed it around for coins.
I liked what I was hearing, so I dropped in half a dollar -
Most of my personal fortune at the time.
I have never heard that song again or read it in a book.

Here is what that weary earnest voice sang:
When I get to heaven gonna sing always -
Sing always - Sing always -
When I get to heaven gonna sing always;
I wanna go to heaven when I die.
When I get to heaven gonna pray always -
Pray always - Pray always -
When I get to heaven gonna pray always;

I wanna go to heaven when I die.
When I get to heaven gonna dance always -
Dance always - Dance always -
When I get to heaven gonna dance always;
I wanna go to heaven when I die.
When I get to heaven gonna preach always -
Preach always - Preach always -
When I get to heaven gonna preach always;
I wanna go to heaven when I die.

“Chattanooga Choo Choo”--
(Hey there Tex, what you say?)

Step aside partner, it's my day
Bend an ear and listen to my version
(Of a really solid Tennessee excursion)

Pardon me boy, is that the Chattanooga Choo Choo?
(Yes yes, track 29)
Boy, you can give me a shine
(Can you afford to board Chattanooga Choo Choo?)

I've got my fare
(And just a trifle to spare)

You leave the Pennsylvania station 'bout a quarter to four
Read a magazine and then you're in Baltimore
Dinner in the diner, nothing could be finer
(Then to have your ham and eggs in Carolina)

When you hear the whistle blowin' eight to the bar
Then you know that Tennessee is not very far
Shuffle all the coal in, gotta keep it rollin'
(Whoo whoo, Chattanooga, there you are)

There's gonna be a certain party at the station
Satin and Lace, I used to call funny face
She's gonna cry until I tell her that I'll never roam
(So Chattanooga Choo Choo)

Won't you choo choo me home
(Chattanooga, Chattanooga)
Get aboard

(Chattanooga, Chattanooga)
All aboard
(Chattanooga, Chattanooga)

Chattanooga Choo Choo
Won't you choo choo me home
Chattanooga Choo Choo

****Dorothy Dandridge and Nicholas Brothers' Version**

Pardon me boys, is that the Chattanooga Choo Choo?
(Yes yes, track 29)

That's on the Tennessee line (She said the Tennessee line)

She means that she can't afford,
I can't afford to board a Chattanooga Choo Choo
I've got my fare
But not a nickel to spare

“Chattanooga” by [Ishmael Reed](#), 1973

1
Some say that Chattanooga is the
Old name for Lookout Mountain
To others it is an uncouth name
Used only by the uncivilized
Our a-historical period sees it
As merely a town in Tennessee
To old timers of the Volunteer State
Chattanooga is “The Pittsburgh of
The South”
According to the Cherokee
Chattanooga is a rock that
Comes to a point

They're all right
Chattanooga is something you
Can have anyway you want it
The summit of what you are
I've paid my fare on that
Mountain Incline #2, Chattanooga
I want my ride up
I want Chattanooga

2
Like Nickajack a plucky Blood
I've escaped my battle near
Clover Bottom, braved the

Jolly Roger raising pirates
Had my near miss at Moccasin Bend
To reach your summit so
Give into me Chattanooga
I've dodged the Grey Confederate sharpshooters
Escaped my brother's tomahawks with only
Some minor burns
Traversed a Chickamauga of my own
Making, so
You belong to me Chattanooga

3
I take your East Ninth Street to my
Heart, pay court on your Market
Street of rubboard players and organ
Grinders of Haitian colors rioting
And old Zip Coon Dancers
I want to hear Bessie Smith belt out
I'm wild about that thing in
Your Ivory Theatre
Chattanooga
Coca-Cola's homebase
City on my mind

4
My 6th grade teacher asked me to
Name the highest mountain in the world
I didn't even hesitate, "Lookout Mountain"
I shouted. They laughed
Eastern nitpickers, putting on the
Ritz laughed at my Chattanooga ways
Which means you're always up to it

To get to Chattanooga you must
Have your Tennessee
"She has as many lives as a
cat. As to killing her, even
the floods have failed
you may knock the breath out of
her that's all. She will re-
fill her lungs and draw
a longer breath than ever"
From a Knoxville editorial –
1870s.

5
Chattanooga is a woman to me too
I want to run my hands through her
Hair of New Jersey tea and redroot
Ain't no harm in that

Be caressed and showered in
Her Ruby Falls
That's only natural
Heal myself in her
Minnehaha Springs
58 degrees F. all year
Around. Climb all over her
Ridges and hills
I wear a sign on my chest
"Chattanooga or bust"

6

"HOLD CHATTANOOGA AT ALL HAZARDS" – Grant
to Thomas

When I tasted your big juicy
Black berries ignoring the rattle-
Snakes they said come to Cameron
Hill after the rain, I knew I
Had to have you Chattanooga
When I swam in Lincoln Park
Listening to Fats Domino sing
I found my thrill on Blueberry
Hill on the loudspeaker
I knew you were mine Chattanooga
Chattanooga whose Howard Negro
School taught my mother Latin
Tennyson and Dunbar
Whose Miller Bros. Department
Store cheated my Uncle out of
What was coming to him
A pension, he only had 6
Months to go
Chattanoogaoooooooooooooga
Chattanoogaoooooooooooooga
"WE WILL HOLD THIS TOWN TILL WE STARVE" –
Thomas to Grant

7

To get to Chattanooga you must
Go through your Tennessee
I've taken all the scotsboros
One state can dish out
Made Dr. Shockley's "Monkey Trials"
The laughing stock of the Nation
Capt. Marvel Dr. Sylvania's shazam
Scientists running from light-
ning, so
Open your borders, Tennessee
Hide your TVA

DeSota determined, this
Serpent handler is coming
Through

Are you ready Lookout Mountain?

“Give all of my Generals what he’s
drinking,” Lincoln said, when the
Potomac crowd called Grant a lush

8
I’m going to strut all over your
Point like Old Sam Grant did
My belly full of good Tennessee
Whiskey, puffing on
A.05 cigar
The campaign for Chattanooga
Behind me
Breathing a spell
Ponying up for
Appomattox!

from [*Ishmael Reed: New and Collected Poems*](#) (1988)

APPENDIX F:

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE: PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT + HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURES

This neighborhood assessment toolkit was designed to put the power of neighborhood-based information gathering and analysis into the hands of the people. By assessing four broad areas of your community—its physical infrastructure, social infrastructure, economic development infrastructure and human infrastructure-- you will gain an in-depth understanding of its strengths and assets as well as its opportunity areas. The information gathered using this instrument can form the basis of neighborhood needs assessments, asset maps and ultimately, community visions and action plans.

The assessment is most efficiently conducted with two or more people working in a group. Typically, one volunteer will fill out the parcel assessment, while another will count and record elements of the built environment (i.e. storm drains, street trees, bus stops, etc.). The walk-through assessment can also be bolstered with quantitative data, such as that which is found in the US Census (www.census.gov) and state and local sources.

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
Roads/ Streets	a. One-Way Streets			
	b. Two Way Streets			
	c. Traffic lanes			
	d. Quality of streets			
	e. Crosswalks (printed on street)			
	f. Timed pedestrian crosswalks			
	g. Stop signs			
	h. Traffic Lights			
	i. Bike lanes			
	j. Existence of Sidewalks			
	k. Quality of Sidewalks (see glossary)			
	l. Curb Cuts (see glossary)			
	m. Speed bumps			
	n. Wheelchair accessible sidewalks			
	o. On-Street Parking			
	p. Surface Parking Lots			

Social Infrastructure

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
	q. Parking garages			
Streetscape Amenities	a. Overhead Streetlights			
	b. Number of public benches or chairs			
	c. Wayfaring (directional signage)			
	d. Historical Markers or plaques			
	e. Street signs (i.e. 'slow,' 'Deaf Child')			
	f. Neighborhood 'Gateways,' banners or markers (i.e. 'Welcome to Glenwood')			
	g. Trash Bins			
	h. Recycling Bins			
	i. Bicycle racks			
	j. Edible landscapes (i.e. fruit trees, herbs)			
	k. Street sweeping			
	l. Litter			
Sewer	a. Storm drains			
	b. Clogged drains			
	c. Local and county data			
Terrain/ Topography	a. Perceived inclines or hills			
	b. Local, state and federal data			
Urban Forestry/ Natural Habitats	c. Street trees			
	d. Maturity of street trees (see glossary)			
Urban Forestry and Natural Habitats	e. Quality of street trees (see glossary)			
	f. Number and acreage of unimproved parcels (municipal and county data)			

Social Infrastructure

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
	g. Forests and/or wooded areas			
	h. Wildlife corridors (state data)			
	i. Pets and Live animals (including strays)			
	j. Road kill			
Water/ Hydrography	a. Rivers and streams			
	b. Environmental Warning Signage (i.e. “don’t fish” or “don’t swim”)			
	c. Standing Water (puddles, pools, etc.)			
Schools + Libraries	a. K-12 Schools: number, grades taught, type and location (public, private, charter)			
	b. Campus/ Grounds—open to public?			
	c. Popular or continuing education classes			
	d. Zoning/Community boundary overlap? (city and county data)			
	e. Pre-Schools, Head Start, early education			
	f. Adult GED Programs			
	g. Public libraries			
	h. Private libraries (universities, etc.)			
	i. Vacant school buildings			
	j. Adult Ed—Financial Skills, Job Skills, Relationship + parenting classes			
	k. Popular education programs (i.e. free schools, community lectures, etc.)			
Public Space— Active (ball fields, playgrounds)	a. Number, location and type (including greenways)			
	b. Programmed Uses and Activities (i.e. baseball fields, fitness trail, etc.)			
	c. Posted use restrictions or permit requirements			
Public Space-- Passive (plazas,	a. Number, location and type			

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
gardens, etc.)				
	b. Amenities (tables, chairs, fountains, landscaping, etc.)			
	c. Posted use restrictions or permit requirements			
Public Activities + Social Events	a. Neighborhood block parties			
	b. Senior activities			
	c. Youth activities			
	d. Family activities			
	e. Sports clubs			
	f. Cultural events + celebrations			
	g. Community Association meetings			
	h. Public forums			
	i. Potlucks, etc.			
Community Gardens	a. Community Gardens			
	b. Fences			
	c. Programmed Uses and Activities (i.e. gardening or cooking classes)			
	d. Farm Stands or Produce Exchanges			
	e. Vacant lots			
Food Stores/ Markets	a. Supermarkets and grocery store chains			
	b. Neighborhood grocery stores and bodegas			
	a. Selling Produce?			
	b. Selling Fresh Meat?			
	c. Selling Beer?			
	c. Farmers' markets			
	d. Mobile market (i.e. produce trucks)			

Social Infrastructure

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
	e. Liquor stores			
	f. Specialty food retail (bakery, ice cream, coffee, etc.)			
	g. Ethnic/ Cultural food stores			
	h. Milk prices (per gallon)			
Public Transit	a. Transit/ Bus stops			
	b. Bus shelters			
	c. Schedules posted at stops			
	d. Wheelchair accessibility of buses			
	e. Frequency of routes; hours of operation; timeliness (CARTA data)			
	f. Local and regional data (including subsidies and taxation)			
Housing	a. Single Family Houses			
	b. Two-Family Houses/ Duplexes			
	c. 3-6 unit housing (condos and apartments)			
	d. 7-10 unit housing			
	e. 10 – 20 unit housing			
	f. 20 units or more housing			
	g. On Campus Housing (dorms)			
	h. Off-Campus Housing programs			
	i. Homeless+ Informal settlements/ tent cities			
	j. Public/ subsidized housing			
	k. Senior Housing			
Housing	l. Squatters (in vacant housing)			
	m. Gentrification trends (census data)			
	n. Housing Vacancies			
	o. Vandalism			

Social Infrastructure

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
	p. Boarded up/ unkempt yard/landscape			
	q. Foreclosures (signs and county data)			
	r. Housing for Sale			
	s. Housing for Rent			
Social Services	a. Types of services and locations			
	b. Homeless Shelters			
	c. Kitchens and food pantries			
	d. Women and families (including shelters)			
	e. Group homes			
	f. Substance Abuse rehabilitation			
	g. Senior Centers			
	h. Youth Centers and Programs			
	i. Programs for formerly incarcerated			
Employment Services	a. Job training centers			
	b. Day labor centers			
	c. Workers' Centers			
	d. Youth employment programs			
	e. Employment Programs for differently abled residents			
	f. Union programs/ apprenticeship programs			
	g. Intervention/ diversion programs (from justice system)			
Recreation Centers	a. Indoor Facilities			
	b. Outdoor facilities			
	c. Scheduled programs			
	d. Murals			
	e. Hours of operation/ availability of staff			

Infrastructure

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
Public Art	a. Graffiti			
	b. Sculptures			
	c. Monuments			
	d. Public performance spaces (stages, amphitheaters, etc.)			
Colleges + Universities	a. Type (2 year, 4 year, university, seminary) and Location			
	b. Public Art Programs/ Classes			
	c. Institutional Engagement-Public Education			
	d. Institutional Engagement-Community Development (bricks and mortar projects)			
	e. Participatory action or community based research projects (faculty and students)			
	f. Master plans and institutional development agendas (including public participation process)			
Religious and Faith Institutions	a. Number and type			
	b. Scale, size and source of membership (neighborhood-based, outsider based, mega church)			
	c. Local ministry programs			
	d. International ministry programs			
	e. Land Holdings			
	f. PILOT (payments in lieu of taxes) programs (including sewer fees)			
	g. Land development plans			
Health Care	a. Hospitals			
	b. Private Practices—TennCare?			
	c. Community Health Centers			
	d. Dentists			

Economic Development Infrastructure

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
	e. Mental Health Programs/ Facilities			
	f. Disability Services			
	g. Mobile health units			
	h. Medicaid and Medicare Stats			
Crime + Crime Prevention	a. Neighborhood Watch			
	b. Police presence			
	c. No trespassing signs			
	d. Posted guard dogs			
	e. Prevalence of Drugs (drug use)			
	f. Prevalence of street exchanges and drug houses (dealers' houses)			
Crime + Crime Prevention	g. Known/ suspected drug suppliers			
	h. Prevalence of Guns			
	i. Arrests			
	j. Instances of police abuse/ brutality			
	k. Prostitution (sex work)			
	l. Registered sex offenders			
	m. Prevalence of Break Ins/ Property Crime			
	n. Prevalence of non-domestic violent crime (except shootings)			
	o. Shootings and gun crimes			
	p. Domestic violence			
	q. Corrections institutions (number, type, public/private)			
	r. Youth corrections facilities			
	s. Modes of police accountability			
	t. Citizens' Police Academy Graduates			
	u. Nonprofit Community Service Programs			

Economic Development Infrastructure

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
Cost of Living	a. Rents and housing prices			
	b. Day Care Centers (Number and Type)			
	c. Public housing and section 8 markets			
Utilities	a. Availability of power sources			
	b. Renewable energy infrastructure			
	c. Rebates and incentives			
Telecommunications	a. Internet, Cell phone, etc. infrastructure			
	b. Free wireless hotspots			
Brownfields/ Potential Brownfields	a. Industrial activity/ mix			
	b. Vacant industrial or commercial land			
	c. State and federal environmental data			
Waste/ Wastewater Systems	a. Local waste and recycling infrastructure			
	b. Storm water management infrastructure			
Commercial Space	Vacant space—for rent or sale sign			
	Vacant space—other (abandoned, etc.)			
Red Tape	Regulatory and permitting procedures			
	Relocation and expansion Incentive packages (local, state and regional data)			
Site Readiness	City County and State Policies			
Existing Commercial/ Business Mix	Business Mix (# of restaurants, # of offices, # of gas stations, etc.)			
	Flea Markets			
	Public Markets (informal and formal)			

Human Infrastructure

Indicators	Associated Measurements	Yes/ No *	Total Number	Details/ Notes/ Locations/ etc.**
Local Job Market	Job announcement/ 'Now Hiring' signs			
	Local, county, MSA data			
Banks and Financial Institutions	a. Credit Unions			
	b. Community/ local banks			
	c. National bank chains			
	d. Check cashing, payday lenders, title loans			
	e. Pawn shops			
	f. Public banks			

Indicators	Observations, Examples and Comments
Empowerment/ 'Can Do' Neighborhood	
Strength/ capacity of formal neighborhood relationship networks	
Desires for neighborhood-based development	
Desires for outside developers	
Characteristics of labor force	
Examples of mutual aid and indigenous service networks (how does your community take care of itself? How do you take care of one another?)	
Indigenous skill sets and community assets (What knowledge and values might we bring to our community?)	

Assessment Glossary with Images

1. **Curb Cuts:** A **curb cut** is a solid (usually concrete) ramp graded down from the top surface of a [sidewalk](#) to the surface of an adjoining street. It is designed for pedestrian uses and commonly found in urban areas where pedestrian activity is expected. Examples:

Non-Curb Cut:



Curb Cut:



2. **Maturity of street trees:** Guess/ measurement of the age/ maturity of street trees:

Young (1)



Medium / Established (2)



Mature (3)



3. **Quality of street trees:** Assessment of whether the tree is healthy, overgrown/ in need of trimming, or dying/ dead. Examples:

Healthy (1)
(3)



Overgrown (2)



Dead or Dying



4. **Traffic lanes:** The total count of lanes laid across a street (both directions, including turning lanes). Examples:

2 lanes



4 lanes



PROPERTY/PARCEL ASSESSMENT

Parcel ID: From Hamilton County GIS website; don't worry about it up front

Street Name: self-explanatory

Street Number: self-explanatory; double check with neighborhood map to line up

Land Use, General:

- R: Residential
- C: Commercial (includes stores, restaurants, gas stations, services, etc)
- I: Industrial (light and heavy manufacturing, including rail lines)
- VL: Vacant Land (undeveloped parcels without forest cover)
- F: Forested land
- P: Parks
- I: Institutional (includes hospitals and universities)
- G: Government (local, state or federal, including TVA)
- U: Utilities (includes power lines, transmission stations, cell phone towers, etc.)

Land Use, Specific: be as specific as possible about what's going on at the property

- For residential, single family, duplex, 10 unit apartment, etc.
 - For commercial, "BBQ Restaurant", "Kanku's gas station", etc.
- ... so on and so forth. Feel free to make additional notes about land use (especially if there are multiple things happening at a property) in the "Additional Information" field

Vacant: Yes or No

Boarded up: Yes or No

For Sale or Rent (if there is a "for rent" or "for sale" sign on the property): Sale, Rent, or No

Fence: Yes, No, PB (Partial backyard), PF (partial front yard)

Sidewalk: Yes or No

No Trespassing: Yes or No

Guard Dog or Sign: Dog, Sign, or No

Additional Information: anything else you think is pertinent. Be as specific as possible but also feel free to leave it blank if nothing stands out. If there is a “for sale” sign, look to see if the asking price is listed on a poster and make note.

Physical, Social Economic Development and Human Infrastructure

Most of the data collected in this instrument involves “yes” or “no” answers and a total count of the different elements assessed (i.e. the total number of crosswalks or traffic lanes on a street). If possible, also mark the location of different elements on the accompanying neighborhood maps (location of street trees and storm drains. You can use the following symbols to represent elements on the neighborhood map: ST: Street tree, SD: Storm drain, SL: Street light, BR: Bike rack, T: Trash bin, R: Recycling bin, PA: Public art (sculptures, murals, etc

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