Consultants, Urban Leadership, and the Replica City

BY

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DISSERTATION

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This dissertation is dedicated to the people of Oklahoma City.
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STB
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. CONSULTANTS AND CONTEMPORARY URBAN GOVERNANCE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection and Resurrection</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Oklahoma City?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Standard Package of Amenities</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of the Consultant</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. GOVERNING, GROWTH, AND THE GLOBAL CITY</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Competition in the Global Economy</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a Better Future</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rise of the External Expert</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Urban Governance</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03. NETWORKS OF NETWORKS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Niches and the Standard Package of Amenities</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The City Builders</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Government Officials</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Planners and Local Government Professionals</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Boosters</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room for Dissent?</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Guided Governance</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04. REPLICA CITY</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaving the City Beautiful from the Frontier</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Entrepreneurs and Urban Boosters</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Boom and Dust</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Renewal and the Pei Plan</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Boom and Bust</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betting on Horsedervatives and Hangars</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling Consultants and the Metropolitan Area Projects</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05. SCHOOLS AND SETTING THE AGENDA</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Oklahoma City</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive Eds as Anchors for Residential Development</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widespread Implementation, By Whom?</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chasing Image in a Fiscal Straitjacket</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Unique Look</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma City’s Approach</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Curious Case of Rex Elementary</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and the Standard Package of Amenities</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Replicating the Replica City’s Tactics: Fusion Referendums .......................... 177
  Birmingham, Alabama .................................................................................. 177
  El Paso, Texas ................................................................................................ 178
  The Political Consultant Component ......................................................... 179
Oklahoma City: MAPs 4? ................................................................................ 180
  Mass Transit and Streetcar Expansion ......................................................... 181
  Midtown, Deep Deuce, and Downtown Residential Development ............ 182
  Disconnected Areas: Plaza District, Classen Curve, and Capitol ............... 183
  Maintaining Momentum in Bricktown ......................................................... 184
  Bikeable, Walkable City ............................................................................... 185
Future Work ..................................................................................................... 186

Appendix A. METHODOLOGY ................................................................. 189

CITED LITERATURE ...................................................................................... 192
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Cities with Exclusive Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>List of Arenas, Construction and Renovation Dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>List of Convention Centers, Construction and Renovation Dates, and Size</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>City Beautiful Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Streetcars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The Pei Plan Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Adventure District and Bricktown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Images of Exclusive School Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Rex Elementary Enrollment Boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Adventure District Restaurants, Oklahoma City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Bricktown Restaurants, Oklahoma City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Las Vegas Lodging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Orlando Lodging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>New Orleans Lodging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>Grand Rapids Lodging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>San Jose Lodging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>Milwaukee Lodging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>Bricktown Development, 2003-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPS</td>
<td>Metropolitan Area Projects (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPs 3</td>
<td>Metropolitan Area Projects (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPs 4 Kids</td>
<td>Metropolitan Area Projects (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLB</td>
<td>Major League Baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA</td>
<td>National Basketball Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFL</td>
<td>National Football League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHL</td>
<td>National Hockey League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKC</td>
<td>Oklahoma City</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the role of external experts in local agenda setting. The study conducts on archival research on three components of Oklahoma City’s Metropolitan Area Projects programs, specifically education, indoor arenas, and convention centers. The decline in local leadership (especially regimes), an increased demand for complex amenities, and the emergence of a trans-urban policy network provide outside actors with agenda setting power. Evidence suggests that agenda setting for urban revitalization has shifted from “inside-out” to an “outside-in” model since the 1980s. Formerly urban leaders would request assistance for specific tactics aimed at urban revitalization; contemporary urban leaders articulate larger objectives to consultants but rely on advice to determine specific programs. A constellation of advocacy coalitions fill niches within the city building policy network, but no central actor organizes their activity. Although urban leaders may rely on outside actors for agenda items, local leaders retain the ability to determine the physical distribution and interaction of infrastructure, which impacts the efficacy of urban revitalization projects.
CHAPTER ONE
CONSULTANTS AND CONTEMPORARY URBAN GOVERNANCE

“We couldn’t imagine our people living in Oklahoma City.”¹ With that simple phrase, one year of effort to attract thousands of jobs evaporated. On a warm Wednesday afternoon, Oklahoma City Mayor Ron Norick received a phone call from United Airlines’ upper management. Norick had aggressively lobbied United for over a year to relocate a maintenance center in Oklahoma City, even supporting a sales tax increase. Instead of taking Oklahoma City’s $250 million subsidy, United Airlines decided to relocate its maintenance facilities to Indianapolis in 1991.² Norick realized that “In order to compete effectively, we have to look like a big league city…. When it comes right down to it, Oklahoma City is still not considered a big league city and if it takes us doing something … then we’ll do it.”³ This rejection sparked Oklahoma City’s renaissance.

Oklahoma City had seen better days, and self-inflicted wounds made the economic slowdown worse. The early 1970s saw Oklahoma City tear down large swaths of its downtown to make room for renewal-era construction. Funding dried up before most of the new city could rise. These public blunders reinforced private sector catastrophe. In 1982, recent economic prosperity collapsed. Oklahoma City’s financial sector overleveraged assets and overcommitted to the oil industry. When the bubble burst, local banks failed. An economic chain reaction leveled businesses and property values throughout the city.⁴ Downtown executives evacuated

¹ Attributed to United Airlines management, quoted by Mick Cornett http://bit.ly/V4F4Fn
their companies to Houston or faced acquisition by multinational conglomerates. What prosperity Oklahoma City had enjoyed fizzled. United Airlines’ high profile rejection was another reminder of how far the city had fallen.

Two decades later, thousands of fans packed the downtown arena to watch the local sports club compete for the big league championship. Many enjoyed dinner in the city’s revitalized leisure district. A handful walked from their walkup apartments in the nearby downtown residential enclave. As these highly educated, single- and dual-income-no-kids families passed through the arena’s turnstiles, they engaged in what had become a quasi-religious ceremony and a justification for twenty years of effort: watching professional basketball.

Oklahoma City had endured economic desolation, unfathomable terrorism, and the stress of a self-imposed makeover from a major minor city into a minor major city. After withstanding the refiner’s fire, Oklahoma City was finally a big league city.

Oklahoma City revitalized its downtown by tapping into an external network of expertise – a relatively new option available to local leaders. In an earlier time, Oklahoma City’s turnaround would have required a sustained, motivated, coherent political coalition to define a strategy and develop tactics to pursue economic revitalization – an arrangement nearly impossible in today’s political world. This type of leadership may take many forms. Robert Caro’s analysis of Robert Moses’ New York finds that power can be consolidated in and deployed from non-political offices. In the political sphere, Robert Salisbury notes the importance of strong central political leadership, often held by the mayor’s office. Machine bosses like Richard J. Daley could cautiously leverage vast resources in order to accomplish

large tasks aimed at economic vitality. These executive-centered coalitions made way for regimes, an informal governing arrangement among political, social, and business leaders. Instead of calling shots like quasi-autocrats, regime leaders would “socially produce” political outcomes through negotiations. This coalition allowed leaders to exchange political legitimacy for economic resources. Regimes allowed cities to embark on great projects, like Atlanta’s Hartsfield Airport, but often floundered with the demise of federal urban renewal funds.

Between reforms in government structure that decentralize power and the decline of local actors who traditionally champion regimes, American cities have little opportunity to rebuild and sustain these traditional, do-it-yourself political arrangements capable of developing both a strategy and tactics toward economic vitality.

Oklahoma City exemplifies a new model in local decision making and urban revitalization, not possible in former eras. Local leaders identified a broad strategy for economic revitalization, but deferred to expertise to define tactics. Instead of compiling the resources needed to develop and implement specific programs, Oklahoma City’s leaders plugged itself into a sprawling network of experts. It was not alone. An established cadre of consultants is ready to provide communities with a menu of actionable plans to pursue locals’ vision for the future. Although this new relationship increases the ease of governance cities, it places remarkable power in the hands of those outside the city limits – especially in terms of shaping the agenda. This institutionalized city-consultant network enables locals to bypass the painstaking costs

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required to build and maintain the political coalitions required for do-it-yourself governance, which allows smaller cities to replicate their larger peers in the name of economic revitalization.

**Rejection and Resurrection**

Oklahoma City Mayor Ron Norick realized that he needed to do something drastic to wright a sinking ship. The 1980s oil bust caused the local economy to implode, annihilating the staple industry, erasing a decade of prosperity, and vaporizing thousands of jobs. Making matters worse, United Airlines reinjured civic pride by rebuffing a lucrative subsidy to develop an air maintenance facility, rubbed salt into Oklahoma City’s festering wounds by citing the lower quality of life compared to Indianapolis. The community had an image problem: a strange amalgamation of Rogers and Hammerstein, an oil-man-gone-bust, and the Joad family prevented business from considering investment in Oklahoma City. Norick knew he had to do something, but he did not know what to do.

Norick quietly took a trip to Indianapolis to better understand the high profile rejection. A quick drive around downtown, and the differences were readily apparent. As Norick recalls, Indianapolis was “a live city, I mean there’s people on the streets, and there were restaurants and hotels and a Convention facility and all this stuff. It got to be a quality of life issue if you were the CEO of United Airlines and you wanted to have your people work in Oklahoma City or Indianapolis, it was a hands-down decision.” When Norick returned, he found an aging minor

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Bureau of Economic Analysis. “Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.”
http://1.usa.gov/V2I4oL


league baseball park, a tired convention center with an undersized arena, and barely enough revenue to fund the government. Norick concluded that a vibrant downtown was critical to assuring quality of life and an economic future.

To resurrect downtown and save the city, Norick organized a group of local businessmen and social leaders to brainstorm a revitalization plan. Local business leaders agreed that downtown was the key battleground, but they did not know what to build. Certain staple projects were readily apparent: refurbishing or rebuilding sports and meetings facilities. Nearly every group in Oklahoma City had a pet project, whether it was the Chamber of Commerce pushing for a water feature near downtown to artists wanting to retrofit performance halls to agricultural interests wanting to expand the fairgrounds. Oklahoma City’s leadership conjured a vision and grand strategy for the city born in a day: a thriving downtown with arts, culture, and entertainment. Oklahoma City was a mess, and local leaders had little idea which actionable plans would tactically approach the leisure downtown plan… so they hired in a consultant.12

After surveying the political scene and local economic base, consultants advised Oklahoma City’s leaders to propose a slate of projects on a single ballot initiative. The oil bust left a wake of partially considered policy options on the table. City leaders consulted with local engineers to provide rough estimates for potential costs. Local planners and outside consultants estimated that the programs most efficient at jumpstarting the downtown’s image would cost approximately $300 million. Voters had recently approved sales tax increases to fund the police department, fire department, city zoo, and the star-crossed United Airlines maintenance facility. Leaders proposed a temporary, five-year, single-cent sales tax to fund nine projects: building a new major-league class arena, constructing a new minor league ballpark, updating the

convention center, a water feature connecting the central business district and the river, a series of dams to improve the river waterfront, expanding the fairground meeting spaces, overhauling the civic center music hall, a new downtown library, and rubber-tire trolleys to transport visitors. This vote posed a significant political risk, because the first attempt at a police and fire tax increase met such public resistance that it led (in part) to the dismissal of an unelected city manager. Leaders applied the parliamentary tactic of logrolling to a popular referendum by grinding a legislative sausage referendum voters would pass. Campaign consultants and the mayor stumped for the “Metropolitan Area Projects” (MAPs) referendum in late 1993. The issue passed with 54% of the vote, and Oklahoma City turned to building a big league city.

By approving four referenda over the course of two decades, Oklahoma City voters allocated $2 billion to major projects suggested by consultants. Oklahoma City leaders have identified weaknesses in the local community, from a deceased downtown to a brain drain to inadequate schools to infrastructure shortfalls. In every case, Oklahoma City has asked for assistance from expertise beyond its borders. With help from consultants, Oklahoma City has constructed key pieces of entertainment infrastructure developed by major cities in the United States. Instead of building infrastructure featured in peer cities, Oklahoma City climbed the urban hierarchy by building bigger than their current stature. The investments paid dividends over the next two decades: Oklahoma City is a big league city.

Oklahoma City’s revival strategy transformed the community in the Replica City. Oklahoma City’s leadership had a basic vision: a hustling and bustling downtown; however, local leaders had no idea which tactics or programs to implement to make their dreams into

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13 City of Oklahoma City Municipal Code ; Chapter 52, Section 23.b.7
14 City of Oklahoma City Municipal Code ; Chapter 52, Section 23.b.7
reality. As a result, they called consultants who helped Oklahoma City replicate initiatives other cities had undertaken. Oklahoma City was late to the postindustrial revitalization game, mainly because the oil boom had delayed the onset of blight. By the time Oklahoma City felt the effects of the urban decline, experts were available to provide advice to guide Oklahoma City’s recovery by prescribing a template of projects. Oklahoma City’s pursuit of this consultant driven regimen replicated aspects of cities nationwide. Notable examples include Oklahoma City’s Bricktown Canal’s similarity to Indianapolis’ Canal and San Antonio’s Riverwalk, Oklahoma City’s Chesapeake Arena’s construction and retrofit to include in-house amenities on par with other National Basketball Association franchises, and Oklahoma City’s commitment to build a new convention center with like amenities to other mid-sized cities’ exposition halls – as prescribed by industry leading consultants. Over the next several years, Oklahoma City transformed into the Replica City.

Why Oklahoma City?

Oklahoma City’s turnaround presents a remarkable case study for urban revitalization. The magnitude and speed of economic turnaround is notable. Instead of a slow descent into the urban crisis, Oklahoma City went from prosperity to devastation in a matter of months. During the 1980s oil glut, Oklahoma City faced an economic collapse as one-half of the jobs in the regional staple industry disintegrated. Construction ground to a halt and nearly one-fifth of financial sector employment evaporated.\(^\text{16}\) Oklahoma City changed its fate through an aggressive infrastructure program starting in the 1990s. Luckily for Oklahoma City, an increasingly institutionalized network of experts provided several tactics to plug into a local

\(^{16}\) Bureau of Economic Analysis. “Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.” http://1.usa.gov/V2I4oL
revitalization strategy. This policy community mutes the local need for traditional coalitions, because an established menu of policy solutions is readily available for leaders. Oklahoma City’s aggressive strategy replicated a wide array of these tactics by building a smorgasbord of entertainment infrastructure investment. Contrary to the national trend, Oklahoma City’s economy improved over the last decade – despite the Great Recession. Despite national stagnation, Oklahoma City enjoys an economic renaissance. Currently, Oklahoma City boasts unemployment rates in the lowest quintile of metropolitan areas,¹⁷ and sales tax receipts rebounded from the Great Recession by 2010.¹⁸

Oklahoma City’s revitalization comes in the wake of significant obstacles commonplace in American cities. Structural problems complicate Oklahoma City’s politics, from a lack of social organization to historically disorganized leadership. Oklahoma City’s rapid settlement – literally in a matter hours – led to many institutional problems.¹⁹ Few organizations have emerged to consolidate political support. The lack of strong institutions coincides with many American cities. Nationally, regime coalitions have declined, leaving cities without the local leadership to speak for the community.²⁰ Without institutions to foster cohesive leadership, overcoming collective action difficulties in the American city often appears insurmountable.

Like many American cities, Oklahoma City is a middle sized city. Markusen, Lee, and DiGiovanna develop the concept of second tier cities as “spatially distinct areas of economic

¹⁸ City of Oklahoma City. Statistics gathered from the 2007 and 2010 actual budgets.
¹⁹ Settlers descended on Oklahoma City during a land run. These spectacles boiled down to a race to claim plots of land. For a good illustration, see Ron Howard’s Far and Away. Howard, Ron. 1992. Far and Away. Universal Pictures.
activity where a specialized set of trade-oriented industries takes root and flourishes, establishing employment and population growth trajectories that are the envy of many other places.”

Savitch and Kantor describe these communities as secondary cities, the former home of niche industries—usually absorbed by larger firms in larger cities. The expansion of the global marketplace, the subsequent outsourcing of industry, and the consolidation of local businesses into multinational corporations left many middle sized cities without a primary function in either a national or a global economy. These now errant cities faced a declining position in the global hierarchy, and distinct disadvantages compared to their larger counterparts. Secondary cities must outbargain their larger peers to lure and secure scarce economic resources, despite bargaining from a disadvantageous position. This structural disadvantage can create a core-periphery effect, which redirects resources from smaller cities to larger metropolises.

Oklahoma City is not an “everyman” city; however, it is a reasonable example of the recent strategy for revitalization. Over the last twenty-five years, Oklahoma City has engaged an aggressive program to become a major metropolitan area. Dedicating over $2 billion to civic improvements, Oklahoma City invested in infrastructure that signals major city status: arenas, stadiums, cultural amenities, riverfront districts, parks, entertainment districts, tourism districts, mass transit, education facilities, and convention centers. Using broad themes common to other cities’ revitalization movements such as “quality of life”, “walkability” and a focus on specific districts, Oklahoma City’s investments reflect a typical portfolio for urban revitalization. Since 1990, Oklahoma City exhibits a nearly exhaustive list of revitalization programs implemented in the United States. As such, it creates a fruitful case for research.

The Standard Package of Amenities

Contemporary cities develop amenities to boost their image through a trophy case of infrastructure. Glaeser notes the trend where cities attempt to satiate an edifice complex by building massive construction projects.\(^{23}\) Local leaders champion these projects, pointing to new infrastructure as trophies during reelection bids.\(^{24}\) Perhaps most surprising is the widespread usage of this trophy collection. It is difficult to imagine a regional city without a downtown convention space, a modest stadium, and a niche entertainment district. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine a global city without a mass transit system beyond simple busses, a place to play, and a grand arena. Communities that desire to hold their place or advance their position within the urban hierarchy must invest in the standard package of amenities found in similar communities. From an alternate perspective, infrastructure serves as a status gatekeeper between the perception of major and minor cities.

A transportable and evolving standard package of amenities has emerged across cities. What infrastructure a city maintains indicates its place in the urban hierarchy. Sports, convention space, leisure districts, attempts at residential gentrification, green spaces, mass transit, reconfigured local education, and other infrastructure all serve as a proxy for the urban quality of life. Sports are likely the most salient example: global cities host summer Olympic Games; national cities host top-tier professional sports teams; regional cities host smaller


The concept of a “big-league” city is often palpably different than a “minor-league” compatriot. Similar iterations apply to different topics, from the relatively new investment in fixed-rail transit to the presence of buzzing cultural scenes.

The standard package of amenities is a continually evolving list of features found in a given community of a certain size. During the industrial era’s heyday, only the greatest cities could afford to sponsor international expositions, build grand railroad terminals, and spawn picturesque suburbs for the wealthiest citizens. DiGaetano identifies new services emerging in the industrial era, including professionalized safety and sanitation systems. Smaller cities sought more modest but similar features, from regional fairs and national sporting events to railroad junctions. In the wake of the urban renewal era, Frieden and Sagalyn identified a “mayor’s trophy collection” of infrastructure that includes “a [downtown] shopping mall, new office towers, a convention center, an atrium hotel, a restored historic neighborhood… a domed stadium, aquarium, or cleaned-up waterfront… the essential equipment for a first-class American city.”

Today, the postindustrial cities aim to secure international festivals, serve as airline hubs, and house their wealthiest in gentrifying districts. Similarly, smaller cities covet the status garnered by hosting a big league sports franchise, transportation options, and livable downtown

25 According to the Globalization and World Cities Research Network, nearly all hosts of recent Summer Olympic Games are “alpha” cities. Athens, Montreal, and Rome are “beta” cities who have hosted the Olympics since 1960. Major league sports strategically place franchises in large markets, with affiliates in smaller markets. Baseball institutionalizes this logic with a multi-tier system of sports franchises operating in multiple leagues. In 1963, these leagues developed into classes, ranging from the major leagues to AAA to AA to A.


districts. Perpetual evolution transforms the standard package of amenities into a moving target beyond the intellectual reach of most local leaders.

Oklahoma City aggressively pursued the current rendition of the standard package of amenities. This generation hearkens back to many of the previous generations’ goals. State-of-the-art, reformed, exclusive schools provide a new brand of professional services in cities, while downtown outdoor spaces create the opportunity for outdoor festivals. Downtown, waterborne leisure districts remain a priority, as cities nationwide continue to reinvent (or, in some cases, manufacture) their ocean and riverfronts. Finally, sports facilities and convention halls continue to play a critical role in the constellation of common city infrastructure. Oklahoma City has replicated each of these programs, but instead of building a political coalition to create these ideas from scratch, Oklahoma City’s leadership called on outside expertise to equip locals with the tactics needed build the Replica City.

**The Role of the Consultant**

After the United Airlines rejection, Oklahoma City’s leaders knew that they wanted to build a “big league city”, but did not know what to do or how to do it. So they called a consultant. Rick Horrow had recently succeeded working with Miami to complete its downtown arena and secure NBA and NHL franchises to anchor a fledgling downtown entertainment district. Horrow played a critical role in both framing and promoting the Metropolitan Area Projects using previous experiences to guide the referendum. More recently, Horrow helped worked with the El Paso Tomorrow PAC approve $470 million in bonds for quality of life measures in 2012. Beyond these two cases, Horrow’s consulting group has left its fingerprints on nearly $3 trillion in public
and private investment in dozens of communities.\textsuperscript{28} Beyond Horrow’s outfit, many city planners, architects, industry groups, and other consultants claim expertise to assist cities implement their image of a better tomorrow.

Urban leaders may want to pursue economic development, but often they do not know how; as a result, they must contact someone who does – an expert. These consultants serve as a conduit between a community’s ambition and the expertise to implement the standard package of amenities. Each phase of a revitalization project often requires expertise, from estimating costs to generating enough revenue and covering costs, from designing the specific infrastructure to convincing policymakers and voters to allocate scarce resources, from building individual projects to composing districts out of infrastructure. Urban leaders likely have neither the expertise nor the awareness necessary to understand the changing standards of life in American cities, but a growing group of consultants may prepare this valuable information. Consultants behave similarly to think tanks at other levels of government by providing grand strategists with the tactics and political ammunition to accomplish their goals.\textsuperscript{29}

Consultants function as political actors. Technocrats enjoy a privileged position in local agenda setting because they can frame how local leaders understand and interpret the standard package of amenities. Local leaders are rational, but often work with limited information. As a result, key components of Herbert Simon’s argument about bounded rationality applies to local


governance. In essence, one may not select an option if one does not know it exists. Similarly, cities may not select a policy option if they are unaware that it is a policy option. Urban leaders perceive their cities’ relative place within a larger context of other communities and are very sensitive to perceived inadequacy, but they often only partially understand how to achieve prosperity and revival. Consultants familiar with successes and failures in other cities develop a condensed menu of projects over time. Consultants’ advice can filter information available to decision makers, gaining influence by being a de facto liaison of information between established knowledge and policymakers. Without a countervailing voice, a network of consultants can dominate a policy area. In this case, self-interested actors may pervert these standards to their own advantage. Further, institutionalized policy networks have the ability to frame infrastructure issues, manage the terms of debate, and simply wait out opposition.

The following dissertation traces the new role of consultants in urban revitalization. This dissertation hypothesizes that (1) a standard package of amenities exists across cities and that (2) consultants outside of a city’s jurisdiction guide the local agenda to include this standard package of amenities. The effort begins with an extended theoretical argument. The work attempts to reconcile the impacts of globalization on urban coalitions and previous theoretical frameworks for understanding urban governance. The focus shifts to Oklahoma City by engaging a “bottom-up” approach by highlighting revitalization programs. Education, professional sports, and convention centers receive special attention, because Oklahoma City’s revitalization budget

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32 McFarland presents an argument that countervailing coalitions can potentially challenge a group dominating a policy area. Theoretically, a countervailing force could arise in the expertise arena as it does with political entrepreneurs or resource holders. McFarland, Andrew S. 2004. *Neopluralism*. University of Kansas Press.
allocates the most funds to the three projects. The project weaves information from other cases to alleviate generalizability concerns. By presenting data from the central city in all metropolitan statistical areas with more than one million residents, the study suggests that a national trend has emerged with an evolving city building policy network influencing local decisions. This selection follows the “good-enough N” trend in recent political science including the Baumgartner, et al, study on lobbying influence in Congressional policymaking,\textsuperscript{33} Trounstine’s study on political monopolies,\textsuperscript{34} and Pagano and Hoene’s ongoing City Fiscal Policy Space project.\textsuperscript{35} Finally, the dissertation concludes by placing the discussion into a larger context and providing insights into larger political science questions. Regarding the argument at hand, the conclusion highlights the emergent dependence on consultants for development, further develops the power over place argument, and examines the role urban leaders play in the global era.

Although agenda setting may be predominantly in the hands of others, urban leaders retain the power of place. Where a city decides to build an arena, new school, or a convention center can affect the efficacy of leisure districts, the speed of revitalization, and the distribution of quality public services. This manuscript expands the traditional boundaries when studying urban governance, including the role of outside actors on local governance. Conclusions include that an extended city building network exists beyond city borders, this policy network wields substantial influence over the tactics used in the local agenda, and that cities maintain the power to influence their own fate by strategically placing prescribed projects to maximize returns.


\textsuperscript{34} Trounstine, Jessica. 2008. \textit{Political Monopolies in American Cities: The Rise and Fall of Bosses and Reformers}. University of Chicago Press.

CHAPTER TWO
GOVERNING, GROWTH, AND THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY

“Chaotic action is preferable to orderly inaction.”
Will Rogers

A series of miscalculations precipitated a near knockout punch for Oklahoma City. After visiting Pittsburgh to examine their urban renewal program, Oklahoma City’s business leaders began a long push towards a similar program. During the 1960s the local newspaper owner, oil magnate, and a longtime Chamber of Commerce advocate organized a short-lived coalition that hired I.M. Pei to craft a city master plan. By the time Oklahoma City started clearing space to implement this plan, federal funds faltered. Many buildings fell, while few new ones rose. Despite these errors, a thriving petroleum economy insulated Oklahoma City from the urban crisis. Oklahoma City prospered, although the oil industry lured investment away from the Pei Plan. Petroleum profits compensated for losses in manufacturing and agriculture. Oklahoma City coasted past the urban crisis until the oil bubble burst. Oklahoma City’s staple economy imploded, which exposed previous errors. Oklahoma City’s immediate response to the economic crisis involved market incentives. Subsidies to build gambling facilities and airline hangars failed to move the employment needle, and Oklahoma City careened further into the economic abyss.

During the early 1990s, Oklahoma City pivoted strategies. Previous plans appeared to have inflicted more harm than good, from razing swaths of downtown to leisure districts that

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37 Haynes, Caroline and Vanessa Langley. Magnet Cities: Decline Fightback Victory. KMPG.
38 The Bureau of Economic Analysis provides information regarding the number of employed by industrial sector. The Oklahoma City metropolitan statistical area shows a steady decrease in manufacturing and agricultural jobs during the 1970s while a steeper increase in extraction (oil) jobs.

Bureau of Economic Analysis. Interactive Data.
attracted negligible visitors and produced negligible economic improvement. \footnote{See discussion of the Pei Plan in chapter 4 and the Adventure District in chapter 8 below.} Leaders imagined a lively downtown, with visitors bustling between shops and restaurants. During the 1990s, Oklahoma City built leisure infrastructure to encourage this vision. 1993’s Metropolitan Area Projects developed a waterway to guide commercial development between the city’s central business district and the waterfront, through a blighted industrial warehouse district. The 2000s saw additional investments in luring single-income no kids, dual-income no kids, and young professional families downtown with new schools, professional sports, and new arts amenities. In short, Oklahoma City changed from advertising itself as a business-friendly place to conduct business into building itself into a productive, competitive place to conduct business.

Oklahoma City’s change in its revitalization strategy reflects a larger paradigm shift nationwide. Revitalization strategies mutated as American cities cast off their industrial shells and emerged as postindustrial communities. Basic tenets of economic growth in previous years – encouraging manufacturing through subsidies and services – were no longer effective. Instead of using subsidies to attract business, cities attempt to develop a productive business climate. \footnote{Eisinger calls the subsidy-based development strategies as “demand-side”, while “supply-side” strategies involve building a competitive advantage for businesses indigenous to the community. Eisinger, Peter K. 1988. \textit{The Rise of the Entrepreneurial State: State and Local Economic Development Policy in the United States}. University of Wisconsin Press.} Similarly, Kantor and Savitch describe the development debate in bargaining terms, where a community’s economic health, state support, local culture, and leadership wherewithal contribute to a city’s bargaining position. \footnote{Savitch, H.V. and Paul Kantor. 2004. \textit{Cities in the International Marketplace}. Princeton University Press.} Most often, the workforce anchors these efforts because they are the most mobile factor of economic production. \footnote{Clarke, Susan E. and Gary L. Gaile. 1998. \textit{The Work of Cities}. University of Minnesota Press.} Instead of competing over capital,
communities like Oklahoma City compete over capital magnets: highly skilled, dynamic workers.  

Urban leaders generate visions of urban revitalization, but they rarely know what actionable options are available; therefore they turn to consultants. The changes have come swiftly, and they have coincided with the rise of a network of experts that specializes in several types of infrastructure. This network includes a constellation of industries, including but not limited to the professional sports industry, the meetings industry, and educators. Members of each group interacts with local leaders, helping guide the local agenda.

**Urban Competition in the Global Economy**

In response to the increasingly liquid marketplace, cities have cultivated a new crop of infrastructure items designed to attract twenty-first century capital. Instead of constructing yesteryear’s economic security predicated on blue-collar muscle, contemporary cities build their base around the white-collar information and service sectors.  

In the wake of free trade, multinational corporations shuttered domestic manufacturing plants; even Oklahoma City felt the growing pains after General Motors closed its automobile factory – one of the community’s largest employers. As manufacturing became less stable and no longer a viable option for sustained economic prosperity, cities pivoted to new economic strategy. Today, urban elites focus on attracting key economic factors in the global market by building communication nodes


to command and control production abroad and lure high value-added labor to manage these
information centers.45

This revitalization plan often engages a two-front battle. First, cities must gather the
resources required to compete in the current marketplace. Either cultivating or capturing a cadre
of creative workers is an economic priority. Cities go to great lengths to appease these workers,
equipping downtown neighborhoods laden with amenities to incite gentrification. Second, city
leaders spin their community’s image of a reputable location to conduct business.46 Free land
and tax incentives are no longer a viable entrepreneurial strategy due to footloose capital and
labor; instead, cities must provide easily consumed snapshots that display a city’s strengths:
productive workers, quality of life, and a perceived safe harbor for capital. In an extreme
example, Houston’s commitment to market-friendly policies has helped the city rapidly grow
despite several challenges for social policies. Transit systems remain minimal, planning
measures miniscule, and low air quality clogs the skies; yet the city is able to attract businesses
in blue-collar industries.47 Houston endures a large amount of income inequality and a
remarkably no-frills cultural standing.48 By building and touting economic advantages, cities can
secure their place and future within the global marketplace.

45 Florida, Richard. 2002. The Rise of the Creative Class: And How it’s transforming work,
Urban Development. Johns Hopkins.
Economy of Urban Development in North America and Western Europe. Princeton University
Press.
Capital and labor are increasingly mobile in the global economy. Savitch and Kantor describe contemporary economic development in terms of cities bargaining with mobile capital. Depending on the local economic conditions, intergovernmental assistance, local cultural preferences and leadership coherence, a city’s bargaining position can be strong enough to attract businesses or weak enough to require public subsidy to attract capital. High value added labor is perhaps most important to the contemporary marketplace; it is the fuel in the local economic engine. Similar to geographically footloose private capital, skilled labor is increasingly mobile. Mollenkopf notes the prosperity in San Francisco and Boston, attributing the economic success and foreign investment to a quality labor force. Florida provides similar praise for Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Mellon and cultural investments specifically aimed at keeping its single- and dual-income no kids households. Nomadic capital and labor places cities in a precarious economic position: a weakened bargaining position for cities that lose “creative capital” and a productivity windfall for cities able to attract high value added workers. On the flip side, inbound creative migrants from another city’s brain drain could be an economic boon for the destination.

Building a Better Future

Today’s cities chase financial stability through infrastructure. Pagano and Bowman suggest that deteriorating economic positions motivate urban elites to pursue entrepreneurial policies.\(^{53}\) Infrastructure investment is the foundation for these aggressive, niche-seeking strategies. Clarke and Gaile note that infrastructure can play a critical role in staking a claim in the future economy.\(^{54}\) If a given firm requires access to large bandwidths of high-speed telecommunication, then it will logically locate in markets with established capacity. While Savitch and Kantor are correct that context determines a city’s relative position, infrastructure may be understood as the actual chair at their figurative bargaining table. Infrastructure investments allow cities to build themselves new opportunities to negotiate with capital. Beyond attracting short-run capital, public infrastructure can foster districts where creative workers choose to live, work, and play. Attracting high value-added workers creates a productivity advantage, reinforcing a competitive advantage for businesses considering relocation to the region.

Large-scale programs can be understood as a collective action problem. Olson\(^{55}\) outlines the collective action problem, where free riders inadvertently undermine efforts to provide and maintain public goods. Although anyone may benefit from a public good, it is rarely cost-effective for an individual to foot the entire bill when much of the benefit spills over to others. Large-scale urban infrastructure fits this prototype perfectly; throughout history costs have been


far too high for an individual or corporation to single-handedly fund capital projects.\textsuperscript{56}

Occasionally, the private sector will attempt to develop smaller programs (e.g. private hotels with extensive meeting spaces instead of public convention centers), but major infrastructure is nearly always public.\textsuperscript{57} Olson’s collective action problem applies to cities, where free riders undermine efforts to provide and maintain public goods like large scale infrastructure. Walker theorizes a solution to the collective action problem by developing the concept of a \textit{patron}, a large actor that invests despite free riders\textsuperscript{58} – often to gain some profit. More often than not, municipal governments are the only available patron for infrastructure projects, especially after the retraction of federal urban policy. Leaders allocate public resources to these projects because cities gain prestige and increased leverage at the bargaining table from these developments, enabling profit from a stronger economy and reputation.

\textbf{Leadership}

Throughout the past century, local urban leadership has taken several forms, ranging from political machines to business-led regimes. Despite differences in structure, the several prominent governance models above share one key similarity: coordination among urban elites. Judd and Parkinson develop the concept of \textit{coherent leadership}, a group of “elites representing a city [with] the capacity to speak with a coherent voice because the political process facilitates bargaining, negotiation, and agreement among a broad range of political and social groups elites


representing a city [with] the capacity to speak with a coherent voice [for] a broad range of political and social groups.” Coherent leadership is tenuous, as significant disagreement can fracture political alignments. If political discord emerges among political entrepreneurs, then gridlock can paralyze the city apparatus’ ability to implement infrastructure. If there is a countervailing force, then the dissenting coalition can pressure the city against the project and stymie an agenda. Coherent leadership is potent but very vulnerable to dissent.

Leadership with the capacity to govern may take several forms. Judd and Parkinson describe leadership as a dominant elite group with control over the formal governmental authority. More importantly, Judd and Parkinson recognize coherent leadership as a group which can represent a city and her interests. Coherent leadership implies a reconciled group of elites working toward the same policy program. In other words, coherent leadership has the capacity to make decisions. Leadership with the capacity to govern always has two simple ingredients: resource-holders and entrepreneurs. Coherent leadership has taken many forms through the last century: machines, reform monopolies, regimes, corporatist governance, pluralist politics, and multiple-elitism. Although varying the political structure may affect policy outcomes, whether or not the leaders are willing and able to rally resources is exogenous to structure.

Urban leadership models often apply one of two general forms: a strong central executive or a cohesive coalition. Early analyses focused on the role of hierarchies. Hunter’s “Regional

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City” analysis develops a pyramidal structure pushing power toward a single power broker" while Dahl’s seminal analysis of New Haven hypothesizes the important role of individuals at the center of executive-centered coalitions organizing and implementing citywide agenda with fragmented resources. Later analyses examine the role of larger coalitions helping political leaders navigate resources outside of their municipal purview. These regimes provide an informal venue to socially produce local agendas over spans of years.

Machines are city politics’ most notorious leadership structure and are an archetypical executive centered coalition. Dubbed the “Shame of Cities” at the turn of the century, political machines existed on the simple exchange of government resources for votes. This collaboration between lesser socioeconomic voters and patronage-doling aldermen who traded favors for clout met both sympathetic and skeptical responses. Addams explains that ward boss won reelection by being a “good friend and neighbor”, despite clear ethical concerns. Gosnell’s analysis describes the machine as corrupt, violent, and vulgar, setting the stage for decades of corruption studies. Perhaps most notable of these political machines, however, is the efficacy by which bosses govern. Even the toughest critics if machines noted bosses’ abilities to develop and pursue an agenda. O’Connor and Royko both acknowledge major achievements under Richard J. Daley, which include a downtown university campus, auto

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highway systems, and the prelude to a major international airport.\(^{68}\) Machine bosses enjoyed a central command and control role in cities; their longevity enabled the ability to deploy resources toward a civic agenda.

Local leaders can also galvanize executive centered coalitions through non-mechanized methods. Richard M. Daley enjoyed a remarkably long tenure as Chicago’s mayor, and Daley found political routes to erect major parks, rebuild stadia, expand transit lines, and consolidate power over city schools. Although Simpson describes the Daley years as a reconceived political machine,\(^{69}\) Bennett notes that Daley’s governing coalition placed the mayor at the intersection of several fragmented resources\(^{70}\) – roughly an executive centered coalition.

An alternative approach to local governance focuses on the interaction between political and economic elites. Stone’s preeminent argument suggests that political leaders alone are unable to muster the resources necessary for developing and implementing long-term agendas, therefore they must turn to and align with non-government actors. Under this logic, regimes emerged as a natural solution to this weakness: local champions and business leaders would informally coordinate with social and political leaders to craft long term agendas. Elkin’s Dallas and Stone’s Atlanta highlight the capacity of sustained informal coalitions to create and implement development agendas.\(^{71}\) These regimes not only pursued a strategic vision for the city, they conceived the specific tactics to pursue those goals. Although Hartsfield’s and

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Jackson’s tenures can be interpreted as executive centered coalitions, the influence of the coalition at-large to reconcile differences and speak for Atlanta with one coherent voice resulted in massive infrastructure investments, from public housing to highways to their namesakes’ airport. Just as Atlanta’s leaders reveal similar tendencies as executive centered coalitions, both Daleys produced quasi-regime traits, such as relative cooperation with the Chicago business community.

Unfortunately, the transition into a postindustrial economy has eroded key building blocks for regimes. Hanson, et al.\(^{72}\) note the systematic replacement of local CEOs with middle-management. Similarly, Strom finds that philanthropic leaders have replaced these cornerstone members at the head of local organizations that champion urban growth. Strom notes that Atlanta, Baltimore, and Philadelphia – once cities with dominant regimes – had witnessed their coherent leadership collapse.\(^{73}\) These businessmen were integral parts of urban governing coalitions. New governing coalitions often include organizations that possess insufficient power to leverage public and private resources to pursue an aggressive infrastructure program. In many cases, cultural and philanthropic elites have joined leading coalitions, although they rarely have the same capacity to govern as effectively as regimes from days gone by. Without coherent leadership at the local helm, a city’s domestic capability to leverage resources toward a sustained, long-term agenda will flounder. As local leadership became less cohesive, the opportunity to build a sustained coalition to pursue a long term agenda diminished. This loss is particularly important when considering the new demands on cities: fostering an environment

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that attracts footloose capital and mobile skilled workers. Sustained regimes were stable enough to develop coherent tactics to accomplish this vision. Urban regimes may be a thing of the past.

**The Rise of the External Expert**

In recent decades, increased instability and demand for economic revitalization have spawned a network of private sector technocrats able to bridge the gap left behind by executive centered coalitions and regimes. Judd and Laslo\textsuperscript{74} argue that as urban governance becomes more complex, local leadership has become reliant on the growing cadre of private sector experts. Even small municipalities maintain a platoon of technocrats that ranges from city planners to city attorneys to various specialists who lead departments. Municipal reforms shifted significant power into a central executive, the city planner. In council-manager cities like Oklahoma City, the city council roughly mirrors a corporate governing board that oversees a CEO-style city manager. These unelected officials provide a professional voice to local politics and can direct city leaders toward experts for additional advice. As in other levels of government, increased complexity has led to external experts that influence government.\textsuperscript{75} Even for seemingly mundane issues involving finance, consultants can play the role of fiscal shamans who conjure and bundle tax derivatives to leverage speculative future revenues.\textsuperscript{76} Although a large city may

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have the technical expertise to revamp a sanitation system, cities invariably solicit architects and engineers when constructing a large stadium.

Assuming city leaders are bounded by their limited understanding of the world, experts are needed to help guide policy. Cities value technocrats due to their ability to improve the local image or fiscal situation. Although relatively mundane programs can provide an excellent vista for a quality of life snapshot and can improve a city’s property tax base by boosting land values (e.g. bike paths and golf courses), city leaders may overlook these programs if they do not know their effects. Individuals associated with successful programs enhance their reputations. In turn, these newly crowned experts can command local leaders’ attention and can place their ideas on the agenda as a new revitalization program.

Experts are political actors. Similar to other levels of government, actors often use perceived expertise to serve private interests. Although there may be some benevolent experts without agendas, several factors beyond their particular expertise may influence technocrats’ opinions beyond their expertise. Just as national level think tanks “are aggressive institutions that actively seek to maximize public credibility and political access to make their experience and ideas influential in policy making,” local level private experts attempt to expand their reputation. Pasewisc notes that tax experts often leverage extra resources to boost their own reputations; in effect, experts seek reputation and rents from the state’s dime. On the other hand, industries may use technocrats to advance their own agendas. Whether it is the

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International Association of Exhibitions and Events underwriting a policy institute or natural gas companies funding the ivory tower to produce pro-fracking papers,\textsuperscript{81} industries manufacture expertise to support policies that enable rents. In other words, technocrats may serve themselves and potentially a patron beyond their employer.

**Implications for Urban Governance**

The rise of consultants as local political actors has fundamentally changed the world of urban governance. First, the readymade menu of policy options has rendered the long-term coalition unnecessary. Throughout most of twentieth century, if cities wanted to pursue an economic vitalization strategy, then they would need to develop tactics in house. Today, consultants provide a menu of actionable policy options to pursue these abstract goals. Garvin’s textbook delineates an impressive laundry list of these programs.\textsuperscript{82} Second, the institutionalization of consultants has made foreign expertise a *de facto* requirement for pursuing a major infrastructure program. It is inconceivable for projects to move forward without an external approval from a designated expert – often at a niche consulting firm. In one anecdote, Sanders highlights the near omnipresence of bullish consultant reports for downtown convention centers.\textsuperscript{83} Not only do cities rely on outside expertise for policy ideas, they all but require their input.


CHAPTER THREE
A NETWORK OF NETWORKS

More than ever, policy making is becoming an intramural activity among expert issue-watchers, their networks, and their networks of networks.

Hugh Heclo, 1978

After United Airlines declined Oklahoma City’s $250 million subsidy, the dejected mayor quietly took a trip to Indianapolis. Norick identified several key differences between the Circle City and Oklahoma City. Norick described Indianapolis as a “live city… [with] people on the streets… restaurants and hotels and a convention facility and all this stuff.” When he returned to Oklahoma City, Norick turned to building a coalition to recreate Indianapolis’ downtown culture. Norick started by casting a wide political net, inviting county leaders and the Chamber of Commerce. The local chamber identified Rick Horrow as a potential asset; Horrow had led a successful effort to publicly subsidize Miami’s recent arena effort and landing the National Basketball Association’s Heat franchise. With Horrow’s help, Norick’s braintrust developed a cohesive agenda that later morphed into the Metropolitan Area Projects.

When Horrow joined Norick in Oklahoma City, he found a motivated mayor, an infantile coalition, and a city in disrepair. The two established a public committee, aimed at developing a plan to revive Oklahoma City’s downtown. Norick consolidated power from other layers of government, politically maneuvering potential supporters and detractors into a unified voice. The committee created a wish list of projects, and the city employed niche firms to determine the

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Norick edged out the County and other local governments, and he intentionally nominated potential opposition to chair the public committee to force their support.

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return on investment and cost to implement these programs. Horrow played a pivotal role in acquiring and managing information – from the potential costs of infrastructure projects to the popular support behind each item on the agenda to developing messages that would gain voter approval. At each juncture, the city’s leadership employed consultants to develop tactics to turn their imagined future into reality.

Outside expertise has evolved from solitary entrepreneurs into a network of networks of experts. A constellation of advocates slowly revolve around a loose set of principles, yet no central hub governs the city building network. The shape of this trans-urban coalition can best be described as a diamond: a few celebrities on the top, many footsoldiers in the middle, and a few niche specialists at the grass roots. This structure provides two key securities: top-down legitimization and bottom-up technical prowess. These two phenomena help reinforce the predominant messages held by the trans-urban actors. Individuals within cities may only have glancing relationships with these actors; on the other hand trans-urban actors can mobilize resources across cities. Access to resources across multiple markets enhances the political position for members of the trans-urban policy network compared to their hometown counterparts, mainly because they have access to a more diversified basket of information. This advantage amplifies the privileged position held by private business, specifically those lobbying for infrastructure.

**Policy Niches and the Standard Package of Amenities**

Oklahoma City’s economic revitalization plan is remarkable for its size and scope; however, each component is part of a larger generic combination of programs common to peer cities. Through decades of expert influence and convergence across cities, a standard package of
amenities has emerged as a continually evolving list of features found in a given community of a certain size. A city’s image is connected with the infrastructure it possesses; any given city’s trophy case of amenities has become standardized and compared to other cities of similar stature. Advocates for each of these prized possessions argue that they attract high value-added workers, the focus of the creative class argument. The standard package of amenities is an evolving list of components, but the current generation of projects focus on attracting high value-added laborers. Elements of the standard package of amenities - publicly funded convention centers, sports palaces, and tourist attractions – headline these leisure districts. Together, this entertainment infrastructure package guides the visitor’s journey through the city’s presentation. Leisure bubbles provide constructed spaces for visitors to interpret the city\textsuperscript{87} and produce an idealized snapshot for visitors. Nearly every city has some form of Oklahoma City’s Bricktown, Boston’s Faneuil Hall, Baltimore’s Harbor Walk, or San Diego’s Gaslight District. In each of these cases, public resources flooded districts to induce growth.  

Not all attractive districts are overwhelmed by public investment. The rise of Bohemian enclaves reflects the presence of a healthy local work force of what Richard Florida calls the creative class.\textsuperscript{88} As millennials sought to self-actualize despite dire economic conditions, they found respite in building seemingly unique communities. Yet, nearly every large city has a form of Oklahoma City’s fledgling Plaza District, Cleveland’s Ohio City, Chicago’s Wicker Park, or Brooklyn’s Williamsburg. Cities guide this investment by laying infrastructure and maintaining zoning ordinances. Consultants have made fortunes by reciting a handful of precepts to help cities attract creative capital following simple advice: walkability, tolerance, and creating venues

\textsuperscript{87} Judd, Dennis R. and Susan S. Fainstein. 1999. \textit{The Tourist City}. Yale University Press.  
for public expression. These values may not be imposed, but cities can attempt to foster them through architecture and infrastructure.

Different interests have claimed policy niches within a larger canon of urban revitalization. Each element reinforces the overarching goal found in the urban revitalization mainstream: carving a livable space for highly productive workers to lure footloose capital. Because cities rarely have enough high income workers to support the boutique leisure economy, cities pivot and invite visitors into these districts to boost the commercial base and increase demand. These efforts often focus on the neighborhoods adjacent to the central business district. Large-scale attractions (sports arenas and convention centers) promise to lure visitors to specific districts. Only on rare occasions do sports boosters find themselves at odds with convention center supporters, as all interests are part of a larger cause: making money via cities improving their image with amenities. Instead of inciting conflict with each other, these groups reinforce the larger movement of building the contemporary city on attracting desirable labor through leisure.

The standard package of amenities for education remains in flux, with entrepreneurs able to append new investments from athletic turf to classroom technology to selective schools with exclusive enrollment procedures. Meanwhile, more established subnetworks remain relatively stable over time. The logic of convention centers (bigger is better) has remained relatively

unchanged over the past two decades; the only notable change is the preference towards public subsidy for hotels physically attached to the meeting space. Instead, experts continue to recount the logic that building an attraction to lure visitors to a specific district and (theoretically) cashing in on spillover expenditures.

**The City Builders**

Akin to other large policy communities, like the environmentalist and civil rights movements, a constellation of actors influence the city building policy network. The city building project has existed in its current form a sufficient amount of time to spur niche-seeking subgroups. Within this larger network, actors encounter slightly different forms depending on the maturity and evolution of a specific aspect of the standard package of amenities. Evidence from Oklahoma City’s experience indicates that the actors remain relatively constant over time.

**Elected Government Officials**

Local leaders are at the center of urban revitalization, serving as the final deciding voice for key issues on the local agenda. In many cases, the key unit of government for infrastructure investment is the municipality. City leaders must balance several priorities while preserving the economic resources to feasibly meet these ends. Local leaders often have a limited understanding of the larger world; that is, they act within the constraints of Simon’s bounded

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rationality. If a problem attracts the local leaders’ attention and it is beyond their immediate comprehension, then they will likely turn to experts. As a result, leaders are free to shop for solutions to their problem on the marketplace of policy ideas, relatively risk free. The options provided by expertise are often the only available solutions for local leaders. The options available in this marketplace of ideas may be tightly narrowed and heavily influenced by a groupthink among experts.

In some cases, special purpose authorities that are separate from the municipal authority make critical decisions. For decades, theorists have suggested that these independent subgovernments risk exposure to rule by the few. Berry notes that independent special purpose authorities are often less financially efficient than their municipal counterparts. Berry attributes this trend to several causes, including the sole focus on a single project; this one-dimensional body may be more easily captured by a pressure group compared to their multi-interest peers. McConnell argues that “Autonomy protects the power of a group, particularly an organized group, and this power is at once power over matters of common concern and power over the group’s members.” In other words, once a group captures an autonomous government, it will be able to solidify and entrench power. Whether or not a group has captured a special purpose authority, the local government may encounter perceived crises.

Leaders within special purpose authorities, such as independent school districts, approach problems in a similar fashion as cities. Berry analyzes the tendencies of special purpose

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authorities, including the trend towards larger budgets for similar services. Leaders within these organizations (and the boards who oversee, when applicable) will shop for solutions when facing a perceived crisis, parallel to their municipal counterparts. For example, independent school districts provide an exceptional example, with a $7 billion annual budget dedicated to software and consulting fees.

City Planners and Local Government Professionals

City governments employ a group of professionals to assist the day-to-day management of municipal governance. By hiring a city manager, cities simultaneously transformed elected officials into a de facto board of directors for a city, reduced the ability for aldermen to engage patronage, and empowered an allegedly nonpolitical actor to serve on the city’s behalf. Today, professionals are ubiquitous, with cities employ a wide range of specifically trained bureaucrats related to infrastructure development, ranging from foresters to engineers to planners. Nearly every major department in a city associated a peer-terminal degree program, from criminology to engineering.

City planners are the most important professional position regarding the city building network. Planners help elected officials develop and lobby for long-term agendas, ranging from new traffic patterns to parks to large scale economic programs. In some cases, these in-house

98 Professionalization is not unique to municipal governments. Many special purpose authorities also follow the same business model, with an elected board an appointed professional executive. Independent school districts hire professionally trained educators, independent library districts employ librarians from higher education programs, and so forth. Like their planner peers, sometimes special purpose authorities and the public sector mimics private by calling upon outside experts for assistance from outside consultants.
professionals have difficulty selling their visions to their managers and city planners. Similarly, sometimes these locally-employed professionals have neither the skill nor the resources to draft a comprehensive plan. In either case, the city planner functions as a primary care physician. Most of the time, a general practice doctor can remedy illnesses. In some cases, ailments require additional expertise beyond the primary care physician’s skill set, so they refer the patient to a specialist. Similarly, city planners can comfortably handle most urban issues that emerge on the local agenda. However, sometimes projects require additional expertise. In these instances, city planners refer elected officials to experts in the field, plugging the city into the city building network.

**Local Boosters**

In addition to public officials, urban coalitions often involve a typical cohort of business, public foundation, and social elites. Elkin and Stone identify a conundrum for local politics: constituents often demand the public sector efficiently manage a group of services and steward a healthy economy, but the voters rarely provide the resources and institutional capacity to meet these ends.\(^9^9\) Several cities in the mid-twentieth century leveraged private resources through informal networks. Some coalitions became *regimes*, because they sustained cooperation among local business, political, and social elites, which enabled skilled leaders to deploy scarce resources to a long term agenda. In a similar but unique vein, Logan and Molotch\(^1^0^0\) identify a trend towards urban growth machines, extended and stable coalitions aimed at expanding the

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local economy. In the era after the 1980s tax revolts, voters tend to prefer governments that provide quality services on minimal cost.\textsuperscript{101}

Traditional champions of local governance have declined, weakening the salience and longevity of local coalitions. Strom notes that ‘‘Leadership companies’ in the area of banking and insurance have been similarly depleted…. The heads of local banks had been among the most eager participants of urban-renewal era downtown coalitions…. But deregulation has led to a consolidation in the banking industry, as those banks that managed to remain solvent have frequently been bought up by one of five or six national banking giants.’’\textsuperscript{102} Hanson, et al, trace the same decline in traditional local leadership in several American cities.\textsuperscript{103} Traditional staples of the local business elite declined as businesses consolidated from local firms to multinational conglomerates. Cities no longer enjoy locally owned department stores, savings and loan brokers, and newspapers. Owners of these institutions would often cooperate with local leaders. Oklahoma City’s department stores are defunct, the local banking industry overrun by major banks based elsewhere, and the local daily newspaper is owned by a Denver group. Even major cities like Chicago have lost these staples; Marshall Fields’ iconic downtown store is a Macy’s (based in New York), the local finance scene has yet to recover national market share from losing Continental Bank, and although the local media is operated in Chicago, the bulk of

\textsuperscript{101} Clark and Ferguson were among the earliest identifiers of this trend, while Erie et al reprised the theory in a case study of San Diego’s fiscal crisis. Clark, Terry Nichols and Lorna Crowley Ferguson. 1983. \textit{City Money: Political Processes, Fiscal Strain, and Retrenchment}. Columbia University Press.
shareholders reside in either Los Angeles or New York. Transient regional managers replaced local CEOs, which eroded the relationship between business elite and municipal government.

Big-name local actors can still influence the agenda and contribute to a political cause, but the constant stewardship found in the twentieth century is out of vogue. Instead, members of a growing cadre of professionals are often at the helm of day-to-day influence. Among other stationary institutions like hospitals and military installations, universities often lend intellectual resources to the community. Some of these institutions may enjoy their own benefactors, boosters who aim to improve the institution. Walker suggests that patrons can serve as patrons for an interest group at the national level; a similar benefactor-driven pattern appears to apply at the local level.

**Consultants**

Consultants tackle issues that come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from comprehensive plans to specific details – such as sidewalk size along streetscapes. Longstanding organizations like the Urban Land Institute buttress these efforts, but there is no extant hub to the extended network. Instead, a constellation of smaller networks appear to function in tandem, with two-levels of consultants: comprehensive, meta-project theorists and nuts-and-bolts boutiques. The two groups reinforce similar goals, with celebrities generating overarching strategic goals while lower-level boutique firms specialize in specific tactics for revitalization. On one hand, Richard Florida’s creative class argument permeates mainstream discussion. Florida’s Creative Class Group provides advice to real estate developers, skilled labor corporations, and the public sector. The firm serves a wide array of list of clients ranging from the United Nations to the United

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States Department of Labor to private developers to municipalities. Creative Class Group has provided a series of goals and tactics to cities, like El Paso’s free wifi zone and Tallahassee’s film festival. Each of these programs reinforce quality of life and the desire to attract nomadic “creative” workers. The Congress for New Urbanism echoes most of Florida’s work, and prominent firms within the movement attempt to build spaces for the upper middle class. Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company produces comprehensive plans to specific architectural designs for projects which serve as a model for other New Urbanist planners. Other firms produce a similar menu of services, from Economic & Planning Systems’ market analyses and policy forecasts to Convention Sports & Leisure’s tourism projections.

As a strategy narrows to tactics, the number of firms offering advice to cities drastically decreases. Although dozens of consulting firms offer local economic analysis and traffic circulation studies, only a small handful of experts enjoy a large market share for unique projects ranging from stadiums to improving walkability. The limited competition within these niches likely stems from the market structure of their consulted goods. Only a miniscule number of firms specialize in maximizing walkability, exhibition halls, or developing arenas. For example, Convention Sports & Leisure enjoy a large market share for advising leaders pursuing exposition halls, with a client list that includes Los Angeles, Miami, Baltimore, Oklahoma City, and Milwaukee, among dozens of others. In a similar vein, political consultants that lobby public

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support for major projects are also relatively scarce. Rick Horrow Ventures leads the public relations niche, helping secure publicly approved funding through bond and tax increases across the country\textsuperscript{109} – a difficult and unique political consulting market.

\textit{Entrepreneurs}

Beyond this established roster of participants, political and economic entrepreneurs see the city building network as an opportunity to pursue their preferred programs. These policy entrepreneurs function similarly to procurement lobbyists, seeking to manipulate government spending toward or away from a given project. These actors meet different types of opportunities, largely depending on the maturity of a specific topic within the network. More established issues are often rooted in a commonly accepted series of assumptions which can prevent new voices from joining the discussion. Debates over building a convention hall or downtown arena usually hinge on the magnitude of economic spillover, rather than other potential impacts. On the other hand, newer issues, such as education, are often more fluid and open to change attracting entrepreneurs.

Urban education is a peculiar case, mainly because real estate interests and residents have recently reframed its role on the central city agenda as a route to revitalization. In the midst of increased middle and high income families moving away from understaffed, underwhelming school districts, how to rebuild and rebrand schools has captured local attention. Varady and Raffel proposed a schools-first strategy during the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{110} Sensing an opportunity, political entrepreneurs have attached their products to the agenda. Entrepreneurs have added

\textsuperscript{110} Varady David P. and Jeffrey A. Raffel. 1995. \textit{Selling Cities: Attracting Homebuyers through Schools and Housing Programs}. State University of New York Press.
new ideas and infrastructure to the education debate.\textsuperscript{111} Without a formal hub either to organize or to filter the intellectual network, entrepreneurs are able to find legitimacy by recasting their product as good for palatable causes like the “creative” or “twenty-first century.”

\textit{Room for Dissent?}

Experts often claim hegemony over a given policy area. In Washington, think tanks and policy wonks provide interest groups their greatest currency: expert information conveniently agreeing with their arguments.\textsuperscript{112} In a sense, left-leaning think tanks function as a countervailing force to right-leaning think tanks; the two sides balance each other in terms of expert opinion. No such balance exists in local governance. Economic growth is widely viewed as good, while infrastructure investment is reliable route to this prosperity.

Activists may attempt to contradict the popular arguments, but they may not escape them. Political battles are often fought over economic development and infrastructure. Labor unions, neighborhood and social groups, and other political entrepreneurs may decry large scale infrastructure investments aimed at the creative class, but their dissent usually falls within the dialect of the dominant city building paradigm. Neighborhood groups may redefine economic redevelopment as gentrification, and slow growth activists may champion “smart growth,” but the arguments constantly return to the same themes: how to leverage space to maximize

\textsuperscript{111} Varady and Raffel note the rise of magnet schools in two waves. The first was during the 1970s as an attempt to create voluntary desegregation within central city school districts. The second wave emerged as a route to stem white flight to suburbs by providing quality education to the white middle class. For more information about infrastructure investments in schools, see Chapter 5.


economic prosperity. Intellectual dissent follows the same pattern. For example, nearly the entire convention industry argues that larger, newer convention centers attract business; the convention industry pushes this message on city leaders through presentations, conferences, and commissioning studies to research the value of convention centers. In Oklahoma City’s most recent convention center debate, dissent emerged around whether or not a proposed hotel recommended by consultants was worth public investment. Dissent focused on how many visitors a hotel could lure. Nuances within the debate are noteworthy: both sides investigate the relationship between building public infrastructure to potential economic growth, both sides presume that a greater of visitors to a city as desirable, and both sides appear to value economic growth as a positive for metropolitan areas. Try as they might to buck the status quo, dissent conforms to the disadvantageous, dominant frame.

**Expert Guided Governance**

When Mayor Mick Cornett wanted to reinforce downtown Oklahoma City’s revitalization momentum in the mid-2000s, he charged the planning department to organize comprehensive program to expand the revitalized zone. From engineers to the city manager, Oklahoma City’s professional staff sketched the contours of the plan. The city’s new plan called for a downtown greenspace with a convention center to anchor to help drive commercial traffic downtown. Local professionals contacted outside specialists to help with details. For example, Convention Center for Exhibition Industry Research. 2003. “To Build or Not to Build – A Look at Convention Center Growth & Management.” Kansas City: International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus. International Association for Exhibition Management. 2005. “The Rhetoric Versus the Facts: What the Brookings Report Fails to Reveal.” [http://bit.ly/1tMLtE](http://bit.ly/1tMLtE)
Sports & Leisure estimated the optimal exhibition center size for Oklahoma City.\textsuperscript{114} Only after CS&L determined the amount of additional space needed, local leaders turned to garnering public funds. Following CS&L’s lead, the MAPs 3 coalition argued for the \textit{exact} specifications outlined by their consultants. Hotel and space specifications flow directly from the expert’s opinion, down to the number of square feet in the grand ballroom. Strategically, local leaders retain the “big-picture” agenda, however experts often control the tactical details of which projects a city builds. Oklahoma City’s leaders articulated their goal of an expanded, thriving downtown. This downtown-first strategy includes a broad set of long-term objectives that explain what a city wants to do. To make this possible, local leaders called upon local and foreign experts to develop tactics to achieve these goals.

Hugh Heclo argued that ”More than ever, policy making is becoming an intramural activity among expert issue-watchers, their networks, and their networks of networks.”\textsuperscript{115} Evidence above suggests that a network of experts strongly influence the local infrastructure agenda by providing tactics for local leaders. From education to sports to conventions, publicly elected leaders follow the suggestions made by consultants – usually from beyond the city’s borders. This increasingly insulated policy community raises significant questions about democracy, representation, and the efficacy of local government; perhaps most salient is “Does the public still matter?” In short, yes. Although the ingredients to cities nationwide may converge (mega-convention centers and prestigious, exclusive schools in the current wave of innovation), this trend is nothing new. City beautiful plans littered the landscape in the early 1900s, streetcars and rail lines had their heyday, and urban renewal funds leveled lots across the

\textsuperscript{114} Convention Sports & Leisure. 2009. “Presentation to the Mayor’s Development Roundtable: Summary of Findings Relative to Future Convention Center Needs in Oklahoma City.”

country in the past. Today, new infrastructure like Oklahoma City’s Core to Shore park and convention hall aims to land highly productive families in downtown spaces. The role of local leadership is not to innovate new programs or select specific projects. Rather, contemporary leadership (in Oklahoma City) defines the long term goals and commissions experts needed to build a strategy and implement tactics. This new model places agenda setting power over which specific projects a community pursues beyond the city’s borders.
On a crisp night, buzz fills the downtown streets. Conventioneers spill out of the expo hall, walking up Broadway to their hotels. Suburbanites and schoolchildren pack restaurants before heading to the local arena. The hometown heroes hope to dispatch their rival opponents once again. As the ticketholders anxiously await tipoff, urban professionals frequent the new club scene along the waterway, blowing off the steam from their day-long tech jobs. Their bohemian peers are a few blocks away, listening to that band on the rise at the outdoor amphitheater in the park. It is just another night in the Replica City.

The Replica City is not alone in its reliance on borrowed ideas from other communities. A clear trend toward convergence emerged as cities borrowed ideas from each other, from constructing water works in industrial cities on behalf of the public health to erecting relatively uniform entertainment districts a century later. Cities emulate programs replicated among their peers. Over time, cities of similar stature coevolve into communities with similar infrastructure. As these institutions become common across cities, a de facto standard emerges. Cities face an implicit choice: either develop a slate of amenities standard to their peers, or face falling behind potential competitors. Failure to keep up with the standard package of amenities may push firms and residents to other communities. A perpetual infrastructure race emerges

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among cities seeking either to gain an advantage over rivals or to catch up to the standard package of amenities.

Contemporary urban leaders rely on expert consultants to guide their community to the standard package of amenities. City building requires expertise, and an army of consultants are ready to respond to ambitious communities’ goals. Not all projects are as complex as others, but in nearly every phase of general obligation municipalities, experts help govern. Even seemingly routine, nineteenth century innovations like sanitation systems and police forces have professionalized classes of engineers and criminologists. From consultant-driven, culture-first economic development to professional sports leagues specifying certain requirements for arenas and stadiums, external consultants help guide a city’s policy.

Consultants who assist urban development can be found across Oklahoma City’s history. Expert fingerprints can be found in nearly every large-scale project undertaken in city history. At nearly every juncture since Oklahoma City’s founding, local leaders have hired experts to implement state-of-the-art infrastructure. Oklahoma City’s narrative can be divided into several eras. First, Oklahoma City faced a tumultuous settlement period with unbridled ambition. Early governments were fractious but able to offer the basic necessities of nineteenth century cities and promote a city beautiful program. Second, Oklahoma City entered a private booster era. Local elites instilled a common entrepreneurial ethos to guide the city’s growth. Third, local elites congealed during the Great Depression because of oil; the emergent coalition coordinated with federal resources through the postwar period. Next, a very short lived quasi-regime formed in the name of urban renewal. After the alliance collapsed with the end of federal renewal funding, problems similar to the urban crisis set in. Finally, contemporary Oklahoma City’s response toward renewal completes the story. Leaders mobilized public resources to revitalize the local
economy around other communities’ amenity models: tourism, culture, and quality of life. Regardless of era, local leaders consistently turned to experts for assistance, ideas, and the standard package of amenities.

The relationship between city leaders and outside expertise has changed. In previous generations, long-term coalitions would craft an agenda and hire experts to implement individual plans. Regimes and executive-centered coalitions not only developed a long term strategy, but they often identified specific tactics to further their goals. Stone chronicles Atlanta’s regime identifying key objectives for the City Too Busy to Hate – including massive highway investments and a world class airport.\(^{118}\) Similarly, Chicago’s Richard M. Daley were able to select individual programs. Daley’s choice to expand the downtown cultural zone from the museum campus to the Magnificent Mile shopping district was a tactic to achieve a larger end: transform Chicago into a postindustrial, global city.\(^ {119}\) Throughout most of Oklahoma City’s history, leaders would contact experts to implement a specific program. Today’s urban leadership are often less stable and unable to identify specific programs to build. Starting with Ron Norick’s response to economic setbacks in the 1980s, Oklahoma City reveals a new approach to urban revitalization. Instead of selecting particular projects to build, leaders defer to experts’ suggestions. Despite the fall of long-term coalitions capable of identifying tactics for urban revitalization, cities continue to pursue strategies aimed at building a better tomorrow. Experts play a critical role in this process by suggesting the specific items that go on the urban agenda.


Cleaving the City Beautiful from the Frontier

From its founding, Replica City has kept a watchful eye on its neighbors’ developments. Oklahoma City sought to build the amenities found in the average American industrial city on the frontier. The City Beautiful movement is the hallmark of these efforts at the turn of the twentieth century. Major cities nationwide adopted parks-and-boulevards plans, from the Cleveland Group Plan of 1903 to the Plan of Chicago to San Francisco’s 1905 plan. Without a city planner available domestically, Oklahoma City turned to foreign experts to make the frontier beautiful.

Settled in a chaotic land rush, Oklahoma City has always been an ambitious city. Over 10,000 optimists descended on the North Canadian River in a matter of hours. At noon on April 22, 1889, cannons fired to signal the start of the land rush. Settlers charged into the “unassigned lands” in Indian Territory. By the afternoon, thousands of residents claimed plots throughout what became Oklahoma City. Upon arrival, they found a post office, railroad station, and a system of streets laid out by the military’s federal land rush authorities. Rapid migration overwhelmed the infrastructure immediately. The average homesteader settled with a hopeful outlook, despite lifelong history of poverty. As the Harpers Weekly reported in 1889, “poverty and wretched condition of some of the older boomers who have been waiting for years for the opening of Oklahoma were painful apparent. Men with large families settled upon land with less than a dollar in money to keep them from starvation. How they expected to live until they could get a crop from their lands was a mystery which even they could not pretend to explain. Like unreasoning children, they thought that could they but once [sic] reach the beautiful green slopes of the promised land, their poverty and trouble would be at an end. They are now

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awakening to the bitter realization that their real hardships have just begun.” Four years later, the 1893 bank panic crippled both the national and nascent local economy. Early local leadership was unstable and unable to meet the social needs of the working poor. Nonetheless, an optimistic ethos of growth guided the city. Oklahoma City elites focused on updating a frontier outpost; when the municipal government proved too limited, local merchants took city building into their own hands.

Without legitimate political institutions or established economic elites, Oklahoma City’s government suffered from poor coordination. Thirteen mayors presided over Oklahoma City in its first twenty years. Nonetheless, Oklahoma City provided a menu of municipal services on par with their counterparts in the industrial north by the end of nineteenth century. Oklahoma City funded a professional police and fire department, public water and sewage systems – standards for industrial cities by the 1880s. Locals hired retired military men to develop and implement these programs. Local homebuilders hired successful schoolmasters from out of state to charter schools in their developments. Settled along an erratic river, Oklahoma City faced major floods. Locals hired a Kansas engineering firm to dam the river, build a water reservoir, and create a water works system similar to industrial cities helped permanently solve this problem.

Most peculiarly, despite its governance and logistic issues, Oklahoma City sought to follow the national trend in urban amenities and city beautiful plans. Following the popular reception of the World’s Columbian Exposition and the first notable articulation of City Beautiful principles, cities nationwide began to adopt the fusion of beaux arts, constructed open air green spaces, and neoclassical architecture. Seeking to replicate the scenic vistas in Kansas

City and St. Louis, Oklahoma City chartered the Fountain City’s parks chief and the Gateway City’s resident planning guru.\textsuperscript{123} Oklahoma City adopted a city beautiful parks and boulevard plan.\textsuperscript{124} Following the plan to the letter, Oklahoma City’s first comprehensive plan calls for five parks and an automobile boulevard.\textsuperscript{125} Map 4.1 displays a basic sketch for the proposed outer boulevard and parks in the City Beautiful plan. Although Oklahoma City’s population was a fraction of its peers, the Replica City attempted to erect an urban space on par with City Beautiful communities of regional and national stature.

**Private Entrepreneurs and Urban Boosters**

After Oklahoma City’s municipal government built early infrastructure, a wide array of elites attempted to fill the cultural gaps found in the new city. Many of these elites echoed the city-building ethos of the previous generation, although constructing private amenities for profit was the main motivation. Despite the absence of a peak organization representing the business community, elites independently propelled the city forward. Through the 1890s, Oklahoma City bustled around the Santa Fe Railroad and the North Canadian River. During the railway era, Oklahoma City boosters subsidized railroad bonds to attract new lines – specifically businessmen with cotton gin or livestock interests. Naturally, new rail construction serviced shareholder interests. By 1910, Oklahoma City boosters had helped lure alternative railway connections,

\textsuperscript{125} Four of the five parks remain, while most of the boulevard still serves traffic as “Grand Boulevard” or portions of Interstate highways.
including locally constructed lines aligned with the Rock Island to the Frisco to the Katy.\textsuperscript{126} Subsidization provided a spillover benefit, helping the growing city eclipse nearby competitors (specifically state capital Guthrie) as the key central business center in central Oklahoma.

Locals turned to experts while developing the local streetcar system. Keenly aware that the emerging manufacturing base was stymieing growth, city leaders looked to establish a network of local railways. Oklahoma City chartered a New York developer with streetcar experience to build a streetcar system, hoping to cash in on experience in the Big Apple. Eventually, local real estate brokers grew impatient and developed lines. These interests frequently consulted with prominent engineers, specifically prominent city planner George Kessler. Kessler’s city beautiful style fingerprints can be observed along prominent routes where streetcars once stood; tree-lined medians with fountain-laden parks. Finally, an independent rail line chartered a long-range study to maximize ridership in the central Oklahoma region. This spoke-and-hub plan mimicked the successful programs found in cities nationwide, concentrating traffic in the central business district.\textsuperscript{127}

The integrated system of streetcars provided mass transit service throughout the metropolitan area. Unlike other metropolitan areas where suburbs developed along the periphery of urban centers, central Oklahoma housed several communities of exactly the same age. The same land rush that created Oklahoma City also birthed the nearby settlements of university-town Norman, state-capitol Guthrie, military outpost El Reno, Bible college town Bethany, and


others. Learning from the profit of other intra-city transit companies, local capital viewed connecting these young cities as a simple profit opportunity.\textsuperscript{128} With coordination from the city of Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma Railway Company constructed an expansive spoke-and-hub system developed around the community, with interurban railroads (trolley-style streetcars) supplying passenger service thirty miles from the center. Map 4.2 shows the extensive streetcar network, nestled within the City Beautiful boulevard system. Slowly, a regional economy developed around the metropolitan area. Thanks to the spoke-and-hub system created by the interurban streetcar system, a \textit{de facto} city-suburban relationship emerged. Further, Oklahoma City’s periphery filled in with streetcar suburbs enabling the new middle class to escape the increasingly industrial central city.

Streetcar investors and local leaders developed new amenities to encourage residential growth. Coordinating with the local church and the city, local elites established a liberal arts and medical college.\textsuperscript{129} Land developers subsidized the construction of new schools and underwrote new independent school districts. Putnam City Public Schools is a perfect example. Lying west by northwest of the central business district, Putnam City organized as the state’s first consolidated school district. Israel Mercer Putnam had lobbied for his homestead to house the state capitol; when this effort failed, Putnam redirected his efforts to public education. Putnam developed a school with state-of-the-art amenities (electric lighting) and constructed residential


\textsuperscript{129} When Fort Worth’s Epworth University closed, Oklahoma City real estate developers and the local Methodist church transplanted the beleaguered faculty to Oklahoma City. The Medical college eventually consolidated with the University of Oklahoma and is now part of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.
units in the vicinity.\textsuperscript{130} Streetcars helped create a sprawling metropolis throughout Oklahoma City, with private investors pouring money into amenities on the city’s edge to attract residents and commercial entrepreneurs. Once constructed, these new amenities required professionals to deliver service; nearly all of these technocrats came from outside of the city limits. In one anecdote, during the 1910s the entire faculty of Fort Worth’s Epworth College moved into what matured into Oklahoma City University. The new college doubled as the terminus for a streetcar line.

\textbf{Oil Boom and Dust}

The Great Depression dramatically affected Oklahoma City, a growing economic center in the Dust Bowl region. An extended drought and improper farming techniques combined to create a disastrous situation for farmers near Oklahoma City. Cotton crops had dominated local agriculture, placing significant strain on the local soil. As the drought continued, crops withered and wind began to carry topsoil long distances in sandstorms earning the nickname “Dust Bowl.” Making matters worse for Oklahoma City, the Great Depression coincided with the crop failures. Early municipal efforts attempted to outspend the economic turmoil, but eventually succumbed to the decade of dust. Federal programs built infrastructure throughout Oklahoma City, employing locals to construct civic buildings. The federal government set the New Deal construction agenda; however Oklahoma City leaders guided the construction by determining where to build what. Although Oklahoma City had little power over what the New Deal agencies built, local leaders influenced where new outdoor amphitheaters, schools, and gardens were built.

\textsuperscript{130} Putnam City Public Schools. “District History.” \url{http://bit.ly/1pmJKah}
Oklahoma City leadership responded to the economic crisis by building local infrastructure. Oklahoma City spent over $250,000 ($3,545,000 in 2010) in the early 1930s to build a new airport, river improvements, and new parks.\(^\text{131}\) Air travel demand increased through the 1920s, pushing the regional airport to maximum capacity. Each of these projects completed plans from experts in previous generations. Spending on local improvements during a depression was short lived, as funding for the local stimulus ran out within months. With local resources drying up, the federal government intervened. In the midst of the Dust Bowl, federal money trickled into Oklahoma and Oklahoma City, helping build several large scale projects. New Deal programs maintained relatively constant infrastructure plans across regions, employing locals to build standardized projects. Federal administrators decided how to distribute resources and what projects to build. Effectively, Oklahoma City leaders had little influence over federal expenditures, but Oklahoma City leaders guided the location of sports stadia (Taft Stadium), a high arts hall (Civic Center), a horticultural garden (Will Rogers Park) and a new city hall.\(^\text{132}\)

As the nation emerged from the tumult of Great Depression and World War II, the national focus pivoted to building the suburban dream and rebuilding central cities. Oklahoma City’s fortunes improved due to the discovery of oil within the city limits. Months after the city’s micro-stimulus spending ended in 1933, Oklahoma City recalled the mayor, installing agriculture and oilman Thomas McGee. McGee worked with aspiring rural Democrats to rebuild the local economy on oil.\(^\text{133}\) The oil industry immediately found an interest in local politics.

\(^\text{133}\) Future Senate leader Robert S. Kerr earned political stripes convincing Oklahoma City voters to pass even looser oil-production laws by referendum. While oil leaders helped Oklahoma City recover, Oklahoma continued to suffer.
Gushing oil profits dominated the established economy, and oilmen took charge of the local government. Rapid political turnover stopped, and pro-oil laws filled the municipal code. Derricks littered the urban skyline, including the state capitol’s front lawn. The discovery of black gold encouraged Oklahoma City’s leaders to build a better, comprehensively planned downtown as the nation emerged from the Great Depression.

**Urban Renewal and the Pei Plan**

Oklahoma City came relatively late to urban renewal; years of downtown renewal programs in other cities had created a template of projects. After visiting Pittsburgh’s reconstructed central business district in 1960, Oklahoma City elites lobbied state officials to grant cities the authority to seek federal urban renewal money. They formed the privately-financed “Urban Action Foundation” and contracted architect I.M. Pei to rebuild the central business district. By the time Oklahoma City business elites commissioned Pei’s firm to develop a comprehensive urban renewal plan for the central business district, several elements were already commonly prescribed remedies for blight. The Pei Plan called for razing swaths of the central business district and replacing them with superblock developments. Pei planned for several public and private spaces on these superblocks, ranging from a downtown shopping mall, to a convention center with community gardens. Each of the projects proposed followed previous successes found in other cities. In essence, the Pei Plan sought to demolish and rebuild from scratch, using other cities as a guide. Incumbent leadership resisted the plan as too reckless.

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Building political support for the Pei Plan was an uphill battle. The sitting council resisted the plan, instead they focused efforts on improving city services. After running into political resistance, Pei Plan advocates ran a slate of candidates to seize control over the municipal government. In 1963, the slate won and started to implement the Pei Plan. They controlled all but one council seat by 1965. Lawsuits from preservationists temporarily stopped the wrecking ball. By 1968, bulldozers unleashed havoc on nearly one quarter of Oklahoma City’s central business district.136 Public backlash to the downtown destruction destabilized the short-lived coalition and elites began to split on how to best pursue rebuilding. Map 4.3 highlights the region that suffered the most damage from the Pei Plan. Approximately two out of three buildings in the area shaded were destroyed.

The Pei Plan inaccurately assumed that there would be adequate funding for large scale projects to replace the razed downtown. Through the Johnson administration, federal funding remained relatively easy to capture. However, Richard Nixon started to phase out federal urban spending by the time Oklahoma City had cleared land in the late 1960s. With oil prices spiking in 1973, nearly all available local private capital focused on resource extraction. Oklahoma City’s government had supplied the bulldozers, but the market failed to supply the capital needed to rebuild downtown. Public private partnerships fell through, federal money dried up, and the pro-renewal local leadership lost power.137 Most of the Pei Plan failed to get off the ground, falling victim to misplaced optimism and remarkably poor foresight. Not all projects stalled; Oklahoma City completed the convention hall and downtown garden, but negligible private development followed. Boise follows a strikingly similar timeline, with a similar late-to-the-

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Oklahoma City’s haste to remake itself failed to consider the local context. First, Oklahoma City hired an architect without a comprehensive city planning background. Instead of learning lessons from other cities’ failures and successes, Pei functioned as an engineer, producing a blueprint which could be laid in any urban environment. Second, local elites assumed that capital would be available and willing to invest in the Pei Plan. Third, local elites misjudged the availability of federal aid. Changes in federal programs and the declining flow of urban renewal dollars combined with changes in local financial markets to create a perfect storm. Leaders’ miscalculations led to downtown demolition without a safety net. Finally, Oklahoma City simply lost track of the local context. Blight was minimal during the 1950s and 1960s, and Oklahoma City’s economy was not faltering. Pei’s plan had backfired; the local dream of a lively downtown turned into a nightmare of a central city largely reduced to rubble. As Councilman I.G. Purser later summarized the ill-fated effort, “Downtown is dead, and we helped kill it. There is no major retail, no major attraction and no place to eat.”\footnote{Lackmeyer, Steve and Jack Money. 2010. \textit{OKC Second Time Around}. Full Circle Press.}

\textbf{Oil Boom and Bust}

Oklahoma City’s oil-centric economy prospered during the 1970s’ energy crisis while much of the rest of the country suffered. Oklahoma City boomed while economies in cities that relied on manufacturing peers disintegrated. OPEC manipulated oil market prices by limiting supply and embargoing the United States. Construction boomed, with new towers emerging on the skyline.
Residential subdivisions sprawled in every direction around the metropolitan area. As OPEC turned black goo into gold, Oklahoma City physically grew upward and outward. Oil profits led local financiers to adopt risky lending practices throughout the 1970s, which fueled further oil speculation. In an era of unprecedented prosperity, Oklahoma City’s financial sector began to process loans for more risky, wildcat loans. Wildcatting wells drill in areas with unknown oil resources below. Because these operation were done without knowledge of the underlying geology, they efforts were very unpredictable. Some wells produced millionaires while others pumped muck. Eventually, extremely high oil prices lured local banks into borrowing money from larger banks to fund risky loans. Soon, Oklahoma City’s financial sector had leveraged a significant part of their capital in this sugar-rush market. Loose lending practices and a fall in petroleum prices combined to produce the 1980s oil bust. Discord among OPEC states normalized oil prices, and lower crude values reduced the wildcat loans’ profitability. As prices declined in the early 1980s, wildcatters could no longer repay their loans. Overleveraged in oil speculation, local banks struggled to pay off their own debts to other lenders. Eventually, Oklahoma City’s oil barons could not service their wildcat loans, which created a liquidity crisis. In 1982, the economic house of cards came crashing down. The Penn Square Bank defaulted, starting a series of collapses peaking with the Continental Illinois Bank’s failure in Chicago. Although the federal government eventually intervened, Oklahoma City’s financial market effectively collapsed.

For most of urban America, the urban crisis struck during the 1970s; for Oklahoma City, it hit in 1982. The 1980s eviscerated Oklahoma City’s oil industry, halted the spillover

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construction boom, and caused the local financial market to implode. By the end of the 1980s, Oklahoma City was practically unmarketable, even with an unprecedented subsidy. The twin collapse of the oil and financial sectors crippled Oklahoma City’s economy.\textsuperscript{142} For the first time in its history, the population decreased. Multinational conglomerates purchased locally held oil interests and annexed local banks, relocating assets outside of Oklahoma City. Even the National Finals Rodeo evacuated to Las Vegas in 1985.

\textit{Betting on Horseraces and Hangars}

Like several Sunbelt cities and southern states, Oklahoma City focused on gambling as an anchor to entertainment districts.\textsuperscript{143} Las Vegas is the most prominent example, however other cities in the Southeast (Biloxi, Shreveport, and New Orleans) have followed with smaller forms of gambling. Oklahoma City had been assembling a constellation of attractions in the “Adventure District,” an attempt at an entertainment district in one of the original city beautiful parks. After Oklahoma approved pari-mutuel horseracing in the early 1980s, Oklahoma City hoped a thoroughbred racetrack would mesh well with a nearby science museum, softball stadium, the city zoo, and a couple of niche museums. Oklahoma City and the Chamber of Commerce deployed Mayor Andy Coats, Oklahoma Governor George Nigh, and a cluster of local business leaders to lobby the DeBartolo family to anchor the district with a horseracing facility.\textsuperscript{144} The DeBartolos maintained nearly two billion square-feet of commercial real estate nationwide, and

\textsuperscript{142} Bureau of Economic Analysis. “Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.” \url{http://1.usa.gov/V2I4oL}
\textsuperscript{143} Judd, Dennis R. and Susan S. Fainstein. 1999. \textit{The Tourist City}. Yale University Press.
the goal was to use gambling and DeBartolo’s perceived Midas touch as an anchor for the district. Negligible commerce emerged in Remington Park’s *Adventure District*.

Oklahoma City bet the farm on landing a United Airlines maintenance facility in the early 1990s. Recalling previous specialization in the aerospace industry, Oklahoma City viewed itself as a perfect mate for United Airlines. Following other cities’ subsidy programs, the city provided aggressive tax abatements to land the maintenance facility. Oklahoma City sweetened the corporate subsidy a step further, presenting a sales tax increase to help pay for constructing the facilities as per United Airlines’ specifications. Voters approved the corporate handout. After raising a three year sales tax to build United Airlines’ infrastructure, the mayor learned that the airline rejected the $250 million subsidy due to the community’s low *quality of life*. This 1991 setback punctuated a disastrous decade following the oil bust. The market-based approach to lure outside investment not only failed, it nearly broke the spirits of an optimistic city.

**Calling Consultants and the Metropolitan Area Projects**

Oklahoma City fundamentally revised its revitalization strategy following the United Airlines rejection. Instead of offering only market incentives, Oklahoma City pivoted to an amenity-led growth strategy. Clarke and Gaile identify early versions of this strategy, where cities invested in labor productivity during the 1980s. Most of these strategies involved investing in education or capturing value-added migrants. Florida articulates a similar argument by highlighting the need for cities to attract the “creative class.” These highly educated, dynamic laborers can

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increase productivity and eventually attract footloose capital.\textsuperscript{147} Hastened by the harsh reality that Oklahoma City’s image hurt business prospects, leadership employed consultants to borrow ideas from neighbors to improve itself. Oklahoma City leaders did not know what or how to accomplish this task, so they contacted Rick Horrow – a key player in developing Miami’s recently developed arena.

Although Oklahoma City diverged from the market-centric strategy often seen in stagnant cities, consultants and local elites focused on efforts to solve problems with the city’s image by emulating other cities’ successful endeavors. Inspiration for each of the Metropolitan Area Projects programs can be found in \textit{big league cities}. The first MAPs slate included nine projects: river lock-and-dam improvements, civic center rehabilitation, building a downtown public library, retrofitting the fairground convention space, renovating the convention center, developing a canal-walk to anchor an entertainment district, embellishing this district with a AAA ballpark, erecting an arena to house a major league sports franchise, and purchasing decorative trolley-style busses.\textsuperscript{148} Each of these programs required large sums of technical expertise to plan, much less construct; as a result, Oklahoma City enlisted members of a growing cadre of consultants, committees, and organizations.

By leveraging the local waterfront for real estate purposes, Oklahoma City converged with other cities. During the 1980s, the North Canadian River provided a visual metaphor for Oklahoma City’s image. Reduced to a trickle by previous water-works projects, the waterway often ran dry, requiring constant maintenance from city lawnmowers. Even during torrential downpours, two large masonry retaining walls dwarfed the once proud river. The boom and bust


\textsuperscript{148} City of Oklahoma City Municipal Code ; Chapter 52, Section 23.b.7
of Oklahoma City’s waterway matched the shriveling boomtown. While other cities touted their waterfronts, Oklahoma City neglected its pitiful river. MAPs proposed building a series of small dams to effectively create a series of small lakes in the river bed. These improvements provided a viable waterfront and improved the city’s image, helping to lure a national museum and a tech center.\textsuperscript{149} Currently, the North Canadian River houses a world-class training center for rowing. The emerging rowing community reprised defunct local humor by joking that “we used to mow the river, now we row it.”

Oklahoma City’s efforts to update its cultural institutions converge with another national trend. Strom identifies a national trend where local business and cultural elites coordinate resources to build high arts facilities. Oklahoma City followed this porcelain-first pattern.\textsuperscript{150} Along with the river, the city’s arts infrastructure had fallen into disrepair. Built in the 1930s, arts leaders used the municipal auditorium for fine arts programs. However, anemic maintenance budgets took their toll on the once-proud building, rendering portions of the venue no longer functional. Similarly, the downtown library suffered from poor upkeep since its construction in the wake of World War II. Downtown political and economic elites found common ground with arts boosters to (re)create public arts spaces near the central business district. MAPs funding reinvented the auditorium by retrofitting the WPA auditorium to national-class standards and constructing a new learning center for the local library system.

MAPs’ highest profile program involved repackaging the old industrial warehouse district immediately east of the central business district into Bricktown, an entertainment destination for residents, suburbanites, and tourists. Similar to other entertainment districts,

\begin{itemize}
\item Strom, Elizabeth. ”Converting Pork into Porcelain: Cultural Institutions and Downtown Development” \textit{Urban Affairs Review} (38:3)
\end{itemize}
Bricktown offers a protected space carved out of urban decay, free from urban ills and equipped with an easily consumed interpretation of Oklahoma City. From murals of natives to a prominent land run statue, public art presents a refined image of Oklahoma City. Bricktown’s makeover involved digging a “canal” through several city blocks, connecting the refreshed river, an updated convention center, relocating the minor league baseball franchise from the fairgrounds, and an indoor arena capable of housing a major league team.\textsuperscript{151}

The Bricktown canal conspicuously resembles the San Antonio Riverwalk and Indianapolis’ Canal Walk; and prominent architectural features in the baseball park can be found in major league stadiums in Arlington, Kansas City, and Chicago. MAPs provided resources to renovate the Pei era’s Myriad Convention Center found in the central business district. Next to the convention hall, MAPs funded a major league arena under the \textit{Field of Dreams} paradigm: if you build it, they will come. The Bricktown brand reboot even brought money to the city’s beleaguered (and highly ineffective) mass transit system. METROTransit received a fleet of trolley-style busses for tourist-area routes and an express spur to the airport from MAPs funds. Intended to hearken back to the streetcar days, these trolley-busses resemble San Francisco streetcars more than the defunct, prewar interurban railways.

Overall, MAPs presented an avenue for leaders to produce public goods found in other communities, which theoretically induces external investment. Oklahoma City approved a series of to increased tax revenues for capital projects. MAPs is remarkable for one main point: historically conservative Oklahoma City found the political will to fund and build these projects simultaneously through tax increases. Oklahoma City is located in a particularly populist and conservative region. This political slant resulted in the removal of city professionals during the

\textsuperscript{151} City of Oklahoma City Municipal Code ; Chapter 52, Section 23.b.7
1980s. After threatening layoffs for the police and fire department if a tax referendum did not pass, the political blowback contributed to a change in the normally insulated, nonpolitical city manager’s office. In order to appease the tax-averse residents, MAPs presented a pay-as-you-go fiscal scheme, funding all projects without accruing public debt. The pragmatic solution to a perceived marketability problem became a political brand with lasting consequences. Ron Norick led civic leaders, city professionals, and consultants like Rick Horrow on the campaign trail, stumping for the MAPs referendum. Early on, leaders hoped that MAPs would reverse or stabilize decline. When MAPs faced an income shortfall, the city manager and new mayor crafted a solution to fill the gap with additional revenue and reduced expenses. By 2000, MAPs presented leaders with an instrument to help Oklahoma City mature into a Big League City.

Oklahoma City’s 1993 MAPs effort reflects a key turning point in a long history of urban revitalization: employing experts to provide tactics needed to implement a vision rather than individual projects. In previous era, elites confronted new deficiencies and dysfunctions with hired expertise to implement portions of the programs common to other cities. With MAPs, Oklahoma City’s leadership commanded the vision rather than the tactics. Instead of commissioning a specific replica of Pittsburgh’s urban renewal or Chicago’s City Beautiful boulevard park system or New York’s streetcar system, locals deferred to the agenda items recommended by experts. As cities matriculated into the global economy, leaders and their consultants recognized that the contest for capital has morphed into a complex competition over skilled labor. Just as Oklahoma City mimicked communities like Indianapolis and San Antonio during the 1990s, El Paso and Birmingham have reprised programs implemented in Oklahoma City. Leaders in both cities contacted consulting firms managed by Rick Horrow to help build public support for downtown revitalization projects. Each community had a larger vision:
Birmingham wanted to become a major cultural center in the Southeast in 1998, while El Paso wanted to reinforce its economic position in the Southwest in 2013. In both cases, city leadership had a general strategy of where they wanted to take their community. Horrow and a series of other consultants provided tactics to make those goals possible. When presented with a difficult competition becoming more complicated, urban leaders like Mayor Norick may yield to a policy network of experts and an established menu of tactics. This deference allows consultants to heavily influence the local agenda.
“OKC schools are no different than other urban districts and therein is the problem. The young professionals today flocking to downtown are likely to flee to the suburbs once they have school-age children, unless they can afford private school.”

“As one of these young urban professionals of which you speak, I am placing a TON of hope and expectation into the Rex Charter Elementary. It will come online just as my oldest enters Kindergarten. If it were a good school that would be so awesome.”

-Discussion on OKCTalk.com

Before running for mayor in 1999, Kirk Humphreys enjoyed a successful career in both the private and public sectors. Humphreys served on the Putnam City Public Schools Board during the 1980s and early 1990s, helping guide the steady expansion of the metropolitan area’s second largest school district. Kenneth Cooper Middle School opened during Humphreys’ tenure, with posh accommodations and state-of-the-art technology in the classroom. Within months, balloon frame houses encompassed the campus; the new supply of quality education helped spur a residential boom of upper- and middle-class families flocking into the new school’s watershed.153

In the fall of 2014, Oklahoma City’s newest elementary opened its doors. Like Cooper Middle, Rex Elementary features state-of-the-art technology in the classroom and the city’s finest elementary accommodations. Funding for the school came from the leftovers of Humphreys’ MAPS 4 Kids initiative, an effort to rebuild education infrastructure for schools that serve students in Oklahoma City. The 2001 referendum levied a temporary one-cent sales tax to

153 Satellite photos from Google Earth reveal this trend. Cooper Middle School lies immediately west of Wiley Post Airport and east of Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge. Before Cooper Middle School opened, the primary use for land in this area was light agriculture. Easily observable residential construction slowly sprawls around the new facility in satellite photos taken after the Putnam City School District opened the new school.
help build quality school infrastructure. A decade later, Humphreys championed using the residual money on a centrally located charter school aimed at bringing families downtown.154

Education is a critical component to the standard package of amenities. Despite massive urban renewal programs, the white middle class continued to evacuate central cities. Suburbs established quality school districts while resources for their urban counterparts dwindled.155 Quality of schools is an extremely salient factor when residents select a place to live, especially for middle class families expecting or housing children.156 Varady and Raffel hypothesize that a key strategy for central cities to retain or attract middle class families is through quality schools – including schools with merit-based enrollment procedures.157 These magnet schools provide central cities the opportunity to celebrate education successes, building the reputation that urban districts can produce quality schooling. More recent research indicates that the physical location of these selective schools can spur residential gentrification.158

By the 1990s, urban leaders recognized that the middle class would not return without quality public education. Central cities use the same tactics that postwar suburbs used to establish and invest in superior schools. Previous generations used exclusionary policies to entrap beleaguered socioeconomic groups in central cities. Expensive housing through large lot zoning, scarce subsidized housing, homogenous housing stocks, and racially discriminatory

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policies helped foster a wealthy white flight to the suburbs.\textsuperscript{159} Advantageous student-to-tax dollar ratios emerged, helping suburbs fund quality primary and secondary education programs for the wealthy and leaving the urban poor without help.\textsuperscript{160} In order to attract residents with children, cities turned to building new neighborhoods – and subsequently schools – based on the same principles: expensive housing (through luxury condos), minimal subsidized housing, and racially discriminatory enrollment policies. These policies take several forms, ranging from geographic enrollment zones to exams that favor certain socioeconomic groups. Magnet schools routinely enroll disproportionately white, wealthy students. As an example, Chicago’s magnet schools seat approximately three times as many white and Asian students as the district average, while enrolling about one third of the average number of students experiencing poverty.\textsuperscript{161} By building new exclusive schools in high-socioeconomic districts, cities are able to reinforce residential revitalization by attracting households with children that would normally migrate to suburbia. Just as exposition halls and arenas are anchors for commerce, exclusive schools are anchors for residents.

Urban leaders have shifted school policy towards a developmental posture with investments in education infrastructure and enrollment practices. The result is a suburban quality education in an urban setting – and a magnet for highly productive workers to reside downtown after rearing children. This policy shift is visible nationwide, opening the opportunity to watch a

\textsuperscript{160} Drier, Peter, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom. 2001. \textit{Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century}.
\textsuperscript{161} Schulte, Sarah. 2014. “Minority student enrollment declining in CPS elite schools.” \texttt{http://abc7.ws/1uxWUTO}
Novak, Tim and Chris Fusco. 2014. “Whites getting more spots at top Chicago public high schools.” \texttt{http://bit.ly/1BNU0dR}
policy network emerge as the standard package of amenities reinvents the urban education model. Exclusive schools are a policy option for cities attempting to designate certain areas as open for gentrification. Exclusion can come in several forms, ranging from strategically delimited boundaries (similar to the urban-suburban education divide) to a lengthy application process often involving interviews and exams. The rise of exclusive urban schools has come in two waves: (1) as an alternative to bussing across neighborhood school service boundaries in the midst of the civil rights movement and (2) as an anchor for gentrification upon the onset of globalization. In either case, these schools often receive the lion’s share of resources – both public and increasingly private – to build a good education brand within the city. Unsurprisingly, these schools are often whiter and wealthier than their counterparts, reflecting a bias toward securing productive workers’ families within the city limits.

**Beyond Oklahoma City**

Central cities can be very aggressive in working to improve the brand of local schools. Education infrastructure in cities is a paramount concern, with communities throwing billions into improving their schools. Urban attempts to brand schools as suburban-quality education often start with two thrusts: infrastructure and exclusion. Baltimore has coordinated over one billion dollars investment from the municipality, the local school district, and the Maryland Stadium Authority (a special purpose district in charge of entertainment spaces). Beyond attempts to improve an entire district, some cities celebrate exclusive schools like New York’s Stuyvesant and Chicago’s Payton. Both of these schools require students to score highly on

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standardized exams before admission. Cities market these high profile schools as a venue for high-achieving students to enjoy a rigorous curriculum. Many of these schools feature state-of-the-art teaching technology, sometimes funded by the municipal government or private boosters.

Although the larger belief that schools with strong reputations create positive spillovers, the tactics of building a school’s brand remain in flux. Particulars range from strategies for student improvement to ambiguous pushes to build state of the art facilities. National ideological debates trickle into local venues, with a growing number of charter, magnet, and selective enrollment schools. Education infrastructure investment appears to coincide with the new focus on schools; a wide host of entrepreneurs and ideologues attempt to steer local leaders towards their products and ideals. The resulting policy world resembles Kingdon’s primordial policy soup: policymakers recognize the importance of an issue area, but the dominant strategy remains in flux.\footnote{Kingdon, John W. 1984. \textit{Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies}. Little and Brown.} As a result, a chaotic system of rapidly inflating and deflating ideas come-and-go, while the policy community stabilizes behind a set of accepted norms.

\textit{Exclusive Eds as Anchors for Residential Development}

Oklahoma City’s Rex Elementary is not the only instance of using primary and secondary education to attract professionals downtown. The quality of schools affects households’ residential decisions within a metropolis. The relatively low costs for intra-metropolitan foot-voting places cities at odds with suburbs over basic services.\footnote{National Association of Realtors. 2013. \textit{Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers}.} As members of the creative class start families, they may feel tempted to move suburbia to secure quality education for their children. As a result, central city governments may find it in their interest to develop schools...
that rival their suburban peers. Instead of improving the entire system, it appears that many school systems focus on only a handful of elite schools with exclusive enrollment patterns. Chicago provides an excellent lens into this pattern.

Chicago Public Schools heavily subsidizes exclusive schools, arguably as a tool to promote gentrification. The most prominent examples are the city’s selective enrollment high schools. After the City of Chicago garnered significant control over the school system in the 1990s, the selective enrollment program founded new campuses located in gentrifying areas. The geographic distribution of these institutions raises the suggestion that exclusive schools in urban areas could anchor residential settlement similar to suburban schools.

Chicago’s selective enrollment schools attempt to capture the highest performing students. Born in the midst of the civil rights movement, selective enrollment schools aimed to enroll the city’s best and brightest measured by exams, attendance and grades. Revisions to this procedure have created a complex process with many loopholes. Ethical concerns remain at the forefront of discussion, with nearly annual investigations concluding that political clout affects enrollment. The resulting system leads to what Chicago Teachers Union leadership calls an “apartheid school system”, where selective enrollment schools are disproportionately wealthy.

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and white. Chicago continues to expand the number of seats in exclusive schools. In 2014, the city of Chicago announced the use of tax increment financing funds to develop the new Barack Obama College Prep selective enrollment high school adjacent to the Chicago Housing Authority Cabrini Green towers’ footprint. Chicago has used TIF funds – usually aimed at infrastructure for economic revitalization – to expand existing selective enrollment schools on the city’s near north and near south sides. 

Chicago’s selective enrollment schools receive lavish resources compared to their in-district peers, widening the achievement gap between elite and neighborhood schools. As neighborhood schools cut the toilet paper budget, a selective enrollment school equipped all students with a state-of-the-art tablet computer. A similar pattern can be found at exclusive elementary schools. Elementary local school councilmembers suggest that both synthetic turf playgrounds and video projectors are critical recruiting tools for all students from prekindergarten through twelfth grade. Policymakers believe that this education infrastructure signals to families the quality of their schools.

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171 Klein, Rebecca. 2013. “Chicago Schools May Be Forced To Choose Between Toilet Paper, Teachers Due To Budget Cuts.” http://huff.to/XGnZb9
173 Local School Councils determine an individual school’s budget within the Chicago Public Schools system. LSCs are 12-13 member boards elected at every school for two year terms.
Table 5.1 Cities with Exclusive Schools

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*Charter School serves as Exclusive School
**State Magnet Program coordinates with Central City, District
***Operates Exclusive Elementary Schools Only
#Under State Control
Shaded indicates one body with zoning and education authority
In sum, Chicago Public Schools appears to support a two-tier education system: the first tier is designed for upper- and professional class children while the second tier is reserved for all others. Exclusive enrollment procedures (including clout-based enrollment) and school infrastructure investment foster an education system that creates geographic advantages similar to the urban-suburban cleavage. These schools allow Chicago to capture would-be professional-class suburbanites with a viable alternative to suburban schools.

**Widespread Installation, By Whom?**

Despite wide variation among how cities and education authorities interact, a vast majority of central city school systems establish exclusive schools. Table 5.1 displays cities with and without exclusive schools. This data reveals two trends. First, an overwhelming number of cities feature exclusive education in the central city. Nearly one half of these schools formed or adopted exclusive enrollment policies after 1990. Second, Chi-square analysis suggests a statistically significant relationship between exclusive schools and cities where the municipality exerts large control over the school district and zoning.¹⁷⁴ This evidence suggests that when given the authority, cities pursue exclusive education – which is increasingly viewed as an avenue for economic revitalization.

**Chasing Image in a Fiscal Straightjacket**

Independent school districts are sensitive to the relationship between fiscal health and image. Oklahoma independent school districts exist within a fiscal straitjacket.¹⁷⁵

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¹⁷⁴ Chi-Square test results are for a one tailed at p<.1 using data from Table 5.2.

¹⁷⁵ Pagano and Hoene describe a fiscal straitjacket as having few, own-source revenue options and binding tax and expenditure limits.
independent school districts rely on limited local property taxes and intergovernmental transfers. Most of these resources fund day-to-day operations. Unsurprisingly, property values can constrain an independent school district’s budget. First, property values affect annual tax receipts. Second, larger property tax bases can dilute bond-increased tax levies into smaller tax rate increases. Oklahoma voters control education infrastructure improvements through bond issues, and state law mandates education referendum approval requires a 60% majority.\footnote{State of Oklahoma Department of Education. 2009. “School Finance.” \url{http://bit.ly/ZiShHZ}} Theoretically, voters are more likely to approve modest tax rate increases rather than larger hikes. In both cases, property values are critical for independent school districts. As a result, districts have no direct control over land values.

School districts’ reputation appear to influence intra-metropolitan foot voting patterns. Tiebout develops a much ballyhooed model working off the assumption that households will take the cost of municipal services into account when deciding where to live.\footnote{Tiebout, Charles. 1956. “A Pure Theory of Expenditures.” \textit{Journal of Political Economy.} (64) 416-424} According to this model, people will “vote with their feet” and move to locales with preferred services. Berry expresses legitimate concern about the ability for ham-and-egg foot-voters to comprehend the impact of several layers of special purpose authorities, municipalities, and other local governments.\footnote{Berry, Christopher. 2009. \textit{Imperfect Union: Representation and Taxation in Multilevel Governments}. Cambridge.} While Berry’s viewpoint likely proves true for mosquito abatement districts and library assessments, education seems to be an exception: the perceived quality of education at the local school appears to guide residential decision-making.

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Foot-voting influences property values. Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom\textsuperscript{179} recognize a “pecking order of jurisdictions” where wealthier jurisdictions “provide their residents with excellent public services at a relatively small tax cost in relation to housing values and incomes.” On the flip side, poorer jurisdictions “provide housing of last resort for all those whom more affluent suburban jurisdictions can exclude by reason of low income, or race.”\textsuperscript{180} Assuming that economic sorting occurs based on who is willing and able to pay for superior services, one can expect to find changes in land value over time, depending on which side of a school district’s boundary a house sits. These shifts are speculative, seemingly based on the reputation of a given district’s education. These assumptions force city officials to act as if they are true.

School reputation is an elusive concept. If any profession should be able to explain what makes a quality school, one would assume it would be teachers. When discussed, teachers often respond with vague terms like “good schools” and “good teachers”. When pressed, responses default to a school’s reputation. This outcome matches answers from real estate agents who suggest that school reputation mattered to their clients more than test scores or millage rates. In other words, teachers and non-teachers provide the same boilerplate answer: when deciding where to live, the local school’s reputation matters. Defaulting to simple reputation makes sense, considering the complex nature of education. The average household would have to expend large amount of effort to accurately gauge the quality of education in a given district. These costs far exceed potential marginal benefit of a slightly better education. As Downs

\textsuperscript{179} Dreier, Peter, John Mollenkopf and Todd Swanstrom. 2001. \textit{Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century}. University of Kansas Press.

\textsuperscript{180} Dreier, Peter, John Mollenkopf, and Todd Swanstrom. 2001. \textit{Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-First Century}. 111
hypothesizes, people will attempt to minimize information acquisition costs when making choices.\footnote{181} Reputation fills this void.

School reputation can be understood as an aggregate assessment of key education symbols. Edelman suggests that a lifetime socialization helps people properly interpret stimulus-response cues.\footnote{182} In particular, Edelman highlights rituals as a socialization process. In order to effectively understand how citizens interpret school performance, one should consider examining the rituals of the individual district. Many of these rituals are highly symbolic – sporting events and graduation ceremonies – to small moments with intense interaction between parents and school symbols – consuming short lessons during open house sessions and watching a child climb the big yellow bus. The substance behind these rituals does not matter; instead, the interpretation is important. In reputation terms, if a school portrays good symbols, then it must be a good school.

Cities face the persistent threat of resources fleeing their jurisdiction seeking better education. If the perceived quality of education influences location decisions, then the overlapping nature of public schools and municipal jurisdictions creates a problem for cities. A simple foot-voting model appears to apply regarding education. Tiebout’s sorting model suggests that families are like consumers and will select where to live based on where they live.\footnote{183} Households with no children may elect to live in substandard education areas; but once children enter the residential calculus, families move toward quality schools.\footnote{184} Scholarly

\footnote{184}{National Association of Realtors. 2013. \textit{Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers}.}
consensus suggests that suburban jurisdictions have maintained stronger public service provision than their central city counterparts.\textsuperscript{185}

\textbf{A Unique Look}

Exclusive schools often feature a district’s highest quality of education infrastructure. A quick sample of images in Figure 5.2 reveals the strikingly different architecture of newer exclusive schools in several cities. Oklahoma City’s Rex Elementary stands at the top, with other cities’ high schools below. These new buildings radically differ from their neoclassical and uninspired midcentury peers, featuring contemporary and postmodern architecture.\textsuperscript{186} Nearly all exclusive schools advertise infrastructural advantages for their students, most frequently the use of technology in the classroom or the quality of extra-curricular activities. Arts auditoriums, well equipped gymnasiums, and security features are tangible signals for school quality. Whether it is the symbolic architecture or the technology within, the resources committed to exclusive school infrastructure builds a brand inherently different than the rest of urban education, signaling a different experience to wealthier families.


\textsuperscript{186} Images from school websites, respectively.
Figure 5.2 Images of Exclusive School Architecture
Schools invest in symbols as part of an image-conscious approach to attract and keep families with higher socioeconomic status. Because property taxes heavily influence school budgets, it is often in the district’s financial interest to project the image of a quality school before providing quality education. School districts invest in projects that foster the image of a better school system, indirectly improving future property values and bringing the district budget into safe harbor. As a result, schools invest in doodads to send positive signals about their school’s quality. School districts throughout Oklahoma City spent millions of MAPs 4 Kids dollars on synthetic athletic turf.\textsuperscript{187} By the late 2000s, school districts citywide initiated comprehensive programs to install interactive whiteboards in every classroom.\textsuperscript{188} MAPs 4 Kids money subsidized this process, especially for implementation in new schools and classrooms. The total MAPs 4 Kids contribution is likely at least $5 million and is potentially greater than $10 million.\textsuperscript{189}

Outsiders manage their product’s image to fit the image of high quality education. Vendors have strategically targeted prestigious institutions first, which has reinforced the perceived symbolic value of their products. Starting in the 1990s, SMART Technologies paired their products with quality educators, particularly interactive whiteboards. In the company’s terms, “Educators were the first to take an interest in SMART’s interactive whiteboards,

\textsuperscript{187} From analysis of OCMAPs Trust meeting minutes. OCMAPs Trust discharges MAPs 4 Kids funds to districts for use.
\textsuperscript{188} Because the central city school district jurisdiction does not perfectly match the taxed area, Oklahoma City transferred nearly $150 million to suburban districts. These transfers depended on the number of students living within the municipality attending the suburban district. This complicated funding mechanism’s expenditures provide an excellent opportunity to examine how different schools approach allocating these unexpected resources.
\textsuperscript{189} This figure estimates equipping approximately two-thirds of the classrooms in the selected districts at $3000 each, the sampled value from multiple itemized expenses. Many districts have supplemented the MAPs 4 Kids money with bond issues, so the actual MAPs 4 Kids expenditure may be less. OKCPS has spent an estimated $4.8 million on SMARTBoards alone.
immediately seeing their potential as instructional, professional development and student collaboration tools. Since then, that initial small group of educators has grown into a large international community. There are now millions of students and teachers who use SMART solutions daily to help make learning more engaging and effective.  

SMART Technologies targeted high-performing educators at conventions, often giving discounted rates to strong instructors. Early sales placed interactive whiteboards into classrooms with advanced courses. Just as school administrators are concerned about projecting the image of a quality education in their schools, this anecdote indicates that SMART Technologies early sales’ strategy focused on projecting the image of their product onto quality education. Over time, the technology became synonymous with quality teachers. By the mid-2000s, working in a room with a SMARTBoard seems to have transformed into a status symbol. Teaching in a technologically-equipped classroom provided job security, because of the perception that only the better teachers used interactive white boards. By 2014, Oklahoma City Public Schools and their suburban counterparts reported that over two-thirds of all classrooms in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area currently have interactive whiteboard technology.

Quality education is a key part of a community’s package of amenities. Finding a way to attract and to maintain a healthy middle- and upper-middle class populace is critical for cities. Despite this high priority, cash-strapped school districts often are ill-equipped to keep up with state-of-the-art technology required to project the image of a quality school. Advocates for certain products can manipulate this image with a clever marketing strategy. These new ideas

become part of a larger set of symbols for “quality” education, which increases the pressure on a financially perilous school system.

**Oklahoma City’s Approach**

Led by Mayor Kirk Humphreys in 2001, city leaders identified local schools as a major impediment to their efforts to revitalizing downtown Oklahoma City. By the late 1990s, most of Oklahoma City Public Schools’ infrastructure had decayed without significant maintenance for seventy years. State law exacerbated the education infrastructure crisis in Oklahoma City. Prompted by the Reagan administration’s analysis of public education, *A Nation at Risk*, Oklahoma’s legislature passed a comprehensive reform to the state’s education system in 1990 with an income tax increase to offset increased state expenditures. The report attributed flagging performance to underpaid and underqualified teachers facing overcrowded classrooms. After the statewide referendum approved the funding, schools budgets’ expanded to reduce classroom sizes and hire more, better teachers. Through the 1990s, several districts applied the additional resources to the workforce, simultaneously reducing class sizes and rewarding increased teacher credentials. Although the initiative funded more full time employees, the legislature did not provide additional funds to build new classrooms. In order to house the new teachers, many schools acquired *portable classrooms*, a moniker for trailers. By 2000, the typical Oklahoma City school featured aging infrastructure and scores of portable classrooms. Some schools held nearly half of their classes in trailers, while the Oklahoma City Public Schools housed over 170

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193 Voters rejected State Question 639 in 1991, upholding the additional spending.
classes in the temporary structures. The resulting image was an insufficient, seemingly backwater education system. Unsurprisingly, highly productive workers settled in areas with nicer-looking, brick-and-mortar schools: the parts of the metropolitan area served by other independent school districts. Instead of enjoying an urban lifestyle, they headed to the suburbs before starting a family.

Local leaders sought to solve the schools problem in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area through education infrastructure improvements. Although the state had improved student-to-teacher ratios, the roughshod approach inadvertently created untenable learning environments by not expanding infrastructure to keep up with the new teachers hired by the state’s funding increases. Local leaders assumed that further improving school infrastructure would enhance local students’ educational outcomes. Better educated workers could make the city’s labor force more productive, thus creating a competitive advantage over nearby regions. Replacing the trailer park school naturally became a priority for educators. Led by a former school board member, the strange bedfellows of the local chamber of commerce, teachers union, and voters mobilized to pay for new infrastructure.

Previous experience revealed that voters would approve a temporary sales tax increase to build school infrastructure; Oklahoma City’s leaders proposed a MAPs-style initiative for the public schools. The specifics in the “MAPs 4 Kids” initiative were rather ambiguous, often offering the simple plan to “rebuild” the local school districts’ decaying infrastructure. Early actions by the MAPs 4 Kids committee pursued consultant guidance regarding priorities and how

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to build the new classrooms. Even without a detailed master plan, voters favored the MAPs-style approach.

Oklahoma City voters approved a temporary one-cent sales tax to solve the educational infrastructure shortage. MAPs 4 Kids funding created a very unique situation for school districts: an economic windfall. In order to rebuild the local schools, taxpayers approved a seven-year, one-cent sales tax and a supplemental bond issue for the Oklahoma City Public Schools. With money in hand, Oklahoma City turned to experts to guide investment. Immediately, the OCMAPs trust, the somewhat independent arm of the Oklahoma City municipal government in charge of allocating MAPs 4 Kids funding, called for consultants to guide the program. Consultants responded with a master plan for completely overhauling the Oklahoma City Public Schools infrastructure. Details ranged from deferring new athletics infrastructure as contingency spending, building a new secondary school, the cost per square foot, the space needed per student, and fixtures needed to turn a structure into a school. These decisions guided the process until its completion.

MAPs 4 Kids provided desperately needed aid for local school districts’ decaying and overflowing infrastructure in the late 1990s. Invariably, school districts in Oklahoma City allocated resources to building new brick-and-mortar classrooms. Once districts vanquished the portable classrooms, they sought image through different parts of the standard package of amenities for education. Working class districts invested in a new fleet of school buses; middle- and upper-class suburbs retrofitted arts auditoriums. Many school remolds created a fortified space to bolster school security through architectural bottlenecks for visitors at a main entrance. These investments all echo aspects of the standard package of amenities for education: the token
yellow bus, a space to conduct school arts recitals, and bulwarks against security concerns. Each of these investments aim to improve the image of a better education, serving as windows the public has into a school system.

MAPs 4 Kids provides a window into school infrastructure resource allocation. Oklahoma City equipped the several school districts serving their jurisdiction with previously unattainable funding. With over half a billion in new tax dollars, school districts received some autonomy on how to distribute the new resources. Surprisingly, even after expanding and replacing existing buildings to cover state teacher-to-student ratio requirements, many districts enjoyed excess funds. Many districts invested in amenities, ranging from tech-savvy interactive whiteboards to state-of-the-art sports surfaces. Oklahoma City Public Schools retained residual funds to build a second layer of education in the downtown district. Kirk Humphreys, the mayor who presided over MAPs 4 Kids, has lobbied for a charter school to “encourage families to move downtown.”

The Curious Case of Rex Elementary

After updating and rebuilding the entire district’s infrastructure, Oklahoma City Public Schools’ MAPs 4 Kids allocation retained several million in residual funds. Instead of using these funds to create extra capacity at established schools or create a nest egg for future infrastructure issues, OCMAPs approved funding for an elementary school in the downtown district. MAPs 4

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196 Evidence collected from OCMAPs Trust meeting minutes, specifically expenditures for Oklahoma City Public Schools and suburban districts.


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Kids Mayor Kirk Humphreys championed a cause to build a new elementary school in the near downtown district. Humphreys contacted education consultants to manage the fledgling charter school. These range from public and private school boosters to school reform advocates to real estate and business interests. Working with the nonprofit Oklahoma City Quality Schools, Inc., the former mayor solicited the help of several self-proclaimed education experts to guide the downtown campus – including the Oklahoma City Public Schools. The school opened in fall of 2014, nestled immediately south of the central business district.

Rex uses exclusive enrollment practices to target gentrifying families by using a gerrymandered recruitment zone. Rex’s enrollment procedure prioritizes students living within unique boundaries. This priority zone includes several neighborhoods targeted for revitalization (gentrification): Midtown, Deep Deuce, and Core to Shore. Recent efforts in Oklahoma City have focused on several districts adjacent to the central business district. Figure 5.3 highlights these targeted areas, and outlines the Rex Elementary enrollment boundaries. Blue zones indicate business centric spaces, while green zones indicate primarily residential districts. The Midtown and Deep Deuce districts have received heavy core infrastructure investments, ranging from traffic circles and boulevards to bike paths. Automobile Alley is a mixed-use district receiving similar investments. The Oklahoma Health Sciences Center enjoys two tax increment financing subsidies in exchange for an “eds and meds” anchor. Each of these programs function as a draw for professional households to the downtown area. Combining the enrollment priority boundaries with the headmaster’s explicit goal to encourage young professional families to move

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downtown, this elementary school appears to be an integral part of a larger revitalization effort.

Figure 5.3 Rex Elementary Enrollment Boundaries

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Education and the Standard Package of Amenities

A new priority for urban education has emerged which reframed quality education as an amenity that attracts middle- and upper- and creative-class residents. This approach differs from previous generations of using urban education as a route to economic vitality. First, the focus is on the school’s brand rather than the quality of instruction. Shiny infrastructure that is strikingly different from traditional neighborhood schools, sending signals to help families easily identify the exclusive schools. Extracurricular activities often enjoy posh facilities, ranging from state-of-the-art athletic surfaces and jumbotron for sporting events to technology-laden arts, communication, and requisite courses.

Notably, the enrollment procedures used in exclusive urban schools often prioritize certain districts. This type of exclusive school may take different names or slightly different forms. In Oklahoma City, Rex Elementary is a charter school catering to students living within an enrollment zone containing districts targeted for gentrification. Chicago used tax increment financing money to build new facilities Jones College Prep, at the time the school launched a special enrollment program to enroll students in the nearby areas. Jones’ enrollment footprint encompasses several gentrifying neighborhoods. Nashville’s magnet program reports a similar outcome, with enrollment becoming increasingly white as geographic proximity between magnet schools predominantly black neighborhoods decreases.

strategic geographic placement of exclusive schools segregate the student body between affluent magnets and less-resourced neighborhood schools.

The new focus for urban education tries to capture middle- and creative class families. Lipman finds that the presence of exclusive urban schools encourage gentrification, which often leads to disproportionately white, disproportionately wealthy, and disproportionately educated populations. Gallagher notes the increasing number of families with young children living in Manhattan. Instead of selecting a suburban lifestyle because they value their child’s education, young families choose to stay in the central city if given access to exclusive schools. This trend was almost unthinkable during the 1990s when Varady and Raffel proposed exclusive schools as a route to stabilizing the urban population. Today, a majority of American central cities include exclusive schools as part of their trophy case of amenities.

Investments in urban education reveal a younger portion of the city revitalization policy network. Among the three case studies, education is a recent tool for revitalization. The issue area appears to be still developing its core principles. Although actors have met consensus that quality education can be a catalyst for residential revitalization, which tactics build a school’s brand remain undefined. Particulars range from strategies for student improvement to ambiguous pushes to build schools for tomorrow. The resulting policy world resembles Kingdon’s primordial policy soup: policymakers recognize the importance of an issue area, but the dominant strategy remains in flux. As a result, a chaotic system of rapidly inflating and deflating ideas come-and-go, as the community stabilizes into a coherent policy network. This

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instability explains the rush to invest MAPs 4 Kids money in synthetic turf and interactive whiteboards. Unlike education’s more established peers (e.g., sports facilities and convention centers), no single frame has dominated the debate. As a result, entrepreneurs can more easily append their ideas and products to “state-of-the-art” education and manipulate the local agenda.
CHAPTER SIX
SPORTS CARTELS AND THE BIG LEAGUE REPLICA

“It’s more than just a basketball team: it’s the culmination of 20 years of civic reinvention, and the promise of more to come. Over the last five years, the city and its team have undergone a perfect mind meld, so at this point it’s impossible to talk about one without talking about the other. After all of that sacrifice – the grind of municipal meetings and penny taxes and planning boards, the dust and noise and uncertainty of construction, the horror of 1995 – the little city in the middle of No Man’s Land has finally arrived on the world stage. While it’s there, it fully intends to put on a good performance.”


Cities fight, subsidize, build and claw for professional sports, a key component for the standard package of amenities. Research shows that arenas with major league franchises attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to various attractions, helping spur commercial growth. Further, the prestige and publicity associated with major league professional athletics helps draw attention to cities, projecting an image that communities are a valuable part of the national culture. Cities nationwide spend billions annually on improving sports infrastructure – from indoor arenas to outdoor stadiums to private training facilities – in order to attract a franchise from the big leagues.

Professional sports leagues incite interest from smaller cities by expanding and expatriating franchises. By building and updating a venue, cities could earn Major league status, the emotional connection to a local team, and an anchor entertainment attraction. Sometimes these projects profited cities, while other times these projects floundered. Rosentraub

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criticizes Saint Louis’ efforts to capture the National Football League’s football franchise. By building the Trans World Dome downtown, Saint Louis’ leaders hoped to attract new leisure and entertainment jobs downtown. The projected prosperity did not materialize, and the team looks ready to head back to Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{211} Kansas City’s Sprint Center tells a similar story. When asked about indoor professional teams, Mayor Kay Barnes responded “I very much want one here.”\textsuperscript{212} Continued discussion with the National Hockey League and National Basketball Association keep Kansas City optimistic, despite only hosting collegiate sports and occasional professional exhibitions. The Sprint Center remains empty, despite state-of-the-art facilities for players, franchise officers, and fans. Despite the mixed response, cities continued to pour billions into new sports projects.\textsuperscript{213}

Local investment in professional sports accelerated as both the quantity and mobility of franchises increased. Prior to the 1960s professional sports leagues were remarkably stable, with teams from the same markets played the same annual circuit. When Major League Baseball famously moved west in 1958, transplanting the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants to California, the geography of professional sports permanently changed. New leagues emerged, locating teams in smaller markets; established leagues offered expansion teams to new markets – expanding their geographic footprint beyond the northeast and midwest. Many franchises struggled and moved their teams to new markets. Cities quickly learned to have arenas and stadiums ready in case a team was ready to move. A second wave of expansion occurred during

\textsuperscript{211} ESPN.com News Services. 2015. “St. Louis mayor: we’re getting hint.” \url{http://espn.com/1Dnm6S1}
\textsuperscript{212} Schoenfeld, Bruce. 2009. “The Empty Arena.” \textit{The Atlantic}. \url{http://theatlantic.com/1vzjz5u}
the 1990s, spurring more investment for cities on the fringe of major league status. With a perceived economic boon on the horizon, cities gambled that if they would build it, then the major leagues would come. Buffalo New York’s Pilot Field (Coca-Cola Field) continues to house a minor league baseball team, despite its original purpose being a major league stadium. During the 1980s, Major League Baseball initiated an expansion process, attracting bids from Buffalo, Washington, Denver, and a handful of sunbelt cities. Buffalo issued millions in bonds, rallied local investors and rolled out the welcome for MLB’s expansion committee. The bid halted after a committeeman remarked “Buffalo would be great if you had another million people living here.” Locals continue to ask “what-if” Buffalo had been a baseball hit, dreaming of championships, and “electric” feel to their downtown. In order to accurately build what the sports franchises would want, cities contacted external experts to consult how to build athletic palaces nationwide.

Oklahoma City garnered temporary big league status after Hurricane Katrina. When the natural disaster displaced the New Orleans Hornets franchise, Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett contacted the National Basketball Association with an offer that they could not refuse: access to an NBA-friendly arena. For the next two years, Oklahoma City’s arena posted one of the highest attendance averages in the association. The short run fulfilled Norick’s argument that “In order to compete effectively, we have to look like a big league city…. When it comes right

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214 Every metropolitan area in the United States with over one million residents has either constructed a new arena, a new stadium, or significantly overhauled existing infrastructure since 1990.
down to it, Oklahoma City is still not considered a big league city and if it takes us doing something … then we’ll do it.”\(^{218}\) Attendance for the visiting Hornets ranked among the highest in the NBA, with games at the Ford Center nearly always a sellout. When the Hornets ended their visit and returned to New Orleans, Oklahoma City had proven its worth as a major league market.

Cornett’s attention quickly turned to capturing a permanent franchise. After a comprehensive remodel to the Ford Center and securing funding for an off-site training center, the Seattle’s Supersonics franchise rebranded itself as the Oklahoma City Thunder. Economic analysis suggests that the NBA and downtown arena are a boon for Oklahoma City. Nearly one million visitors attend events in the Ford Center annually, which leads to a near $100 million in direct spending impact on the area.\(^{219}\) New boutiques, restaurants, and hotels litter the adjacent Bricktown district and spill into the nearby mixed use neighborhood, Deep Deuce.

**Replicating the Big League City**

Oklahoma City’s eagerness to become a city with big league sports can be found in cities almost everywhere. Oklahoma City faced economic decline in the late 1980s, inciting anxiety and self-image insecurity. After the oil economy ran out of gas, unemployment plagued the region and took a toll on the city’s financial and construction sectors.\(^{220}\) In 1993, locals included an arena as part of a master plan to revive the central business district and vicinity. Through the 2000s, Oklahoma City planned to build high-traffic attractions near other investments (walkability


\(^{219}\) Oklahoma City MAPS 3 Citizen’s Advisory Board. 2010. “Oklahoma City Ford Center: December 2010”

improvements, other attractions) to spawn a leisure agglomeration – a positive economic spillover in the entertainment and tourism sectors. The potential financial boon and the tacit justification of reaching “big league” status coaxed hundreds of millions of public dollars into sports infrastructure.

**The Appeal**

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a rapid expansion of professional sports, and many franchises were on the move. For most of the century, the big four leagues (Major League Baseball, the National Hockey League, the National Basketball Association, and the National Football League) held a virtual monopoly on professional sports. A series of legitimate threats from outside leagues began to challenge this dominance. In 1958 William Shea led the charge of a third baseball league, the Continental League, to protest the Western movement of the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants. From 1960 through 1969, the American Football League provided the NFL competition. The AFL garnered national attention with a sweetheart television deal in 1965. Founded in 1967, the American Basketball Association produced a flashier version of roundball until merging with the NBA in 1976. The World Hockey Association initiated a bidding war for increasingly scarce talent on ice from 1971 through 1979. Eventually each of these leagues would dominate their rivals, but professional sports quickly

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Simon & Schuster.
learned that expansion beyond the long-standing six and eight market leagues could be profitable.

Instead of relying on massive metropolises, the vagabond sports leagues integrated smaller markets in regions outside of the industrial belt. The rebel leagues placed franchises into cities smaller than the long-standing big-league stalwarts (New York, Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia, among others.) Profitability in the ABA indicated that cities like Indianapolis and San Antonio were viable big league markets – and perhaps a better business opportunity than a third or fourth franchise in New York City. At first, professional baseball homesteaded major cities along the West Coast. Soon enough, cities like Seattle and San Diego were big league baseball cities. By the end of the 1980s, the NHL was plotting a Southward migration, littering teams across the sunbelt from Miami to Phoenix. Since 1990, the big four sports leagues have added twenty-three expansion teams and have moved fifteen existing franchises. This constant movement provided hope for cities of similar size as these marginal major league teams. “If Memphis and Salt Lake City are successful markets, then why not larger markets like Birmingham or Louisville?” became a legitimate question.

Several cities built arenas and stadiums on the hopes of acquiring a team. Charlotte used a special purpose authority to develop a convention center, auditorium, and the second Charlotte Coliseum. When breaking ground in 1988, no teams planned to fill the 24,000 seat arena. During the next wave of expansion, NBA awarded the Queen City the Hornets franchise.

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226 The National Basketball Association has relocated five teams and added two franchises; the National Hockey League has relocated five teams and added nine franchises; the National Football League has relocated four teams and added five franchises, and Major League Baseball has moved one team and added four franchises. These shifts do not account for intra-MSA moves, like the NBA and NHL’s Brooklyn franchises recent move from New Jersey and Nassau, respectively.

Similarly, Nashville established an special purpose authority to service additional debt for an arena and outdoor stadium. Houston Oilers ownership had failed to negotiate additional concessions from the city, and planned to move their team to Nashville. Local leaders saw the opportunity to fund both an arena and outdoor stadium. With an empty arena available, the NHL awarded Nashville the Predators franchise. Over time, cities began to believe that: if you build it, the major leagues will come.

The Sports Industrial Complex

Professional sports are a multi-billion dollar industry. Major League Baseball draws over 73 million fans in paid attendance annually. A never-ending stream of in-stadium advertising distracts viewers, monetizing nearly the entire ballpark. Monopolized access to food and beverage boosts revenues, and fans wearing official merchandise kick a few more dollars into the pro sports coffers. Television stations pay over $3 billion annually to the big four leagues to show their games. In turn, the media hyps future games to boost ratings and ad revenues. In the extreme example, one minute of advertising for the Super Bowl costs $4 million for access to 111.5 million viewers. Leagues also maintain their own television and online subscription access to all broadcast games. Each league distributes these revenues in a unique fashion, but all include a cartel economic structure and a players union. A cartel is an economic structure in

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228 George, Thomas. 1996. “PRO FOOTBALL; N.F.L. Owners Approve Move To Nashville By The Oilers.” http://nyti.ms/1t1vugK
229 Brown, Maury. 2014. “Winners and Losers: MLB Attendance In 2014, Nearly 74 Million Through the Gate.” http://onforb.es/1DWuFST
which competitive firms agree to act as a single supplier to a market. In short, although dozens of owners operate competitive franchises, they cooperate to form a de facto monopoly under the league banner in order to maximize revenue.\textsuperscript{232}

Professional sports can create a positive spillover effect for local business. Leading sports funding consultant Rick Horrow associates sports projects with spillover benefits ranging from “ancillary business activity, residential development, and infrastructure investment.”\textsuperscript{233} Similarly, brand new stadiums and arenas can attract high profile events (the Super Bowl, Wrestlemania), along with a boon for the local economy.\textsuperscript{234} In the shorter run, the mere construction of multi-million dollar entertainment infrastructure creates jobs, stimulating the local economy. In the long run, proponents suggest that franchises enhance a city’s ability to attract new jobs dovetails with the perception boon created by association with the major leagues.\textsuperscript{235} Taken together, these economic opportunities provide a strong incentive for local leaders to invest in new sports infrastructure. Having thousands of visitors flood an arena’s district can create business opportunities and buzz for economic investment.

\textit{The Sports Cartel}

American professional sports have the unique opportunity to function as an economic cartel, an

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{235} Rosentraub, Mark S. 2009. \textit{Major League Winners}. CRC Press.
\bibitem{234} World Wrestling Entertainment. 2012. “Wrestlemania makes over $100 million for host city.” \url{http://bit.ly/1pRT4Tw}
\end{thebibliography}
imperfect market where a small number of competitors cooperate to maximize profits. In the early twentieth century, Major League Baseball won exemption from the Sherman Antitrust Act. Court decisions consistently defended Major League Baseball – and later other professional sports leagues. Compared to professional leagues in other countries, American sports have relatively few, geographically sticky top-tier teams. As a result, their relative prestige and value are disproportionately high. Some professional leagues affiliate with regional leagues, creating a developmental system for their teams. Major League Baseball affiliates with the Pacific Coast League and the American Association, among others; the National Hockey League affiliates with the American Hockey League and East Coast Hockey League; the National Basketball Association manages its own developmental league. The National Football League attempted a minor league called NFL Europe; currently, the National Collegiate Athletic Association’s football programs function as a de facto developmental league. These developmental leagues routinely follow the same cartel structure. Further, the central authority can help maintain territorial rights for each league, preventing too many teams saturating a geographic market. Before a single franchise may move to a new market, the league (including central management and other owners) must approve the action.

The owners of various franchises in the main sports leagues collude as a cartel, providing a usually unified voice when dealing with other actors. These cartels place teams that are most profitable, monopolizing markets with occasional exceptions for extremely large markets. Profitability in smaller markets often hinges on public subsidies, including building and maintaining state of the art athletic facilities. The sports cartels deal directly with cities through

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figureheads, whether it is David Stern negotiating with Mayor Mick Cornett or the International Olympic Committee’s elaborate bidding process pitting cities against each other to produce the largest subsidy for the games.238

Professional sports leagues organize behind an administrative figurehead who negotiates on behalf of the small number of franchises. These commissioners and executives help contain internal disputes and guide the league through external turbulence, and run point regarding potential expansion.239 By hinting at the occasional expansion or relocation, major professional sports leagues can pique the interest of local boosters. A team owner’s mere threat to move prompted Sacramento to build a posh new arena in the heart of its downtown. The threat of losing the Kings inspired a $220 million investment. Meanwhile, the promise of becoming the next big league city coaxed similar investments from Louisville, Buffalo, and Kansas City. Louisville’s KFC Yum! Center remains vacant, despite ostensibly meeting NHL and NBA standards. Buffalo’s Coca-Cola Field (née Pilot Field) originally aimed at attracting a major league baseball team. Kansas City’s Sprint Center replaced Kemper Arena. None of these cities have housed a team in these facilities. By converting the oligopoly into a cartel-monopoly, leagues can demand indirect subsidies for artificially scarce teams: new arenas.

One key component of each the major sports leagues is the territory model. By strategically placing teams in different markets, leagues developed creating a “home team” connection to local fans. Territorial rights help reinforce this home-team concept. As Danielson

notes. “Territorial exclusivity enables teams to avoid competition for local fans, viewers, media, and broadcasting and advertising dollars…. Territorial controls are the basic instruments by which teams and leagues regulate their relations with places.”

Individual franchises voluntarily agree to not play “home” games in others’ territories, but provide a system of rules and regulations for moving teams to a new territory. These rules create a monopolistic relationship with each market. When combined with the threat of exiting the market (and the emotional trauma of losing the “home town heroes,”) sports leagues can squeeze subsidies out of local governments.

Oklahoma City Arrives?

On October 29, 2008, Oklahoma City became a big league city. The Oklahoma City Thunder (née Seattle Supersonics) suffered an 87-98 loss, but the city reveled in their new status. Fifteen years of effort seemed to have paid off, as the National Basketball Association legitimized Oklahoma City’s transition from a major minor city into a minor major city. A city’s image is connected to the trophy case of amenities it possesses. Oklahoma City’s history is marked with a near obsession with two themes: its relative status compared with other communities and competitive athletics. Professional athletics satisfies both of these fascinations.

Oklahoma City’s leadership set a clear goal during the 1990s: garnering big league status. Local leaders called the consultants who helped Miami fund a downtown arena to sell a series of projects to voters. When piecing together the MAPs plan in 1993, Oklahoma City leadership


included a provision to build an NBA or NHL class arena.\textsuperscript{243} Chief consultant Rick Horrow helped the mayor Ron Norick and other supporters win support for the MAPs referendum.\textsuperscript{244} Within a decade, an NBA team appeared ready to move to Oklahoma City, but the arena was already out of date. The efforts to build a jack-of-all-trades arena flexible enough to accommodate several sports prevented it from being a slam dunk for the NBA. Minor league hockey and minor league arena football consistently used the space, while touring musical acts utilized the multipurpose space. While the New Orleans Hornets visited while New Orleans recovered from Katrina, Oklahoma City retrofitted the arena to resemble the Crescent City’s arena.

Oklahoma City’s acquisition of the Supersonics National Basketball Association team earned the city “big league status”. Acquiring the Thunder (née Supersonics) in 2008 closed a lengthy chapter in Oklahoma City’s history. The city returned to the themes that had funded a series of downtown projects to refurbish the arena. In March 2008, voters approved the “Big League City” referendum to permanently attract professional sports. The 2008 referendum extended a tax increase to fund a reconstruction of the downtown arena. The two decade quest to build a “big league city” ended in success when the Sonics moved into the Ford Center. The immediate impact of this status promotion remains unseen and difficult to measure. Zipp\textsuperscript{245} finds little evidence that professional athletics improves local economies at the MSA-level, although Rosentraub\textsuperscript{246} suggests that sports can anchor leisure districts. Local basketball success has shone light on Oklahoma City, putting the franchise on the “map” for the national sports

\textsuperscript{243} City of Oklahoma City Municipal Code ; Chapter 52, Section 23.b.7
\textsuperscript{246} Rosentraub, Mark S. 2009. Major League Winners. CRC Press.

104
media. Commentators favorably compared Oklahoma City’s Bricktown Canal to San Antonio’s Riverwalk, confirming that Oklahoma City’s hospitality sector has steadily grown. After a century of minor league status, Oklahoma City has turned a potential relegation to AA into a promotion into a big league city.

Athletics as an Attraction

Oklahoma City’s merchants recognized the role sports could play in attracting visitors to their shops as early as the 1890s. Early attempts to draw visitors downtown built on the local agricultural economy. Only five months after the land run, business leaders organized a precursor to the Oklahoma Territorial Fair in 1889. These agri-centric fairs awarded ribbons for livestock and drew local farmers and local vendors together. This initial venture included standard agricultural fare like a midway carnival and best-livestock awards, but soon faltered in the wake of the 1893 bank panic. Competition from agriculture-to-railway communities sponsored horseracing, a popular sport at the turn of the century. Upon the turn of the century, prominent bankers revived the festival around the Oklahoma Derby. Within five years, the horse race had attracted enough visitors to justify building permanent infrastructure for the fair.247 Private investment from local real estate moguls and business leaders developed a downtown fairgrounds on the city’s east side, near present day Bricktown.

Horseracing became one of many attractions featured at the fair. Hot air balloons, automobile shows, and livestock shows rounded out the festival. In 1913, the State of Oklahoma prohibited gambling on horseracing, which undermined the Oklahoma Derby’s and the fair’s popularity. By 1917, the fair which had been supported by its downtown organizers needed

public assistance. Dallas’ local leadership had recently purchased the fairgrounds and subsidized the construction of permanent sports and exposition venues.\textsuperscript{248} Oklahoma City followed the Texas model.

\textbf{Hometown Heroes: The Emergence of Leagues as an Attraction}

Although downtown merchants developed destination attractions, other traffic-dependent industries followed suit. Oklahoma City’s first significant amusement park underwrote a professional baseball team. Nestled along the North Canadian River, Delmar Gardens emerged as a prominent amusement park in the first decade of the twentieth century. Delmar included several attractions, ranging from a 3,000 seat theater (which survives), a beer garden, a horseracing venue, a zoo, a midway arcade, and an outdoor stadium.\textsuperscript{249} Opened in 1902, Delmar cycled through a series of vaudeville acts as attractions. Oklahoma City boosters organized a team in 1902, but no league accepted the squad. In 1904, the Oklahoma City Mets joined the Southwest League (later the Texas League), and Delmar’s built Oklahoma City’s first permanent stadium to host the franchise. Floods and mosquitos forced the amusement park to close in 1910.\textsuperscript{250} The baseball franchise folded two years later.

Baseball quickly returned to Oklahoma City. As the Western League recovered from World War I, a franchise owner moved his team to Oklahoma City in 1918. After flooding destroyed the local park in 1923’s offseason, ownership conjured local resources by offering

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{248} Texas State Historical Association. “State Fair of Texas.” \texttt{http://bit.ly/1ly5jzn}
\item \textsuperscript{249} Cinema Treasures. “Delmar Garden Theater.” \texttt{http://bit.ly/V16tS8}
\item Davis, Sandi. 1994. “Garden Fun for All.” \texttt{http://bit.ly/1yKx6rA}
\item \textsuperscript{250} Part of the campus has been rehabilitated as a multiuse space which serves as a music hall, wedding venue, and farmers market.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
nonbinding shares of the team called “multiple season passes.” The 1930s witnessed Holland Field’s heyday, as development on the city’s near west side clustered along the prominent interurban streetcar lines connecting the stadium. By the 1950s, the predominantly wooden facility fell into disrepair. Attendance sagged, and ownership lobbied for public resources to keep the team afloat, but the city declined.

Combining Themes: The New Fairgrounds

Oklahoma City leadership undertook two major projects during the postwar period. First, the city sought to revitalize its downtown district with a comprehensive urban renewal plan developed by I.M. Pei. Second, Oklahoma City relocated and reshaped its agricultural fairgrounds around sports attractions. Relocation began in 1951 as the city built towards the 1957 Statehood Arrows to Atoms Semicentennial. Prominent Oklahoma City businessmen ousted the state fair board and implemented an aggressive expansion agenda. By the 1960s, Oklahoma City’s new fairgrounds developed three major pieces of sports infrastructure: an automobile racetrack, an indoor arena, and a baseball park. The racetrack attracted weekly events, drawing thousands to the (previously rarely used) fairgrounds. Meanwhile, two sports leagues expanded into the new facilities: the Central Hockey League and the Pacific Coast (Baseball) League. Despite seeming out of place in central Oklahoma, hockey proved curiously popular. The Oklahoma City Blazers joined the Central Hockey League in 1965, playing in the Fairgrounds Arena. Over the next decade, the Blazers drew among the league’s largest

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The Green Bay Packers have famously used a similar system to make stadium improvements.

attendance. The 89ers Pacific League team returned baseball to Oklahoma City in 1969, reprising baseball’s role in early fairs and amusement parks.  

*Decay and Demands*

Oklahoma City turned to I.M. Pei’s urban renewal plan during the 1960s. Refocusing on downtown harmed the fairgrounds. Previous investments had expanded fairgrounds exhibition space to nearly 300,000 square feet, and provided a campus for sports venues. However, new leadership supporting the Pei Plan turned the focus to downtown. In the early 1970s, the city finished the Myriad Gardens and Myriad Convention Center - the most notable pieces of the Pei puzzle. When the minor league hockey Blazers moved to the downtown arena, the fairgrounds began a slow, downward slide. Professional hockey moved to the arena in the downtown convention center in 1972, relegating the Fairgrounds Arena to secondary status. Making matters worse, the downtown convention space competed with the fairgrounds. Over time, the two spaces specialized, with the fairgrounds gaining an agricultural slant. Rodeos and other attractions soon filled the fairground arena’s calendar, but the minor-minor league stigma grew around the fairgrounds. Without posh events and a second-tier status, the fairgrounds infrastructure decayed over the next three decades.

Baseball facilities fell into disrepair as the fairgrounds declined. In the early 1990s, minor league baseball’s commissioner informed mayors nationwide that all host cities would

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need to upgrade their facilities or else lose their team.\textsuperscript{255} Oklahoma City faced losing the 89ers franchise unless it overhauled the aging All Sports Stadium at the fairgrounds. Organized baseball threatened to strip Oklahoma City of its triple-A status by moving the 89ers club elsewhere. Emerging from the oil bust, Oklahoma City returned to sports attractions as a way to secure status. Oklahoma City pursued two broad strategies: the one-time attraction presented by an Olympic Festival and permanent sports infrastructure.

\textit{Olympic Festival}

On its centennial, Oklahoma City hosted the OK89 Olympic Festival. Established as a counterweight to the Soviet Union’s Spartakiad, the United States Olympic Committee started holding annual events to simulate world-class competition.\textsuperscript{256} Early festivals focused on preparing athletes for the Olympic Games, but they evolved into major events. Indianapolis had treated the 1982 games as an impromptu interview for the 1987 Pan American Games, landing the international competition. Houston treated the 1986 in a similar fashion while preparing for an Olympic bid.\textsuperscript{257} Commentators noted that Oklahoma City treated the festival as if it were the Olympics.\textsuperscript{258} The festival garnered national attention, but the city remained on the economic and status periphery.

\textsuperscript{255} Voices of Oklahoma. “Ron Norick.” \url{http://bit.ly/1pRbnrU}
\textsuperscript{256} Hersh, Phillip. 1995. “Olympic Festival’s Success May Cause its Demise.” \textit{Chicago Tribune}. \url{http://trib.in/YJRDfP}
\textsuperscript{257} The games eventually went to Atlanta.
\textsuperscript{258} Hersh, Phillip. “Olympic Festival’s Success May Cause its Demise.” \textit{Chicago Tribune}. \url{http://trib.in/YJRDfP}

Jeansonne, John. 1989. “U.S. Olympic Festival Still Has an Identity Crisis: Even With Successful Turnout, Exact Nature of Competition is Uncertain.” \url{http://lat.ms/1gNX8Bo}
One interesting note reframes the OK89 Festival: commentators repeatedly compared Oklahoma City to Indianapolis. The two cities would soon compete over the United Airlines maintenance center discussed above, and Oklahoma City’s mayor would visit Indianapolis to understand the quality of life flaws in his hometown. The short conclusion boiled down to Oklahoma City’s minor league status. Mayor Ron Norick argued that “In order to compete effectively, we have to look like a big league city…. When it comes right down to it, Oklahoma City is still not considered a big league city and if it takes us doing something … then we’ll do it.”259 This logic led Oklahoma City leaders to speculate that if they built a major league arena, the NHL or NBA would expand into the sports palace.

**Speculating on Status**

The 1993 Metropolitan Area Projects attempted to earn Oklahoma “big league city” status by landing a professional sports team. One of the key components was “an indoor sports/convention facility meeting not less than National Hockey League (NHL) or National Basketball Association (NBA) standards[.]”260 Local leaders readily admitted that there was no commitment from either indoor league; however, information from consultants guided the logic. Studies commissioned by the city, Chamber of Commerce, and local athletics associations all suggested that creating a new multipurpose arena venue could spur commercial investment. As a result, professional sports harmonized with local optimism to build the infrastructure for a big league city. Voters passed the 1993 referendum to build a multipurpose arena on mere

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City of Oklahoma City Municipal Code; Chapter 52, Section 23.b.7
speculation that Oklahoma City could be the next major league city. Ground broke in 1999 with hopes of doors opening by the 2002-2003 season. By the time NHL announced more expansion in 1999, Oklahoma City earnestly hoped that the MAPs arena would lure a team. The NHL went elsewhere: Nashville already had a vacant arena, Atlanta was finishing an arena, Columbus had secured private financing for an arena, and Minnesota offered to help fund St. Paul’s new rink.\(^{261}\)

MAPs’ new arena was too late for the expansion cycle, leaving Oklahoma City on the outside of major league hockey. Oklahoma City’s Chesapeake Energy Arena (née Ford Center) remained vacant for four seasons. Minor pro sports and concerts used the arena, but it appeared the major league status would evade OKC as the leagues ceased expanding. By 2005, the largest sporting events held in the Ford Center were college basketball conference championships and a record setting AA hockey match against Tulsa.\(^{262}\)

**Katrina and the Hornets**

When Hurricane Katrina displaced hundreds of thousands along the gulf coast, it also displaced the professional sports teams. Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett turned this disaster as a job interview for the NBA.\(^{263}\) The New Orleans franchise became the NOK Hornets\(^ {264}\), a portmanteau referencing both home cities: New Orleans and Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City remodeled the seating arrangement in the Ford Center, using the New Orleans Arena as a guide. Attendance remained strong for two seasons, and Oklahoma City became the frontrunner as the NBA franchise for the New Orleans Hornets.


\(^{263}\) Katz, Andy. 2005. “Hornets’ interim home could be decided in a week.” [http://es.pn/1AERrvW](http://es.pn/1AERrvW)

\(^{264}\) The New Orleans franchise has since rebranded itself as the Pelicans.
next major league market. As New Orleans healed and resettlement allowed for professional sports to rejoin the Crescent City, the Hornets experience inspired local oilmen to purchase a franchise.

In order to bolster attempts to move a franchise into Oklahoma City, local leaders asked voters to approve a mini-MAPs initiative to retrofit the young Ford Center to accommodate a permanent NBA franchise. The “Big League City” referendum passed and levied a temporary one-cent sales tax to cover arena upgrades.\textsuperscript{265} Revenue from this temporary tax customized the Ford Center as per the inbound franchise’s specifications, roughly following the original architects’ design. Thirteen months after their acquisition, the Thunder relocated to Oklahoma City.

\section*{The Moving Goalposts of Sports Facilities}

State-of-the-art arena infrastructure has changed in recent decades. Oklahoma City’s “Big League City” initiative updated the 1993 MAPs arena to conform to this new standard: more luxury suites, a restaurant, a new jumbotron, locker rooms, and a remodeled entrance. Each of these improvements matched the changing landscape of American indoor arenas. Oklahoma City’s designs stemmed from original plans from 1993 and were explicitly designed to attract the NBA Sonics franchise, conforming to demands ownership made in negotiations with the City of Seattle.\textsuperscript{266}

Luxury suites are profitable arena amenities. The emerging arena model is somewhat similar to airlines providing “first class” service. Despite smaller numbers of seats, suites charge

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[265] Dean, Bryan and John Estus. 2008. “Mayor declares victory for Ford Center upgrades.” \url{http://bit.ly/1nc0OAD} \[266\]
\item[266] Allen, Percy. 2008. “NBA approves Sonics’ move to Oklahoma City.” \url{http://bit.ly/1vsEfas} \[266\]
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
higher ticket prices and offer various luxuries to guests – at a significant upcharge. Luxury section menus include gourmet options, instead of the burgers and bratwursts in common arena fare. Instead of boosting attendance, the business focuses on attracting and exploiting high-end customers. Today, franchises seek arenas with highly profitable luxury suites. Oklahoma City’s Big League City expanded the capacity of these luxury suites, boosting the arena’s profitability and adhering to the national standard.

In a similar vein, arenas increasingly feature full-service restaurants. Concessions have consistently played a role in arena profitability, but restaurants allow promoters to capture two key income streams: attendance fees and meals. Patrons are no longer forced to eat at neighborhood establishments before or after an event; instead, they can extend their sports experience in the arena. Similarly, these restaurants often include a full-service bar, with more profitable beverages. Although this undercuts the potential private spillover from arenas, the rise of higher-end arena catering creates a new income stream for franchises to capture. Big League City referendum money helped update Oklahoma City’s arena, which currently features multiple restaurants and bars. Oklahoma City also updated the Myriad Convention Center’s arena to include amenities targeted at minor league hockey patrons.

New-generation arenas also include improved arena infrastructure for both patrons and athletes. Oklahoma City’s Big League City initiative funded a massive video board, updated locker rooms, and a new practice facility for the Thunder squad. Jumbotron continue to evolve, with the most recent crop featuring large LED boards featuring high-quality, color video. These monitors are a far cry from simple digital clocks with black-and-white bulbs. Similarly, the

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improvements transformed the athletes’ locker room experience. Instead of cinder-block caverns, athletes now prepare in lush carpeted, finely finished spaces. Finally, the city subsidized construction for the Thunder’s state-of-the-art training facility, a newly required space for sports teams. Finally, Big League City retrofitted the arena’s entrances. The largest infrastructure overhauled the southwestern corner of the arena, opening a new entrance. This new portal opens towards the expected “Core to Shore” park and convention center. Taken together, the voters approved the City of Oklahoma City increasing taxes to subsidize professional sports. The investment increased the team’s profitability at nearly every turn, improving the fans’ experience - often for an upcharge. In the end, the generically “NBA-quality” Ford Center transformed into the rebranded, state-of-the-art Chesapeake Energy Arena: the home of the Seattle Supersonics/Oklahoma City Thunder.

**Sonicsgate**

For each Oklahoma City acquiring a professional sports franchise, there is a Seattle that loses their hometown heroes (and arguably, an economic engine.) Even after a city acquires their team, the community must continually submit to the franchise’s demands, else face losing major league status. Seattle’s side to the Sonics story is remarkably different. Two narratives dominate the discussion: KeyArena is a state-of-the-art basketball arena and Oklahoma City based ownership did not bargain in good faith with the city of Seattle regarding Key Arena. Publicly subsidized sports infrastructure plays critical role in both.

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269 Oklahoma City Thunder. “Thunder, City Break Ground on New Practice Facility.” http://on.nba.com/1toSvlh

270 Reid, Jason. 2009. *Sonicsgate: Requiem for a Team.*
Part of the 1962 World’s Fair, Seattle’s Washington State Coliseum was a natural fit for an expanding professional basketball league. Hockey promoters chartered the Basketball Association of America to play in their arenas in the wake of World War II. This league annexed the National Basketball League, creating the National Basketball Association. NBL teams moved from smaller markets (Fort Wayne) to larger markets (Detroit), following the BBA’s big-city market model.\textsuperscript{271} During the late 1960s, the American Basketball Association challenged the NBA’s dominance,\textsuperscript{272} spurring the older league to expand into a national footprint. Seattle’s Supersonics joined the association in 1968, consistently drawing strong attendance. Seattle served as a regional anchor for professional basketball for four decades, helping the NBA build a national brand with a larger geographic footprint.

Seattle overhauled the aging Washington State Coliseum in 1994, transforming it into the state-of-the-art Key Arena. Initial reviews welcomed the refurbished Key Arena.\textsuperscript{273} Seattle’s renovation started at the beginning of a larger trend among NBA cities. Between 1995 and 2008, every publicly owned arena in the NBA experienced an extensive remodel except Seattle.\textsuperscript{274} In the meantime, Seattle built a new baseball stadium and a new football stadium for the other two major league franchises. In 2006, Seattle voters required any sports subsidy to turn a profit for the city, effectively rendering any new investments impossible.\textsuperscript{275} Seattle’s Key Arena appeared stuck as state-of-the-art, circa 1994.

\textsuperscript{273} Reid, Jason. 2009. \textit{Sonicsgate: Requiem for a Team.}
\textsuperscript{274} Sacramento’s ARCO Arena is privately owned, however the city is currently building a new downtown arena.
Sonics ownership demanded arena renovations to make the arena more profitable. Howard Schultz’ Seattle ownership had failed to reach an agreement with the city for renovating KeyArena. Led by Clay Bennett, the Oklahoma City-based new ownership group promised to negotiate in good faith with the city\textsuperscript{276} when acquiring the team from Seattle-based owners. Immediately, the new owners set a rough deadline of one year before considering relocating the Sonics.\textsuperscript{277} Seattle and State of Washington lawmakers balked at the Sonics’ demands. Multiple plans appeared on the agenda, from renovating KeyArena\textsuperscript{278} to building a suburban facility.\textsuperscript{279} As negotiations failed to gain traction, ownership identified Oklahoma City as the likely destination for the Supersonics. Team managers traded the underperforming roster in order to gain draft picks and future success. Many locals interpreted this decision as an attempt to bring a clean slate into a new market.\textsuperscript{280} Attendance plummeted, fueling the Oklahoma City ownership’s argument to move the team.

With Oklahoma City voters willing to raise taxes on the chance of attracting a team and Seattle councilmen comparing owners to hijackers, the Sonics rebranded and moved away. Lawsuits ensued, although all were settled by mid-2008. Schultz apologized to citizens in

\textsuperscript{276} Remarkably, the requests were very similar to the previous owners’ requests, including a significant public contribution towards a state-of-the-art, $500M arena. Brunner, Jim and Ralph Thomas. 2007. “Sonics choose Reston.” http://bit.ly/1wifaU1 USA Today. 2007. “Owner: Okla. City chosen as destination if no arena deal reached. http://usat.ly/1mvYbnz
\textsuperscript{277} Galloway, Angela and Phuong Cat Le. 2006. “Sonics sold to ownership group from Oklahoma City: New owners say they will keep team in Seattle.” http://bit.ly/1q5m2y7
\textsuperscript{278} Young, Bob. 2006. “Mayor’s panel backs KeyArena renovation.” http://bit.ly/1tAi8O9
\textsuperscript{279} Associated Press. 2006. “New Sonics owner: Key Arena won’t cut it.” http://es.pn/1v6qK2T
\textsuperscript{280} Reid, Jason. 2009. Sonicsgate: Requiem for a Team.

Still reeling from losing the Thunder, Seattle leaders mounted an effort to reclaim an NBA franchise: the Sacramento Kings. Learning lessons from the Supersonics debacle, local leaders considered building a new arena without the promise of an indoor franchise. Discussions turned to targeting a team: the Sacramento Kings. Seattle attempted to lure the Sacramento franchise by promising a new, state-of-the-art arena. Outside of KeyArena, Sacramento’s privately held SleepTrain Arena (née ARCO) is the facility with the least recent renovation. Starting in 2011, owners began negotiating with the city to publicly subsidize a new arena for the Kings. Early efforts threatened to move the team to an arena in Anaheim, California, that currently houses an NHL franchise.\footnote{National Basketball Association. 2011. “On the move? Kings file for ‘Anaheim Royals.’” http://on.nba.com/1rfzCvP} Sensing an opportunity, Seattle leaders began to draft a proposal to develop an arena to meet contemporary standards.

Sacramento successfully rebuffed the attempted raid on their NBA franchise by building a multipurpose venue in its downtown district. When the local NBA Kings franchise requested renovations, local leadership initially balked. After the legitimate threat of losing the Kings to Seattle, Sacramento committed hundreds of millions to erect ARCO III, a state-of-the-art multipurpose arena. After securing an arena, long-term owners sold the franchise to a coalition of Silicon Valley moguls who promise to keep the team in Sacramento.\footnote{Delevett, Peter. 2013. “How Vivek Ranadive beat out Steve Ballmer to buy Sacramento Kings.” http://bit.ly/1qxLUA3}
Communities exist in a competitive environment, artificially amplified by the sports cartels’ market manipulation. Similar to oligopolies or artificial monopolies, the consumer (cities) must pay a higher price (subsidy) to suppliers (sports franchises). In an era with relatively stable yet still mobile teams, cities must outbid each other to attract and keep professional sports in their backyard. This situation is simultaneously an artificial oligopoly and prisoner’s dilemma; were the relatively small number of cities able to support major league sports to collude to limit arena subsidies, the sports cartels’ market power would diminish. However, in a world were cities seek the “major league” status, defection yields a large premium – similar to the prisoner’s dilemma. A prisoner’s dilemma is a game theory concept for situations where the promise of potential benefit can lead to two actors act so that both receive negative outcomes. In this case, the implied promise of getting a professional sports team might lure cities to spend millions on cutting-edge arenas. However, if all cities build cutting-edge arenas, no one takes an advantage, teams do not move, and cities investments are lost.

In recent years, cities nationwide have invested new sports infrastructure. Some estimates suggest that local governments in the United States have spent over $34 billion. Table 6.1 displays the number of cities investing in new or substantially renovating old arenas. Since 1990, nearly 90% of metropolitan areas with a million residents have publicly subsidized the lion’s share of either building or retrofitting arenas. The remaining cases (Baltimore, Birmingham, Richmond) maintain serious discussions of building new indoor sports palaces. Shaded arenas house neither an NBA nor an NHL team; upon a quick glance, it appears that newer arenas attract teams.

Looking at the most recent changes to arenas, there is a surprising amount of convergence within arena infrastructure. The most recent wave of arenas includes many more luxury suites than previous generations. Luxury suites feature lounge spaces with a small handful of seats. In many markets, corporations pay top dollar to leverage access to these facilities as business favors and workforce rewards. Considering these suites’ placement within arenas – immediately above and below the economy “nosebleed” seats – the upgrade provides higher profit margins for tickets sold. For sports franchises, the increased demand for a high-end experiences allows for even small market teams to maximize revenue within smaller venues. Arena capacity has contracted in recent years, with the number of luxury seats have sharply increased.285

Who Benefits? Surplus Arenas as an Exit Option

The construction boom outpaced major league expansion. Several large arenas remain vacant, waiting impatiently for a professional franchise to migrate or a league to reconsider expansion. In short, the image-seeking construction boom spawned an arena surplus. As regional cities add arenas, they provide an exit option for established major league markets. Kansas City’s Sprint Center and Louisville’s KFC Yum! Center are two empty arenas, waiting for a professional team. With these viable alternatives available, sports franchises are able to extract more lucrative subsidies from local governments.286 During the late 2000s, Seattle failed to submit to

285 Kasler, Dale and Ryan Lillis. 2014. “New Kings arena will be among NBA’s smallest, but built for profit.” http://bit.ly/1oNRmPl
286 This logic follows a similar pattern to the central-city-suburban exit option argument articulated in Williamson and Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom. Williamson, Thad. 2010. Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship: The Civic Costs of the American Way of Life. Oxford University Press.
the Supersonics ownership’s demand for updates to KeyArena. The team relocated to Oklahoma City. More recently, Seattle’s threat of replacing KeyArena served as an additional exit options to the NBA Kings franchise if Sacramento did not commit millions to a new sports palace.\textsuperscript{287} Sacramento currently plans to build a publicly funded downtown, multipurpose arena to replace the private ARCO Arena. In effect, Sacramento must spend $250 million in order to keep their major-league status –due to the potential exit options across the county.\textsuperscript{288} Table 6.1 provides supporting evidence that recent renovations influence team placement; the longest-untouched arenas are least likely to house a major league franchise.

Nationwide, cities have used public funds to build a new wave of arenas. Professional sports promise to provide thousands of visitors to a district; it is easy to imagine economic revitalization with this influx of tourist dollars.\textsuperscript{289} However, as the arena surplus grows, a prisoner’s dilemma intensifies. A prisoner’s dilemma is a situation where two rational actors will not cooperate, despite their best outcome involves cooperation. In a prisoner’s dilemma, both actors receive an advantageous outcome to betray the other, assuming the other cooperates. As a result, both actors often shift to a betraying stance, leading to a mutually destructive outcome. Arenas present a similar outcome. As each city adds a new arena, it undercuts the value and stability of all other arenas by providing sports franchises a legitimate exit option – undermining the value of all previous investments.

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\bibitem{News10}News10, 2013. “The estimated cost of the new Sacramento arena and other Sacramento Kins numbers.” \url{http://on.news10.net/19sfmFw}
\bibitem{Rosentraub2}Rosentraub, Mark S. 2009. \textit{Major League Winners}. CRC Press.
\end{thebibliography}
Table 6.1 List of Arenas, Construction and Renovation Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Arena Name</th>
<th>Date Built</th>
<th>Most Recent Renovation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>Valley View Casino Center</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Beach</td>
<td>Hampton Coliseum</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1970</td>
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<td>Richmond Coliseum</td>
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<td>1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Baltimore Arena</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1986</td>
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<td>Las Vegas</td>
<td>MGM Grand Garden Arena$</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>Seattle</td>
<td>Key Arena</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Rochester</td>
<td>Blue Cross Arena</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>Oracle Arena</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Verizon Center</td>
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<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>Philips Arena</td>
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<td>Pepsi Center</td>
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<td>Miami</td>
<td>American Airlines Arena$</td>
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<td>New Orleans Arena</td>
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<td>Columbus</td>
<td>Nationwide Arena*</td>
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<td>AT&amp;T Center</td>
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<td>Austin</td>
<td>Frank Erwin Center**</td>
<td>1974</td>
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<td>Toyota Center</td>
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<td>2008</td>
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<td>Chicago</td>
<td>United Center</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>KFC Yum! Center</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>Orlando</td>
<td>Amway Center</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>Consol Energy Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saint Louis</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>First Niagara Center</td>
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<td>2011</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>BMO Harris Arena</td>
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<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>ARCO Arena$</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt Lake City</td>
<td>Energy Solutions Arena</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2014</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Originally Private, sold to city in 2012; **Operated by University of Texas; $Privately Owned

Bold indicates active local consideration for new, publicly subsidized arena

Shaded background indicates a vacant arena (no NBA, no NHL)
Nearly all American major league sports facilities are either publicly owned or significantly subsidized. Leading sports development consultant Rick Horrow argues that contemporary arenas require public subsidy. The recent Brooklyn Nets provides an interesting wrinkle to the prevailing wisdom concerning professional sports. Instead of relying on public funding, private developers have foot the bill for a multi-billion dollar complex, anchored by the Barclays Center arena and a multi-modal transit hub. Local government provided assistance in land acquisition, using eminent domain to acquire real estate needed to privately construct the Atlantic Yards development, including the major league arena. Considering the estimated value for an NBA franchise is approximately $750 million, the average annual operating income is nearly $25 million, and the average owner enjoys a net worth hovering around $1 billion, the need for public subsidy seems unwarranted. Delaney and Madigan explain the structure of sports in the United States resembles a cartel, an economic oligarchy that governs in its own interest. By creating the perception that cities on the fringe of major league status could theoretically lure a team with a new, amenity-laden arena, the sports cartels are able to enjoy an exit option and hold cities “hostage” with publicly-funded renovation demands.

**Sports as a Part of the Standard Package of Amenities**

Professional sports remain a key part of the standard package of amenities. At their best, sports serve as an attraction that can drive visitors to commercial districts. At their worst, they drag cities into an arms race where communities must pour funds in order to maintain expensive infrastructure to keep a sports franchise. Oklahoma City, Sacramento, and Seattle’s behavior are

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behaved similarly. All three cities defined success by whether or not the National Basketball Association located a professional basketball franchise within their jurisdiction. All three cities offered to publicly subsidize professional sports franchises by building arenas to meet an evolving standard package of arena amenities. Seattle decried the Sonics’ departure, yet immediately sought to replace the team with Sacramento’s squad – by building a new venue that conforms to the standard package of amenities for sports arenas.

Big League City upgraded an NBA class arena with new amenities aimed at securing the Sonics-Thunder franchise. Oklahoma City leadership wanted to secure a team, so they called in the consultants to build an arena to attract the attraction. Expenditures ranged from improving the fan experience – a new scoreboard jumbotron to new washrooms – to better sports facilities – including a new basketball floor and locker room equipment. The substantive bulk of Big League City money went towards monetizing the fan experience. New high-dollar luxury suites, in-house restaurants, an expanded merchandise shop, and improved concessions highlight the expansion – each creating or augmenting a revenue stream critical to profiting off of professional sports. These ideas stem directly from consultant suggestions.292

Oklahoma City’s experience reflects a larger trend regarding the relationship between communities and professional sports. In order to prevent the Thunder from relocating elsewhere, Oklahoma City has upped the ante, creating a higher threshold for other cities to conquer in order to steal the franchise. In one sense, as cities seek status through sports infrastructure, they undermine the investments made by all other cities by creating an exit option for franchises. The resulting prisoner’s dilemma favors the end users of this infrastructure: intercity sports leagues. Hundreds of millions in public investment allowed Oklahoma City to transition from a

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292 For more information, view the MAPs 3 Citizen’s Advisory Board’s “Oklahoma City’s Ford Center” slideshow. http://bit.ly/1oZyaCM
major minor league market into a minor major league market. Local leaders – traditional parts of a growth machine – combined resources to pursue this upgraded status; however, outside experts prescribed the tactics behind developing downtown and claiming a major league franchise. Both during the original construction and the renovation phase, consultants delineated a list of tasks for locals to attend – effectively setting the local agenda’s substance.
Although Oklahoma City obtained major league status with the Thunder basketball team in 2008, outsiders continue to express a negative view of the community. Convention Sports & Leisure reports that Oklahoma City “does not exude the image of being fun,” is “an unknown market” to many, and planners feared that attendance would drop because “most people use [conventions] as a vacation… and it wouldn’t interest the members.” The report provides a list of policy solutions to Oklahoma City’s dilemma: update and expand the local convention space, create an entertainment “campus” to provide a competitive advantage, and enhance the marketing budget.

Mayor Mick Cornett turned Oklahoma City’s attention towards improving the city’s image by expanding the revitalized zone southward to the river. The state department of transportation planned to reroute the crosstown freeway southward and essentially remove a physical barrier between downtown and the waterfront. This “Core to Shore” plan hopes to link the central business district “core” to the northern “shore” of the North Canadian River. The Core to Shore master plan aims to foster three mixed use neighborhoods surrounding public investments. New civic buildings play a critical role in “providing security for private investors and civic presence through major permanent community investments”, anchoring a “retail base

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293 Shelden, Darla. 2014. “Councilman Ed Shadid backs initiative petitions to stop OKC’s new convention center and hotel.” http://bit.ly/1tBtRMq
with towers to accommodate corporate offices, a hotel, or residential uses.” The largest planned investment for Core to Shore is a convention center – a perceived catalyst for economic development.

Convention space is a critical component of the standard package of amenities. Exposition halls are spaces dedicated for two main purposes: conducting business and attracting visitors. As cities rebranded from the manufacturing sector into leisure and hospitality economies, leaders prioritized building attractions that could reliably deliver tourists. Cities had often housed convention spaces, but a boom emerged during the urban renewal era. Renewal generation convention halls often included an attached sporting venues and parking structures, like Detroit’s Cobo Hall, Birmingham’s Jefferson Convention Complex. Updates and expansions in the 1980s and 1990s often included detaching the sports infrastructure and large exposition halls, like Indianapolis’ Indiana Convention Center apart from the old Hoosier Dome and New York’s Javits Center. By the 2000s, the race for space pushed several convention halls past 1M square feet and smaller venues towards subsidizing attached hotels. Consultants advised cities to pursue each new generation of convention center.

The great building boom created a space race with communities competing over convention industry dollars by building the nicest, newest, and largest facilities. This competition promises prosperity on the backs of millions of visitors, but capturing and keeping the convention business is difficult because meetings are extremely mobile. As a result, cities continue to pour resources into their convention spaces, upgrading technology, expanding space, and facilitating easy access to hotels. The exact specifications for convention halls cities build can be found in consultant reports, reflecting the strength of experts’ agenda setting power. In

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Oklahoma City’s case, convention centers conform to the exact number of square feet as prescribed by outside consultants’ estimates.

The 2009 rendition of the Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPs 3) provided funding to implement Core to Shore. MAPs 3 money will build a new downtown exposition center on the north end of a large park connecting the urban core to the river’s shore. The convention hall will serve two main purposes. First, it will provide more leasable space for potential conventions. This investment will compensate for the perceived status loss caused by an undersized expo hall. Second, it will anchor the expanded entertainment campus, highlighted by its proximity to the new central park. This new attraction will theoretically draw conventioneers from beyond the city’s borders into the district by building reasons to visit Oklahoma City.²⁹⁷

A Century of Meetings

Publicly subsidized exhibition halls emerged relatively early in Oklahoma City’s history. After homesteading in April 1889, new Oklahomans began to establish local agricultural fairs. Following the national trend, Oklahoma City hosted the territory’s first fair five months after settlement. By 1892, local business leaders organized the Oklahoma Territorial Fair, featuring a horse racing venue. Excluding short stoppages for recession and war, the Oklahoma State Fair has continued to attract visitors to Oklahoma City – both through festivals and meeting space. Multiple attractions emerged in 1907, as the fair nestled along the city’s near east side. Carnival games, vaudeville acts, and contests augmented the festival, but the prohibition on gambling injured the fair’s profitability. Public funding buttressed the effort, but with strings attached. By the 1920s, fairs served multiple functions – including educating the populace in conjunction with


127
federal agriculture initiatives.\textsuperscript{298} New demands spurred demand for new buildings, including early versions of exhibition halls. In 1927, the fairgrounds offered a new profit stream: leasing the public space for non-fair meetings. The eastside fairgrounds eventually fatigued. The Great Depression and Dust Bowl dampened fair attendance, leading to smaller budgets and fewer attractions. Proximity to several local nuisances made matters worse. Pollution from a large oil field, persistent flooding and a faltering business model forced leaders to consider moving the fair.

Exhibition halls soon returned to downtown. Local leaders settled on a new fairgrounds campus at its current location on the west side of Oklahoma City. Construction began in the early 1950s, with the fair officially moving in 1954. New facilities included an extended sports campus, several exhibition halls and several barns. The State of Oklahoma approved establishing urban renewal authorities in 1955, but it took local business leaders visiting Pittsburgh’s new downtown before Oklahoma City acted. Upon their return from the Steel City, Stanley Draper and E.L. Gaylord leveraged the Chamber of Commerce and the \textit{Daily Oklahoman} to build support for urban renewal in Oklahoma City. The Oklahoma City Redevelopment Authority formed in 1958, but the incumbent council allocated little power. Oil baron and former mayor Dean A. McGee joined the coalition and helped fund a new plan. The

\textsuperscript{298} The 1914 Smith-Lever Act established the Cooperative Extension Service (the vocational-education arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture) within each state's land-grant colleges, including Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical (now Oklahoma State University) and Colored Agricultural & Normal (now Langston University). The idea was to give agricultural research information directly to farmers and their families through interaction with county extension agents. By that time, many agents already served as judges at fairs and livestock competitions. The 1917 Smith-Hughes Act provided funding for Extension Service personnel to work more closely with 4-H (and later, Future Farmers of America and Future Homemakers of America) clubs. As a result, fairs increased in importance as an educational tool for rural youth.


128
growing coalition commissioned I.M. Pei to develop a comprehensive plan. Pei had recently completed plans for Cleveland and Philadelphia. Pei envisioned a new cityscape of superblocks for Oklahoma City. Shopping malls, a central park, and a meetings hall adorned Pei’s imagined downtown.\textsuperscript{299} Despite funding issues derailing most of the Pei Plan, Oklahoma City built the Myriad Convention Center. At 163,000 square feet of usable space, the central business district’s Myriad provided a smaller meeting space compared to its fairgrounds peers.

Oklahoma City entertained the idea of hosting a world’s fair. With an eye cast towards 1989 – the city’s centennial – local leaders organized a bid to expand its fairgrounds and downtown meeting spaces during the early 1980s. The process started with a councilman overreacting to an off-hand remark by a city planner at an economic development conference. When Paris cancelled its bid for a 1989 event, Oklahoma City shifted into overdrive, petitioning Congress and the World’s Fair regulating board.\textsuperscript{300} The rapid movement in the early 1980s faltered when the Penn Square Bank collapsed in 1982. The oil bust ensued, and Oklahoma City tempered its ambitions to an Olympic Sports festival.

Despite these setbacks, conventions stayed on the agenda. Voters approved funding to renovate both the Myriad and the fairgrounds campus under the 1993 MAPs initiative.\textsuperscript{301} Although grandiose ideas of hosting a World’s Fair diminished, keeping pace in the meetings market remained a priority. Refurbishing the Myriad promised to capture part of the Pei Plan’s promised gains: a lively downtown and new vitality in the fledgling Bricktown next door. In one sense, both meeting-centric movements stemmed from the same goal: attracting visitors. Despite the agricultural fair moving westward, downtown continued down the exhibition path – at the

\textsuperscript{301} City of Oklahoma City Municipal Code. Chapter 52, Section 23.b.7
suggestion of city planners. By the mid-2000s, convention space remained on the MAPs 3 and Core to Shore agenda.

**MAPs 3: Anchoring Core to Shore**

With the “Big League City” tax extension near sunset in 2009 and Core to Shore on the horizon, Mick Cornett turned toward developing a MAPs 3 referendum. Local leaders solicited popular opinion through an online survey. Scenic walking trails topped the most requested items. According to a local public opinion firm’s research, local trails were the only project to achieve majority. Local news stations released a poll days before Mayor Mick Cornett officially introduced MAPs 3 to voters. Although voters resoundingly supported both MAPs and MAPs 4 Kids, a slight majority opposed the tax extension. Only one project attracted majority support: local parks, trails, street beautification, or an outdoor amphitheater. MAPs 3 included many of the projects proposed via the online survey; however, the bulk of resources focus on the Core to Shore revitalization. This slate of projects resembles a logroll, a compromise built exchanging support for disparate programs.

MAPs 3 blends the perceived need to jumpstart Core to Shore with garnering public support. MAPs 3 allots $39 million to trails, approximately 5% of the slate’s entire budget. In a similar vein, MAPs 3 allocates $9 million to improving sidewalks. Although this is related to the trails, sidewalks are part of the city’s growing push toward walkability.

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304 Oklahoma City commissioned Speck & Associates to analyze the city’s walkability. Speck authored the text *Walkable City*, citing several positive spillovers from pedestrian transit, including better health and more commerce.
strategically located senior health and aquatic centers were a fairly popular addition to the MAPs survey. Despite receiving the least support, expanding the downtown convention space received the largest funding allocation. The new convention hall will cost $252 million, following the consultants’ recommendations to the square foot. A $128 million trolley will connect visitors attending meetings to Bricktown and the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum, two tourist attractions in the vicinity.\textsuperscript{305} Meanwhile, the neighboring $132 million park will attempt to extend the leisure space south toward $57 million in river improvements. Including popular projects helped local leaders secure enough popular support to fund to pursue economic development as per consultants’ advice.

\textit{Core to Shore: Pei Plan Part Two?}

In 1961, Oklahoma City leaders asked consultants to develop a plan to drive development in downtown districts. The Pei Plan promised to replace several city blocks with two pieces of expensive infrastructure: a large downtown convention center and an adjacent park. During implementation, the Pei Plan as implemented successfully razed its targeted areas, built the Myriad Convention Center, and the Myriad Gardens park. As downtown development stalled, and many claimed that the slash-and-burn plan had helped “kill” the central business district.\textsuperscript{306}


Although it may seem dark, tragedy tourism is a recognizable attraction for many visitors. The Oklahoma City National Memorial is one of the larger attractions in the central business district and vicinity. For more on this type of tourism, see Sturken.

Sturken, Marita. 2007. \textit{Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero}.

In 2009, Oklahoma City leaders asked consultants to develop a plan to encourage development in the downtown neighborhoods. Core to Shore promised to unite the central business district’s “core” to the North Canadian River’s north “shore”, by replacing several city blocks with two large pieces of expensive entertainment infrastructure: a large downtown convention center and an adjacent park. Consultants came up with a plan strikingly similar to the Pei Plan: anchoring downtown residential development predicated on a convention center and large park.\textsuperscript{307} Despite a disastrous outcome following the strikingly similar Pei Plan fifty years prior, Oklahoma City is currently following the same strategy to sustain the momentum of downtown revitalization.

As Oklahoma City plans to build a new convention center, the municipality appears to follow the exact specifications provided by consultants. Oklahoma City’s new grand plan involves extending the downtown “core” to the North Canadian River’s “shore.” The city manager, planning department, and public engineers sketched the general outline of Core to Shore, but contracted details to outside consultants. The Urban Land Institute advised the Core to Shore master plan, including the large park and downtown convention center. The City of Oklahoma City chartered Economic & Planning Systems in Denver to draft a market analysis. Subsequent planning consultants have provided commentary on the program, ranging from Jeff Speck in a walkability analysis to park architects.\textsuperscript{308} The Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce commissioned a study concerning the viability of the aging Myriad Convention Center (built in

\textsuperscript{307} City of Oklahoma City. 2008. “Core to Shore Plan: a redevelopment framework.”
\textsuperscript{308} City of Oklahoma City Public Works Department and Hargreaves Associates. 2009. “Oklahoma City Central Park Concept Plan.” \url{http://bit.ly/1dbYKkc}
the 1970s, refurbished in 2000). Consulting firm convention Sports and Leisure recommended a new meeting space of approximately 235,000 square feet of usable space. Oklahoma City’s new convention center plans stem from this flurry of recommendations, calling for a new 235,000 square feet hall cattycorner to the Pei Plan’s 163,000 square feet convention hall.

**Fairgrounds: the other convention space**

With so much focus on the downtown space, the Oklahoma City fairgrounds receive marginal attention. Convention consultants claim a shortage of meeting space in Oklahoma City, citing the relatively undersized Myriad Convention Center while ignoring the fairgrounds campus. Even dissent against the MAPs proposal – and particularly the convention center – largely ignores the fairgrounds, despite its being the larger exposition space. Nonetheless, MAPs 3 renews the continued effort to quietly upgrade the fairgrounds, dating back to the 1993 initiative.\(^3^{09}\) Beyond the downtown meeting space, an additional $59 million will erect a new exposition building at the state fairgrounds – the alternative meeting campus. Located near the airport and the western interchange of two interstates, the fairgrounds continue serve as a major agricultural meetings space.

Three renditions of MAPs have focused on updating or expanding the aging fairgrounds campus. Although the minor league baseball team departed, the city poured millions into new agricultural stables, upgrading meeting halls, and a new 100,000 square foot exhibition space. The State Fairgrounds Arena and Myriad Convention Center arena gained hand-me-down scoreboards and communication systems when the Big League City initiative upgraded technology in the Chesapeake Energy Arena (née Ford Center). MAPs 3 adds to the fairgrounds

\(^{309}\) City of Oklahoma City Municipal Code ; Chapter 52, Section 23.b.7
campus, building an additional 225,000 square foot exhibition hall. The new construction would expand the fairgrounds’ exhibition to nearly 500,000 square feet campus-wide.

**Growing Dissent: a Populist Revolt**

The MAPs 3 logroll succeeded, passing with a 54% majority in 2009. Despite the win, a popular political brand, and a well-perceived mayor, dissent began to simmer. Mayor Mick Cornett encountered a growing rebel voice at council meetings. Although early conflict emerged during the Big League City referendum, the convention center’s share of MAPs 3 money sent dissent into overdrive. Councilman Ed Shadid led the charge.

In 2014, Mick Cornett sought an unprecedented fourth term as mayor. Cornett’s first mayoral run in 2004 featured brutal campaign tactics by disconnected allies. Popularity helped reduce competition; a local service worker provided the strongest showing against Cornett, despite a shoestring budget. Cornett’s tenure included the completion of the final 1993 MAPs project, allocating the majority of the MAPs 4 Kids program, an innovative health program to fight obesity, a failed Congressional bid, the temporary and permanent arrival of professional basketball, and the implementation of Core to Shore.

Despite the incumbent’s strong popularity, Shadid mounted an effort against Cornett. Shadid’s candidacy attempted to frame Cornett as a “downtown” mayor, while faneying the challenger as a “neighborhoods” mayor. Shadid’s strategy attempted to unite the anti-tax, populist conservatives with social justice advocates. The massive expenditure on the MAPs 3

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311 Steve Hunt ran against Mick Cornett, receiving over 40% of the vote. Hunt ran the closest campaign against Cornett to date. Dean, Bryan. 2010. “Oklahoma City voters re-elect Mick Cornett.” http://bit.ly/1y2isKP
convention center was Shadid’s most poignant argument. New fiscal populists saw the expenditure as a waste, while social activists decried poor funding elsewhere in the municipal government. Shadid called in various experts from across the country to buttress his arguments and provide legitimacy to his coalition. Leading convention center scholar Heywood Sanders headlined several events in the Oklahoma City area,\(^\text{312}\) including a Shadid campaign event. Sanders’ systematically questioned the convention center cause, critiquing the study calling for a new convention center in Oklahoma City. When questioned, Sanders reinforced Shadid’s call for a continued discussion, suggesting that previous analyses had proven to be overly optimistic and convention center projects consistently missed their expected revenue targets.

Cornett nonetheless won a fourth term in 2014, defeating Shadid with over a twenty percent margin. New, notable elements have matriculated into office. An explicitly conservative candidate displaced a longtime incumbent councilman, Gary Marrs, who served the city as Fire Chief during the Oklahoma City Bombing. Running on a religious, small government platform, James Greiner swept into office from the city’s working class far west side. Meanwhile, John Pettis dislodged another multi-term councilman in a predominantly African American district. Pettis ran on a populist-leaning, community service message, promising to spread the city’s revitalization on the city’s long-neglected northeast side.\(^\text{313}\) The new voices have shifted the tone of the council and created new tax increment financing districts beyond the downtown districts -including in in impoverished areas.\(^\text{314}\)


Remnants of the Shadid campaign also continued to fight the convention center. Grassroots and social media efforts attempted to mobilize an initiative petition to shorten the duration of MAPs 3’s taxation and to cut the amount of funds dedicated to the convention center.315 Others have threatened to sue the city government because MAPs 3 does not conform to an obscure part of the Oklahoma Constitution.316 Neither of these efforts resonated with locals, and the push to override the MAPs 3 ballot died by summer 2014.

The nature of the anti-convention center argument provides a key insight as to how durable the economic growth, vibrant downtown narrative can be. Despite Oklahoma’s consistently conservative bias and general disdain for taxation, the anti-convention center-tax movement failed to gain traction. The political brand that theoretically should fit does not, mainly because it interferes with a larger intellectual ideology managed by experts. The durability of the consultants’ frame can be observed by examining the dissent. Instead of attacking the need for a convention center, both local leaders (Shadid) and countervailing experts (Sanders) were forced to debate in unenviable terms: jobs, the tourism industry, and economic growth. Instead of moving the message to what $250 million could buy besides a convention center, the dissent must answer to the prevailing logic that increased convention space leads to increased jobs.

The National Push for Convention Centers

Oklahoma City is not the only community expanding their convention center; nearly every metropolitan area with over one million residents has either expanded or constructed over

315 OKC Hotel and Convention Center Initiative Petition. “OKC Hotel and Convention Center Initiative Petition” 2014. http://on.fb.me/1uxR0SD
100,000 square feet of public convention space in 1995. The resulting race to provide meeting space accelerates how quickly previous investment becomes obsolete, forcing cities to update existing or build new facilities.

As cities continue to compete for meetings, they seek advice from consultants to make their spaces competitive. Some cities negotiate contracts for private firms to operate public convention halls. Firms like SMG and Global Spectrum operate the public space while advising the city to update their space to remain state-of-the-art. Some changes are relatively minor, such as wireless internet access and audio-visual presentation technology. For large upgrades, architecture firms that specialize in meeting spaces like Populous are readily available to help cities expand existing spaces. Although arenas were routinely built with convention centers in 1970s, few new convention centers include sports facilities. In recent years, consultants have promoted subsidizing hotels attached to the convention center. Sanders argues that this subsidy can depress hotel prices and potentially crowd out the existing hospitality industry. The primary solution prescribed for convention centers is expansion, which reflects the policy network’s paradigm.

Convention space has proliferated in recent decades. Between 1970 through 1995, Heywood Sanders notes a 350% increase in convention space. Figure 7.1 reveals that the “great space race” continued, with a rapid flurry of convention center development at the turn of the millennium. Sanders argues that cities often respond to sunny forecasts for meetings.

317 Memphis, Rochester, Jacksonville, and Oklahoma City are the only exceptions. Oklahoma City plans to expand their convention space.
industry. When consultants promise extremely high payoffs – potentially doubling the number of tourists to a district – cities optimistically expand their convention centers. The magnitude of some of these upgrades is breathtaking. For example, Chicago’s McCormick Place has increased its exhibition space by over 1,000,000 square feet since 1990 – adding roughly the size of 17 football fields.

Debate rages about the trajectory of the convention industry. There is a consensus that exposition space is rapidly growing and that competition to land high-profile meetings intensifies as more cities invest in larger convention halls. Yet Sanders provides evidence that the convention industry is declining. Tradeshow Week responded to Sanders’ Brookings study by providing contradictory data that the industry is growing slowly. Assuming the meetings industry is either growing slowly or shrinking, convention space is rapidly expanding, and convention space is not over capacity, then an oversupply of exhibition space grows. Nonetheless, industry experts encouraged the glut by continuing to recommend larger meeting spaces.


### Table 7.1: List of Convention Centers, Construction and Renovation Dates, and Size

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<th>City</th>
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<th>Date Built</th>
<th>Most Recent Renovation</th>
<th>Usable Space, 1000sqft</th>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>1974</td>
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<td>Virginia Beach Convention Center</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>508</td>
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<td>Cleveland Convention Center, Public Auditorium</td>
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<td>2010</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>Henry B. Gonzales Convention Center</td>
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<td>Cobo Hall</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>Salt Palace (Third)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>Saint Louis</td>
<td>America's Center</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>Louisville</td>
<td>Kentucky International Convention Center</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>2013</td>
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*Miami has multiple large convention centers*
Conventioneers benefit from a convention space glut. As more cities support more exposition space, meetings organizers have several options for hosting a large convention. This diversity of choices allows for renters to enjoy lower prices, but undercuts the potential profit of a given convention center. Further, the intense competition among cities creates a rat race among convention centers – failing to provide the newest upgrade to the standard package of meetings amenities can inhibit a city’s ability to attract visitors. Recent commentary notes that if larger cities have a difficult time keeping up with increasing costs, then regional cities’ smaller budgets face a nearly impossible task. Despite large costs, convention centers are a popular tactic to attract visitors and encourage revitalization. When asked how to increase upper-income residential development, multiple consulting groups advised Oklahoma City to invest in a larger convention center (a visitor-centric project) adjacent to a large park. The logic articulated suggests that the exposition hall and park campus would attract visitors in the short-run, which should lead to early commercial investment; in the long run, residents would be attracted to the district’s newfound services.

The Clandestine Push for Extra Funds

After convention center planning began, Oklahoma City leaders called for additional resources to underwrite a hotel attached to the convention center. The MAPs 3 budget is porous, allowing for

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324 City of Oklahoma City Public Works Department and Hargreaves Associates. 2009.
City of Oklahoma City Public Works Department and Hargreaves Associates. 2009.
“Oklahoma City Central Park Concept Plan.”
http://bit.ly/1abU9KH
fungibility across projects. If one project receives money from an outside source, penciled-in allocations may be transferred to other projects relatively easily. Small changes to the MAPs 3 budget – expanding the convention center’s share – were insufficient to cover the costs of a new hotel. The publicly subsidized hotel attached to the convention center was widely overlooked during the MAPs 3 campaign, fanning the flames of public dissent after the vote. Even after fiscal wrangling, the initiative’s tax does not cover the cost for both the exhibition halls and the new lodging.

Oklahoma City has started to use business improvement districts (BIDs) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to supplement the programs’ anemic budgets. Business improvement districts, micro-level governments generally located in commercial spaces that raise revenue to provide local services, lump the central business district and Bricktown revenue. One suggestion to help underwrite the streetcar route (which has lost funding to the convention center) would be either a supplemental downtown BID or borrow money by extending the existing district’s charter. BID revenues in Oklahoma City are primarily property tax based, and despite their public collection are dispersed through a private board with somewhat opaque procedures.

Similarly, Oklahoma City continues to use tax increment financing to augment previous MAPs investments. Tax increment financing allows cities to borrow money for infrastructure improvements against improved future revenue. Oklahoma City currently services nine TIF districts, most of which exist in the central business district or Bricktown. Local boosters have suggested speculating on “Core to Shore” development to underwrite the streetcar project and, in turn, the convention center. TIF revenues come in two forms in Oklahoma City: through property and sales taxes. Oklahoma City’s budget is sales-tax dependent due to state laws,

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leading to a unique variant of TIF revenue collection. TIF governance is somewhat muddled, and expenditures are often difficult to follow. One remarkable aspect of the Metropolitan Area Projects is the transparency and perceived democratic legitimacy produced by popular referendum. Although the slate may be selected by a small handful of shifting elites, the masses do have the plebiscite authority to affirm or deny the local leaders’ visions.\textsuperscript{327} BIDs and TIFs reflect a shift away from the transparency found in previous generations of MAPs, but their use brings Oklahoma City in sync with the rest of the country.\textsuperscript{328}

**Convention Centers as a part of the Standard Package of Amenities**

The Core to Shore’s inclusion of a new convention center (adjacent to an existing meeting space) in order to induce residential development seems odd upon first glance. The two types of investment seem to be unrelated. Yet Oklahoma City’s leaders continue to allocate millions towards the project.\textsuperscript{329} These decisions come upon the advice of outside expertise. Despite the industry’s relative decline, consultants continue to project sunny forecasts into the foreseeable future. Convention Sports and Leisure’s reports to Oklahoma City predict the rapid recovery of the convention market heading into the Great Recession.\textsuperscript{330} Although critics like Heywood Sanders note that the convention industry’s business projections are nearly always inflated

\textsuperscript{328} Every central city in metropolitan areas with over 1,000,000 residents use Tax Increment Financing.  

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beyond realistic outcomes, Oklahoma City’s leaders continue to envision a busy downtown and follow consultants’ suggestions to allocate public resources for bigger and better convention spaces.

Nationally, cities continue to invest in convention centers. Every metropolitan area with over one million residents has a publicly owned exposition hall. The ubiquity of convention space has created a prisoner’s dilemma similar to the exit-option presented by vacant sports arenas. As each city adds more space, the market floods with excess supply that reduces rental prices. In a similar pattern, consultants have promoted subsidizing hotels attached to the convention center. This addition guarantees more lodging, but the public investment can potentially inhibit private investment. Sanders argues that this subsidy can depress hotel prices in the market, which could crowd out future private hotels. Despite these risks, local officials and consultants presume convention centers are catalysts for urban development. Like other investments, how they interact with their surroundings influences any economic benefits.

The convention center debate is remarkable because the frame (economic development) is extremely durable. Despite mixed evidence, convention center debates invariably center on the expected magnitude of economic development. The established policy network – both in support and dissent – argues in the same terms, which reinforces the economic development frame. The niche topic has matured and settled on endlessly recurring lines of debate.

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CHAPTER EIGHT
LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND THE POWER OVER PLACE

Each is given a list of rules;
a shapeless mass; a bag of tools.
And each must fashion, ere life is flown,
A stumbling block, or a Stepping-Stone

RL Sharpe

Oklahoma City’s largest revitalization investments inhabit two distinct areas: Bricktown and the Adventure District. Bricktown follows the contemporary leisure model, with professional sports and convention halls anchoring a leisure space. Visitors flock to events, spill out of their attraction halls and into local shops, bars, and restaurants. Meanwhile, the Adventure District attracts a larger number of visitors through museums, a casino, and the city’s zoo. Despite larger attendance, the area currently generates a remarkably small amount of commerce – a couple of fast food restaurants and a discount goods store. The feeling between the two districts is palpable: Bricktown nestles along a walkable canal, cloistered between red brick buildings while the Adventure District is a disjointed constellation of attractions lacking both a psychological and physical theme. This discrepancy highlights the importance of geography: how infrastructure interactions with attractions can enable or endanger economic growth. Although outside actors may guide cities’ agendas, locals retain the power over place, the ability to geographically distribute infrastructure. Where cities locate attractions – especially in relation to other – can help determine the efficacy of anchor institutions: education as an attraction, professional sports, and exposition visitors.

Cities develop similar packages of infrastructure; however cities achieve remarkably different outcomes based on their investments. Simply checking the boxes on an infrastructure wish list does not necessarily translate into economic spillovers. For example, Rosentraub has
both identified cities that have failed to capture external benefit and cases where cities leveraged economic gains.\textsuperscript{333} How cities locate these projects – and the physical relationship among the attractions – is an artform that either enables or inhibits economic spillovers. Luckily for local autonomy, domestic leaders continue to determine infrastructure placement throughout their jurisdictions. Local leaders may neither fully understand nor control the local agenda, yet they have the power to shape their future by where an in what configuration they build specific infrastructure.

Oklahoma City features two districts that house major attractions aimed at drawing and monetizing visitors. Oklahoma City’s Adventure District includes a casino, a cultural museum, a profession museum, a science museum, world-class softball facilities, a national-class zoo, and a horseracing facility.\textsuperscript{334} On the other hand, Bricktown features easy access to an aging convention center, a water feature, a minor league stadium, and a major league arena.\textsuperscript{335} Despite the Adventure District’s larger tourist attendance, local commentary points to Bricktown’s general success and the Adventure District’s general failure. Neither the Adventure District nor Bricktown are accidents; instead, Oklahoma City leaders deliberately clustered attractions with the intent of spawning a specific atmosphere. Leaders hoped to anchor the Adventure District through thoroughbred racing and a hodgepodge of attractions. Voters passed MAPs with the goal of flipping Oklahoma City’s economic trajectory based on revitalizing the Bricktown

\textsuperscript{334} The Adventure District is area in the immediate vicinity of the Interstate 44-Interstate 35 junction.
\textsuperscript{335} Bricktown is the area outlined by the city’s BID and TIF districts.
neighborhood. In both cases, leaders hoped to foster an economic agglomeration around the leisure industry.

The differences between the two districts reveal that how a city builds a space is important. When Oklahoma City’s leaders worked with expertise, Bricktown’s profitable district emerged. When they haphazardly built the attractions in the Adventure District, economic momentum fizzled. On one hand, the Adventure District contains a litany of attractions – none of which synergize with the others. On the other hand, Bricktown has fewer attractions but builds on a larger theme as Oklahoma City’s night life scene. Deconstructing the architecture of each district sheds light on the vastly different outcomes. Qualitatively, the difference between the two districts is immediately noticeable. Outside of the attendance to major facilities, the Adventure District is barren. Beyond three fast food restaurants, the district effectively exists commerce-free. On the other hand, Bricktown features a busy agglomeration of smaller vendors. These restaurants, bars, and trinket shops bring the district to life – inducing residential gentrification in an adjacent district. The Adventure District is dysfunctional not because of the facility content; rather, it struggles because it lacks any semblance of synergy. When Oklahoma City built the Adventure District in the 1980s, leaders tried any tactic that seemed to work in other cities; when Oklahoma City built Bricktown, it built around a vision of a “live city” near the central business district. Local leadership retains the ability and responsibility to approve and designate places for revitalization projects. Although the rising reliance on consultants has convoluted local control over the agenda, urban leaders retain the power over place and the ability to dictate a vision to consultants for their community.
The Adventure District

The Adventure District is one of Oklahoma City’s longest running leisure spaces. Originally one of the four major parks developed under a City Beautiful plan in 1910, planners have struggled to convert the region to an entertainment space for nearly a century. During the 1920s, the city zoo moved to the park. During the 1950s, a national-level heritage museum built facilities northwest of the city park, and the interstate program built two highways intersected near the district. During the 1980s recession, local leaders developed a horseracing facility, world-class softball stadium, and science museum between the zoo and heritage museum. State law enabled some casino gaming at the racetrack in the early 2000s, turning it into a “racino”. Despite a concerted effort, the district fails to spur any significant non-attraction development.

Nestled in a repurposed city beautiful park, the Adventure District lies in one of the city’s most tranquil green spaces. The unique combination of wildlife, sport and science draws attendees of all ages to the city’s most visited district. Next to an interstate highway junction, the city’s nationally lauded zoo attracts the most visitors – nearly three times the total patrons for the local National Basketball Association franchise. The Oklahoma Science Museum stands next door to the zoo’s entrance, inspiring local students with Rube Goldberg contraptions, a mirror maze, an earthquake simulator, and an elaborate meteorology lab – including a television studio. Remington Park features horseracing and machine gaming across Grand Avenue – the Boulevard from the 1910s City Beautiful plan. Behind the racetrack, visitors can peek at All Sports Stadium, the American mecca for softball and home of the Women’s College World Series. The quaint stadium complex provides a campy experience for sports fans, though the amenities are from yesterdecade.
With so many visitors, the Adventure District is remarkably inefficient at generating extra commerce. Despite housing several of Oklahoma City’s most frequented venues, the district maintains very little retail businesses: three fast food restaurants. The main problem with the Adventure District is its complete lack of cohesion; it remains a disjointed cluster of attractions that happen to be near each other rather than a place to play. The Adventure District is an extremely unwalkable space. Speck identifies protection from automobile traffic as a key variable for walkability. Figure 8.1 shows that acres of concrete separate each venue, with every attraction having its own parking lots. These parking lots force foot traffic to pass through dangerous zones, where automobile traffic could come from any direction. Even if patrons were willing to walk between attractions, the only space is along a bike path precariously close to a five-lane street. Making matters worse, the lane width on this street are the same width as the local interstates; Speck notes that wider lane widths encourage greater speeds. An already unprotected walk becomes more dangerous considering drivers’ high speeds.

The Adventure District is hostile to pedestrian traffic. Uncomfortable walks prevent patrons from wandering beyond their attraction. There is no opportunity to comfortably stroll from one venue to the next. Instead, visitors spilling out of attractions immediately encounter large concrete moats, parking lots, and wide streets with no or poor sidewalks, which result in an uncomfortable walk. No businesses exist along the path between attractions. The Adventure District’s disjointed nature prevents visitors from spending additional dollars in the district, undermining the economic development potential of these facilities.

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Bricktown

Bricktown is Oklahoma City’s preeminent leisure space. During the 1990s Oklahoma City poured hundreds of millions into renovating the area immediately east of the central business district. At the time, the region was one of the more blighted parts of the city, yet the Bricktown district has grown in popularity, often serving as a stop along the way to and from other events. Bricktown is a reasonably walkable area, with a few key anchors drawing traffic. Nearby anchors include the city’s convention center, a professional sports arena, a minor league arena, a minor league stadium, and a major department store. Bricktown roughly follows a water feature strikingly similar to the Indianapolis Central Canal and the San Antonio Riverwalk. Bricktown
appears to be spawning residential gentrification immediately to the north, providing a steady flow of pedestrian patrons.

Bricktown is the heart of Oklahoma City’s nightlife. Patrons headed into Bricktown often flock to the free parking opportunities in eastern Bricktown. A larger-than-life statue commemorates the city’s founding land rush, anchoring the eastern end of the Bricktown canal. Winding brick sidewalks flank the waterway, and the occasional stage and quiet garden. As visitors stroll along the waterway, they pass by new hotels and cinemas before encountering a series of restaurants, including culinary ventures by local musicians and athletes. As visitors pass into western Bricktown, the construction notably shifts from larger, modern construction to retrofitted, early twentieth century construction. Red brick unites the old and new architecture, and brick-laden streets separate the waterway and the local baseball club’s stadium. The canal curves sharply west, weaving through public art, tchotchke stores, and the city’s nightlife scene. After passing by a small fountain, pedestrians pass under the Santa Fe railroad through decorated viaducts to encounter professional basketball, the convention center, or the central business district.

Where the Adventure District fails, Bricktown succeeds. Nonetheless, Bricktown’s development is remarkably unbalanced. Overall, the space is very walkable, but most of the anchors are on the west side. Bricktown lies between the city’s central business district, convention hall, sports arena, and an interstate highway junction. Unsurprisingly, Bricktown features mature development on its west side, but commerce quickly fades as tourists travel east. Figure 8.2 displays the Bricktown’s major attractions. Three major attractions anchor western Bricktown: the convention center, the ballpark, and the arena. The only anchor in the east appears to be from happenstance: a large department store negotiated a deal with Oklahoma City
for subsidized rent in exchange for free parking for Bricktown patrons. This functions as a main parking lot for the district, but also marks the end of eastern development along the water feature. In its own sense, the free parking is an anchor that drives foot traffic.

**Figure 8.2 Bricktown Restaurants, Oklahoma City**

Few phenomena threaten the district; however, Bricktown is somewhat inefficient due to anchor placement. First, the proximity between convention center and major league arena inadvertently minimizes patron exposure to local establishments. Second, unbalanced anchor distribution reduces the profitability of nearly one-third of the water feature. Although future development may fill in these gaps, Oklahoma City could likely accelerate this process by

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constructing (or subsidizing) a new anchor to the near east. Finally, a proposed streetcar route could harm the district if extended beyond its current plan to serve far west Bricktown. The proposed route links the parking lot to all other anchors, allowing visitors to bypass potential shops lessens their exposure to sales opportunities.

**Creating Spaces: Interaction Among Attractions**

Leisure districts attempt to lure tourists into a specific space, manipulate visitor’s experience within the bubble in order to expose the wayfarer to as many vendors as possible, and ultimately extract the maximum amount of (tax) dollars possible. Leisure districts are constructed spaces that attempt to create economic agglomerations. These districts often follow a similar design pattern similar to shopping malls: attractions draw visitors while architecture drives them towards other commerce. With such similar goals, it is unsurprising that the two types of development exhibit similar traits. City planners often carve leisure districts from urban spaces, while architects develop malls in suburban places. Terminology and scale may differ, but the tactics are the same.

Tourist districts rely on a wide array of *anchors* to attract customers. Judd notes the wide range of tourist magnets, from historical landmarks to convention centers to large-scale shopping facilities to casinos. Rosentraub describes professional sports facilities as potential *anchors* for entertainment and districts – borrowing the term from mall lexicon. In a very basic sense, visitors need an excuse to go somewhere. Visitors include those who do not live in a given

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district: one who lives in another neighborhood, a nearby suburbanite, or a traveler from a different metropolitan area.

Tourist-oriented spaces often create an *introverted* effect. Major shopping mall architect Victor Gruen described introverted architecture as inward facing, where brick and mortar encourages human interaction between the structures.\(^{341}\) Chicago’s Michigan Avenue is a perfect example. Tourists on the Magnificent Mile find a series of landmarks, shopping centers, and entertainment facilities facing Michigan Avenue. However, if visitors stray one block in either direction to continue their journey, they find a much different Chicago. Despite the occasional spillover attraction, parallel streets Rush and St Clair often support little commerce in lieu of service entrances to Michigan Avenue shops. This presents a “facing inward”, or introverted architecture focusing on the Magnificent Mile.

Cities are quick to equip tourist districts with enhanced services, creating a *fortified* experience for their clientele. Fainstein and Gladstone\(^ {342}\) describe tourist spaces as “the Fortified City”, where private security, video surveillance, and architecture blend together to carve an aura of safety within a (perceived) unsafe urban environment. In many cases, local businesses work with the city to displace undesirable people, ranging from the homeless to the mentally ill. Some districts even provide for “ambassadors,” uniformed tourist-representatives that reinforce hospitality by providing information while keeping vigilant eyes-and-ears for security purposes.\(^ {343}\) These urban mall cops provide similar services as their suburban brethren.


\(^{343}\) Briffault, Richard. 2010. “Reassessing the State and Local Government Toolkit” *University of Chicago Law Review*. (77) 65-95
Tourist districts that create retail agglomerations are *walkable*. Speck argues that humans will become pedestrians if presented a safe, comfortable, and interesting route. First, Speck equates safe walks to limited interactions with automobiles, preferring barriers between pedestrian and traffic. Street parking, tree-lined streets, or sidewalk flowerbeds provide pedestrians physical protection from drivers. Second, Speck argues that open spaces, exposed surfaces, and setbacks all reduce comfort while walking. Speck’s research concludes that pedestrians prefer spatially contained spaces, which can be roughly translated as introverted architecture. Finally, Speck observes that pedestrians prefer to avoid walking to sameness through sameness from sameness. As a result, varied spaces along the streetscape are necessary to entertain pedestrians on their journey from anchor to anchor.

The most effective tourist districts maximize exposure to agglomeration shops by *manipulating pedestrian traffic* to travel moderate distances between anchors. Simply placing tourist magnets in the same region does not guarantee a retail agglomeration, prospering business, or increased tax receipts. Connecting anchors with walkable spaces that foster other commerce is critical to boost private revenue in the tourist space. Providing visitors with ample opportunities to spend money, a pedestrian-friendly, somewhat spread out leisure space maximizes the return on investment. In 1958 Kalamazoo, Michigan, contacted Victor Gruen to rebuild its downtown shopping district. Gruen applied the shopping mall model to an outdoor space, manipulating foot traffic into a corridor of commerce. Later, Boston, Jacksonville, and

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Baltimore employed the Rouse Company to build festival marketplaces. Each of these projects follow a similar model of driving foot traffic towards commerce through outdoor architecture. Eventually, these outdoor malls transformed into expanded districts with strategically placed attractions like downtown New Orleans.

**Evidence from Elsewhere**

The private benefit from anchor attractions depends on the siting and design of attractions. Oklahoma City’s two districts could be outliers; as a result, the following investigates six cities’ prominent entertainment districts. Cases are chosen using the three largest and three smallest leisure sectors, based on metropolitan area location quotients. New Orleans, Las Vegas, and Orlando feature the largest relative leisure and hospitality employment, while Grand Rapids, Milwaukee, and San Jose’s lag behind the national average. The discussion focuses on the relationship among walkability, anchor attractions, introverted architecture, and fortified space.

**Large Leisure Industry: Las Vegas, Nevada**

Las Vegas’ largest concentration of leisure and hospitality is along the world famous “Strip”. Large casinos line Las Vegas Boulevard and are packed with attractions, ranging from conference rooms to fine dining to gigantic buffets to theater entertainment. A surprisingly large share of Las Vegas hotels and eateries lie within these megacasinos, providing gamblers enough amenities to potentially never leave their gambling experience. The spectacle never sleeps, as casinos continue to vie for visitors’ attention. At the most local level, casino floorplans mirror

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347 Data compiled from 2012 data using the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ location quotient calculator.

the strategy used in tourist districts. Entertainment attractions are often placed far from the main entrance and parking garages, forcing patrons to navigate through the casino floor. Although casinos seemingly compete over an entertainment trophy case, casinos profit from patrons gambling. The hubbub over entertainment is designed to draw in potential gamblers; the rest of the architecture is designed to increase the likelihood of patrons gambling. If patrons elect to gamble, then collecting their winnings often requires a hike deep into the recesses of the casino floor – another manipulation to expose pedestrian traffic to more profit opportunities. In short, casinos manipulate pedestrian foot traffic to maximize exposure to the profit generators.

On the larger level, Las Vegas’ Strip captures visitors with several traits noted above. Most of the buildings face Las Vegas Boulevard, creating an introverted feel that manipulates traffic. Instead of venturing off of the Strip, pedestrians are drawn by the constant stimulation casinos present. While casinos attempt to lure potential gamblers, the casino district also captures pedestrians. The Las Vegas Strip’s internal and external architecture works in concert to keep visitors entertained, and manipulates traffic to maximize profits. Figure 8.3 shows the distribution of Las Vegas’ hotels. Las Vegas’ large hospitality agglomeration can be easily seen along Las Vegas Boulevard, especially near casinos and the convention center.

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Large Leisure Industry: Orlando, Florida

Orlando’s entertainment industry revolves around theme parks. Orlando’s hotels and restaurants appear to cluster within and around major private attractions, from Disney to Universal Studios to SeaWorld. Similar to casinos, theme parks erect attractions to lure visitors; however, these attractions rarely generate revenue. Instead, theme parks monetize patrons when they visit supporting shops, from food vendors to tchotchke stands. Disney’s Magic Kingdom is an archetypical example of a theme park. Visitors enter the park on foot, either serviced by trams
from the parking lot, private ferries, or a monorail. Once inside the park, a series of attractions await visitors. Cinderella’s castle anchors the park, with small attractions only a short walk from the center. Each section of the park features a combination of rides, an iconic monument, and approximately a dozen shops and restaurants. Disney makes no money off of their rides; however, they do profit from selling food and souvenirs at vendors strategically located between and near attractions. Disney uses rides to guide pedestrians along routes with several shops, exposing visitors to multiple shopping opportunities and monetizing their presence. This pattern can be found throughout metropolitan Orlando. Other Disney parks, Universal Studios and SeaWorld enjoy architecture that functions in a similar manner, using attractions and shows to manipulate traffic and expose visitors to profit opportunities.

Orlando’s theme parks reprise and expand strategies found in casino architecture. Theme parks are enclosed spaces that attempt to capture and monetize visitor attention by manipulating traffic between attractions. Orlando enjoys several of these districts, although they are almost entirely private and free from public interference. Early subsidies enabled heavy private infrastructure investment. Fogelsong notes that marriage with the mouse occasionally renders Orlando hamstrung when attempting to collect taxes from these privately planned and developed spaces. 349

On a larger level, Orlando’s hospitality economy nestles around theme parks. Figure 8.4 reveals the distribution of Orlando’s hospitality industry. Orlando’s convention center, arena, and football stadium draw remarkably small numbers of nearby hotels and restaurants, paling in comparison to clusters near privately owned and operated theme parks. International Drive, a route that roughly connects three major theme parks and the city’s convention center,

hosts dozens of hotels and hundreds of restaurants. Orlando’s leisure agglomeration traces along International Drive, with clusters of restaurants and hotels huddled near major attractions.  

**Figure 8.4 Orlando Lodging**

![Orlando Lodging Map](image)

**Large Leisure Industry: New Orleans, Louisiana**

Unlike Las Vegas and Orlando, New Orleans’ tourist space is a combination of public infrastructure and private investment. Five large downtown attractions work in concert to create a large place to play. This geography creates opportunities for leisure oriented businesses to prosper off of tourists attending conferences to local sports fans watching NBA Pelicans and NFL Saints games. New Orleans’ downtown space reflects the same principles in a suburban
mall, a Las Vegas casino, or an Orlando theme park: attractions, walkability, and space zoned for leisure and hospitality.

New Orleans’ leisure bubble carves an unusually large footprint. Figure 8.5 displays the Crescent City’s downtown vicinity, highlighting several attractions. Sports attractions are to the west, while a casino and the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center are riverside to the east. The historic French Quarter lies to the north, an older neighborhood with unique architecture famous for its unique mixed-use, party-heavy culture. Finally, a small cluster of museums anchor the southern end of the Warehouse district. Hospitality thrives within the polygon created by these anchor attractions. Central New Orleans features remarkable walkability. This walkability interacts with the several public attractions, creating a large yet coherent leisure space. Instead of a single, concentrated path from attraction to attraction, New Orleans’ leisure economy pours throughout the downtown district. Although the meta-architecture is not necessarily introverted, separated access highways create a de facto introverted atmosphere throughout the district. A stark dropoff in walkability and commerce occurs outside of this polygon, revealing the edge of the leisure bubble. Instead of facilitating a linear walkable space between two anchors, New Orleans developed an entire district which has spawned a healthy leisure and hospitality industry.

Grand Rapids’ hospitality industry is caught between two eras: the postwar and contemporary. Unfortunately for Grand Rapids, the awkward state of limbo between two strategies translates into an undersized leisure and hospitality sector. Grand Rapids has the smallest location quotient among MSAs with over 1,000,000 residents. Two small clusters of hotels and restaurants are easily visible, each surrounding a different generation of leisure attractions. Although Grand Rapids has two clusters, neither is able to spawn agglomeration economies.

The larger cluster of hotels and restaurants lies along the central city’s southeast limit. This larger cluster connects two large shopping malls with Interstate 96 and easy access to the
local airport. These malls, the hallmark of the postwar shopping economy, appear to anchor commercial development along Southeast 28th Street. Shopping malls are able to provide opportunities for niche shops and restaurants, although architecture constrains this behavior. Once a shopping mall meets capacity, there is little opportunity to expand. This suburban-style development updates the downtown-suburban decision for shoppers: visit the commercial cathedral on the edge of town or the central city’s independent shops.

Starting in the 1990s, Grand Rapids strategically invested in key entertainment infrastructure near its downtown. The Van Andel Arena anchors the southern end of the nascent downtown, while the new Devos Place convention center lies to the north. A web of museums lies on the west bank of the Grand River – easily accessible by footbridge. Hotels and restaurants litter the vicinity, serving visitors to these attractions. Unfortunately, these attractions are not salient enough to draw national attention. Minor pro sports headline the Van Andel arena, drawing locals but rarely outsiders. Devos Place is easily lost in the meetings industry rat race, placing 48th in metropolitan areas by convention hall size in the United States.351

The downtown district is unable to effectively expose visitors to commerce, a critical component required to spark a restaurant or hotel renaissance. All of the ingredients are in the same vicinity, yet there is ineffective interaction among the attractions due to poor walkability. Prospective pedestrians face an uncomfortable journey along city streets with little protection from automobile traffic. Several open spaces and superblock-garages represent safety concerns, leading pedestrians to make their journeys as short as possible. Further, Grand Rapids offers a

351 See Convention Center data found in Chapter 7.
system of bridges, allowing pedestrians to completely bypass street-level transit – undermining potential street-level vendors’ exposure to visitors and profitability.

**Figure 8.6: Grand Rapids Lodging**

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**Small Leisure Industry: San Jose, California**

San Jose provides an example of disjointed infrastructure inhibiting the leisure industry. San Jose’s entertainment infrastructure is neither clustered nor connected. Miles away from other attractions, outdoor stadiums are surrounded by parking lots and parks that preclude any private opportunities for reinforcing investment. Instead of enjoying the district, fans return to their cars and drive away. Several attractions are practically adjacent to one another. This placement provides convenient access for visitors, but minimizes pedestrian exposure to shops, restaurants, and bars. This too-far or too-close spacing undermines any opportunity to monetize patrons.
The somewhat walkable downtown space squanders an opportunity for hospitality investment by inefficiently distributing leisure infrastructure. Adjacent attractions minimize visitors’ exposure to commerce, undercutting opportunity to monetize tourists. In cases where attractions are not stacked atop each other, barriers create unpleasant walking experiences – leading patrons to either not attend attractions or take transit that bypasses potential commerce. For example, an asphalt moat parking lot and separated access highway wall off the downtown arena from the rest of the city, its commerce, and its attractions. Although San Jose’s tree-lined sidewalks generally include protection from the street, the negative ambience of parking lots, superbblocks, and other pedestrian disincentives inhibit a walkable downtown space. As a result, minimal spillovers from attractions fuel the local hospitality sector, and there is simply no room for a leisure agglomeration to occur.
Small Leisure Industry: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee features several attractions, including indoor and outdoor professional sports, arts museums, motorcycle museums. Summerfest headlines the outdoor music calendar, drawing nearly one million visitors to the city’s lakefront annually. Nonetheless, Milwaukee maintains a relatively small, undersized hospitality sector. Milwaukee presents unique evidence: the simple construction of various attractions and the standard package of amenities does not guarantee an economic spillover. Instead, the placement and interaction of leisure institutions and infrastructure can create or inhibit the opportunity for commerce.

Milwaukee’s largest attractions are geographically distributed evenly across its downtown district. A national class art museum lies along the lakefront to the east, while a publicly owned arena and convention center anchor the west. The Harley Davidson museum and a cluster of theaters lie to the south along the Menomonee and Milwaukee River confluence. Between a relatively healthy corporate sector and a large urban university, one might expect this district to support a large hospitality industry.

Unfortunately for Milwaukee, the cohesion among these attractions is cumbersome. Walkability in downtown Milwaukee is inconsistent; although some blocks provide pleasant strolls, most routes between attractions force pedestrians down uncomfortably open, undeveloped spaces next to speeding traffic. Interstate 794 provides an east-west barrier, dividing the theaters and museums from the rest of downtown, creating a disjointed experience for the patron. As a result, visitors can routinely be found zipping between attractions in cars or on motorcycles, bypassing commercial opportunities along the way.
**Power Over Place**

Oklahoma City houses two districts specifically aimed at generating tourist revenue. Bricktown provides a larger agglomeration, yet the development is incomplete. The Adventure District lacks a walkable route among its several attractions, inhibiting visitors from spilling into neighboring commerce. Both districts have attractions in place, but Bricktown’s walkability allows for larger volumes of revenue than the Adventure District. Evidence from six other cities provides analogous evidence, indicating that walkable, introverted, fortified spaces near anchors can incite spillover commerce. Oklahoma City’s experience with Bricktown provides a
key insight. For the first several years after digging the Bricktown Canal, most commerce existed along the waterway between the ballpark and the central business district – just under two city blocks. When the city subsidized a large department store to the east with free parking, development rapidly spread along the canal. The store and parking served as an anchor attraction and the canal served as the most walkable route. Higher foot traffic fostered commercial growth and captured more spillover from the leisure district, including a cinema, seven restaurants, one hotel, a bowling alley, and a corporate headquarters. Figure 8.9 highlights the new commercial development in the five years after the eastern anchor opened. All highlighted spaces were empty lots in 2003, but functioning businesses by 2008. The strategic placement of the department store on the east side of the Bricktown district appears to have stretched foot traffic, creating opportunities for commerce.

Figure 8.9: Bricktown Development, 2003-2008

Where cities decide to locate expert-prescribed infrastructure – especially in relation to other established anchor institutions – can determine whether or not an economic agglomeration occurs. Disjointed downtown dystopias lead to little positive spillovers, while well-connected,
evenly distributed infrastructure can foster economic revival. Governing coalitions may not have
the ability to sustain long term agendas; however local leaders have several tools needed to
engineer economic revitalization. As in Oklahoma City, urban leaders still hold the reins of their
future despite enjoying less control over the agenda because they maintain the power over place.
They may not dictate what opportunities arise or which infrastructure become part of the
standard package of amenities, but they do have the power to strategically distribute the
resources advantageously or disadvantageously.
CHAPTER NINE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY REPLICA

Urban politics have fundamentally changed, with local leaders reliant on an emergent policy network. The new world of urban revitalization is a multifaceted policy network, which enjoys a privileged position of influence. Increasingly insulated access to expertise allows consultants to manipulate the local policy agenda, including specific programs. The result is a strange dynamic: local strategies seeking foreign tactics. Although local leaders may often concede power over the agenda to the network of experts beyond their borders, cities retain the power over where and how public infrastructure interacts with private investment.

Amenities have captured local leaders’ attention, but the standard package of amenities remains an evolving and elusive goal. Projecting future elements for revitalization into the distant future is difficult, but one trend appears emergent. As the number of niches grows, the potential for message discord and intra-network feuding increases as well. Internal inconsistencies may create enough friction among actors to reduce the efficacy of individual actors, similar to other policy networks like the civil rights social movement and the environmentalist movement.352

Despite the intent to examine the role of outside experts on local decisionmaking, this study’s findings pour into several questions that haunt the core of American political science. The argument synthesizes these seminal arguments into a single narrative, concluding that a network of consultants outside of the government proper heavily influences the local agenda through expertise. Yet evidence from Oklahoma City sheds light on classic questions like “Who

Governs?” and contemporary debates over agenda setting. Happily, this conclusion affirms and reinforces many segments of the canon literature concerning American politics, while contributing new information specific to American cities. This manuscript aims to contribute to both the study of local politics and classic questions.

**Snapshot of Evidence**

At the heart of the discussion lies a central question: what role do experts play in urban politics? Experts play a critical role in agenda setting. As time passes, a standard package of amenities has evolved across urban America. Nearly all cities of the same size erect similar infrastructure. Newer, exclusive schools mark the educational amenities in and around central cities. Sports palaces help subsidize attractions to draw locals to entertainment districts. Exposition halls lure those from beyond the local borders into leisure districts. These facilities work in conjunction (or dysfunction) to pronounce the vicinity’s status as a “big league” or minor league city as measured by a standard across communities.

Experts and consultants outside of the local government significantly influence these standards. These actors are aligned in a constellation of interests, lying underneath a larger banner of city building. This larger message provides cover for smaller groups to carve niches around their industry and expertise. Unique policy networks manage and manipulate each component of the standard package of amenities, creating a confederation of interests. This larger network of networks provides no central leadership but offers safe haven for each component. The resulting political system reflects two models from the interest groups literature. First, each issue area resembles an advocacy coalition, or a group of actors who share
similar belief systems and terminology leading to a consensus in policy choices.\textsuperscript{353} On the other hand, no actor governs the city building policy networks, a phenomenon shown in several Washington issue areas.\textsuperscript{354} Paradoxically, there is a large consensus about central ideas, but no one in the center to articulate and govern them. Revitalization programs may start with locals articulating a vision of a better city; when turning to strategy, tactics, and implementation, cities look to experts to provide actionable policy solutions. Consensus within each policy niche creates a unique dynamic. When cities reach beyond their borders for expertise they are almost guaranteed to contact someone with the party line standards. Expert network cohesion allows for a privileged position in agenda setting simultaneously across several cities. This governance pattern roughly resembles bureaucratic agencies captured by special interest groups. Lowi describes this monopolized governance as a relationship between the bureaucracy, legislative decision-makers, and an interest group;\textsuperscript{355} the urban version discussed above includes an institutionalized policy network, local leadership, and an interested economic coalition. These monopolies will likely continue until confronted by a countervailing coalition,\textsuperscript{356} a politically viable second opinion to break up the quasi-iron triangle.

Despite heavy foreign influence over the local agenda, domestic leaders still retain the power over place – the ability to geographically distribute large scale attractions within their jurisdiction. Although an external apparatus prescribes actions to local leaders, agency still matters because place still matters. Local actors have the ability to set the stage for future

\textsuperscript{356} McFarland, Andrew S. 2004. \textit{Neopluralism}. University of Kansas Press.
development (determined largely by outsiders) by weaving infrastructure into cohesive districts. External experts enjoy a privileged political position in local agenda setting, largely due to the bounded rationality/ignorance of local leaders, the ad hoc nature of local coalitions in an era of eroded leadership, and the lack of countervailing experts attempting to provide alternative frames. Nonetheless, local actors can assert meaningful power over place to leverage these projects into improving their local image and economic base.

The next generation of urban leaders will likely become more reliant on this decentralized network of policy networks in order to navigate the increasingly complex world of urban revitalization. In many cases, the messages among the constellation of interests reinforce each other; however, there is the threat of increasing incoherence among the messages. The contemporary city building policy network appears headed towards headaches similar model to Stone’s polis, where conflicting values create paradoxes for policymakers. Each component of the standard package of amenities has a miniature policy network that operates autonomously. As new programs join the standard package of amenities, the tactical demands on a city become increasingly complex, nebulous, and potentially inconsistent. This process will reinforce local leaders’ need for consultants to provide tactics, because certain plans may undermine other tactics and stymie the grand strategy.

Recent efforts towards economic revitalization have produced a flurry of construction across American cities. The resulting political system is a network of expert networks loosely reinforcing similar goals. Time and politics have produced an increasingly disjointed policy network, similar to those studied at the national level. The city building network is a slightly immature version of Bosso’s fragmented, niche-stricken environmentalist movement: ideals

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enjoying popular support with competing sub-interests promising conflicting concrete
solutions.\textsuperscript{358} Similar to the Heinz et al’s hollow core, no central group of elites is able to
reconcile these differences in priorities, promising continued conflict and uncertainty among
groups.\textsuperscript{359}

\textbf{The Evolution of Interest Groups and Policy Networks}

Examining the city building policy network provides unique insight to issue networks. The city
building policy community is a constantly evolving, decentralized policy network with several
components and no central leader. A life cycle of policy networks emerges when examining
each component of the city building network. Newer issue areas like education are hotly
contested, with policy entrepreneurs pitching new options. Older components like arenas and
convention centers enjoy a more stable frame. It appears that over time, new issue areas
gelatinize, allowing key actors and expertise to define common terms and set the stage for later
debate. As policy areas stabilize, new actors find less access to the debate towards their favor.
A positive feedback loop accelerates, where those within the policy community gain
disproportionately more influence than those outside, cloistering and insulating the network from
external actors. Eventually, laypersons become reliant on those within the policy network for
guidance on what to build and how. Most studies uncover the end-product of this evolution: a
relatively stable policy network. Baumgartner, et al, approached nearly 100 policy areas as
debated in Congress over four years, concluding that established interests exist in most policy
areas. Nearly every issue covered involves policy discussions that have matured and stabilized

\textsuperscript{358} Bosso, Christopher J. 2005. \textit{Environment, Inc.: From Grassroots to Beltway}. University
Press of Kansas.
Hollow Core: Private Interests in National Policy Making}. Harvard University Press.
into small groups of actors, similar to Heclo’s policy network or Sabatier’s advocacy coalition. The status quo often enjoys disproportionate support; when conflict emerges, it is typically easy to boil down into a one- or two-sided debate.

In the beginning, however, a chaotic debate coincides with the emergence of new policy areas on the agenda. Whether through the continued efforts by individual advocates, dubbed policy entrepreneurs, or by high profile, attention-grabbing events, new areas of debate enter the public discourse. Kingdon notes that crises present windows of opportunity for policy entrepreneurs; a sentiment echoed by Rahm Emanuel’s advice to “never want a serious crisis to go to waste.” When a salient (usually economic or social) problem presents itself, advocates spring into action. Kingdon’s primeval policy soup creates a vivid image for the resulting process. At the dawn of a debate, any and all actors are able to throw ideas, potential solutions, and critiques into the policy hopper. Currently, municipal influence in education – especially through the revitalization lens – fits this bill.

Eventually collisions, conflict, and combinations of suggestions mutate the debate into a simpler battle among coalitions. Baumgartner, et al, focus on a peculiar issue in the late 2000s, regulating the Internet prescription drug market. At the time, researchers identified seven “sides” to the policy issue. This immature issue appeared chaotic compared to more stable issues with longer tenure on the agenda. Without consensus behind a policy – much less the terms of debate – Congress remained unwilling to act. Although the sides remained fragmented, two

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larger coalitions appeared headed towards alignment, based on the support or opposition to online pharmacies. Assuming that the sides continue to gelatinize into two sides, it appears that new issues on the agenda mature into the expected one- or two-sided debate relatively quickly, likely based on assembled pro- or anti-lenses.

With a constant terminology in place, an advocacy coalition or policy network can emerge. Sabatier argues that a relatively stable set of social and legal parameters foster a policy subsystem. These relatively insulated groups of actors seek to influence government policies that share similar belief systems and terminology. General agreement about terms, definitions, and causal mechanisms often lead to a consensus in policy choices. In many cases, advocates for change attempt to reframe the debate by introducing new outlooks for an agenda – often to no avail. Baumgartner, et al, find that competition for attention, strongly established frameworks for understanding the issue, and actions by status quo supporters usually undermine the attempted insurgency. The view that arenas for professional sports teams produce downtown vitality fit in this phase, as a common series of beliefs exist that influence local policy choices: public subsidy for the private sports cartel.

Support for broad sides within a policy coalition eventually splinters into specialized niches. McAdam chronicles the rise, preeminence, and decline of the civil rights movement. After decades of attempting to reframe key issues into friendly terms, a coalition of major civil

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363 See issue 44 in the appendix.

rights leaders was able to coordinate and demonstrate political strength. Bosso discovers a similar trend within the environmentalist movement. Although the Sierra Club and Greenpeace avow similar tenets underneath the environmentalist umbrella, the specific tactics of each organization differ. As a policy network matures, the specificity of issues and subissues proliferates. This opens the door to new audiences for advocates to represent – and in turn carve new niches within the larger movement. Over time, groups and subgroups formed their own smaller groups, creating competition that reduces peak organizations’ ability to recruit resources. This process hollows out the core groups, fractionalizing (and arguably stymying) the larger movement. The convention centers network reveals this specialization for each aspect of the meeting industry.

Taken together, policy systems evolve and mature over time. In the beginning, a policy entrepreneur or socioeconomic change places an issue on the agenda. If sustained, a policy area emerges. Almost immediately, the primordial policy soup boils, with ideas from all potential angles on the table. A dominant frame emerges, filtering technically feasible ideas that match the dominant viewpoint’s values. The number of sides on an issue dwindles to either a dual-coalition debate or a single-issue “subgovernment”, similar to the much ballyhooed iron triangles and islands of powers from the mid-twentieth century. Those in the policy community specialize, create jargon, and reinforce barriers to enter the debate.

Replicating the Replica City’s Tactics: Fusion Referendums

Oklahoma City is neither alone in its revitalization tactics, nor its strategy of using single slates to raise resources. Birmingham, Alabama, and El Paso, Texas, have all attempted using a single tax to underwrite multiple infrastructure projects. Birmingham voters shot down their 1998 proposal amid public complaints. El Paso voters approved $500 million in projects in 2012 for a package of entertainment infrastructure similar to Oklahoma City’s in 1993. In each of these cases, cities hired consultants to help determine and package revitalization programs into a single brand, guiding a political campaign to raise new resources for the leaders’ newfound wish list. Oklahoma City’s MAPs consultant, Rick Horrow, has led a wide array of these programs across the country, including Birmingham and El Paso.

Birmingham, Alabama

During the 1980s, Birmingham was a quasi-major league city. Birmingham hosted a franchise for the upstart United States Football League, an attempt by several investors to build a rival brand to the National Football League. Birmingham’s Legion Field hosted the team until the league collapsed in 1986. Several sunbelt cities lost their only major league teams; over the next decade, Birmingham watched its peers reachieve major league status. Jacksonville and Tampa both gained NFL franchises. Memphis temporarily housed the Houston Oilers while they transitioned into Nashville’s Tennessee Titans. Yet Birmingham never returned to the regained big league status.

Birmingham’s leaders contacted Oklahoma City’s MAPs consultant in chief to guide a similar program in Jefferson County, including a major expansion to the local convention center: an NFL class domed stadium. Inspired by Replica City’s overhaul and consultant’s guidance to
build a domed stadium, Birmingham anted up to regain a professional football franchise.

Birmingham housed a short-lived franchise in the United States Football League, a legitimate challenge to the National Football League’s dominance. Using Horrow’s Oklahoma City’s MAPs formula, Birmingham leaders proposed a one-cent sales tax to build a slate of projects. Nearly one half of the money would go to the domed football stadium. Other projects included logroll amendments, from money for the schools throughout the county, public safety funds, a zoo expansion, walking trails, cultural projects, and historical preservation. Voters turned down the tax, and only a handful of projects have come to fruition through clandestine funding measures.

Since the “Metropolitan Area Projects Strategy” initiative failed, Birmingham has recycled programs similar to Oklahoma City’s efforts. Railroad Park and a new minor league baseball park is Birmingham’s downtown park intended to anchor a tourist district – following roughly the same plan as Oklahoma City’s Bricktown. A later plan mirrors MAPs 4 Kids: Region 2020 was an attempt to overhaul the Birmingham schools, including curricular and infrastructural programming. More recently, Birmingham has commissioned a major convention center engineering firm to expand their convention center in conjunction with a new multipurpose indoor stadium.

El Paso, Texas

El Paso presents a repetition on the theme, although at a smaller level. Instead of attempting to stake a claim as a “big league city”, El Paso openly wants to transition from a AA town to a

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fully-fledged AAA city. Seeking to move up within the hierarchy of American sports, the city contacted experts to advise where to place a new stadium. Following the canon, consultants suggested a downtown site near the convention center. Seeking the synergy from an entertainment district found in benchmark cities such as Memphis, Albuquerque, Las Vegas, and Oklahoma City, El Paso leaders jumped at the opportunity to raise their status.\(^{371}\)

Nearly twenty years after Oklahoma City voters approved the Metropolitan Area Projects, El Paso contacted Oklahoma City’s chief consultant behind the MAPs program. In 2012, El Paso voters passed $470 million in bonds to build a slate of quality of life projects aimed at economic revitalization. Additions to the property tax will increase the millage rate by 4.1 cents, roughly a two percent increase. El Paso’s Proposition 1 and Proposition 2 promise to build several cultural and recreation facilities, with attractions ranging from new museums to a cultural heritage center in 2013.\(^{372}\) El Paso voters also approved an increased hotel tax to build a new minor league baseball park. Taken together, these attractions aim to convert part of El Paso’s downtown district into a leisure bubble and move the city up within the urban hierarchy.

*The Political Consultant Component*

Urban revitalization is a political action. Political consultants emerge to help politicians garner support for political actions. Just as consultants can guide candidates through specific aspects of campaigns (branding, ground game, spin control, polling, marketing, policy research, data analysis, plumbing), a niche industry has emerged around branding urban revitalization

\(^{371}\) Major league cities were included in El Paso’s published analysis when promoting a AAA ballpark.


programs. Some consultants run independent shops, like Horrow above. Other specialty shops find themselves attached to niche projects. Companies like Convention Sports & Leisure provide information for local leaders to cite as grounds for building certain projects – justifying tactics to meet a planning goal.

**Oklahoma City: MAPs 4?**

Oklahoma City’s current trajectory appears headed toward pursuing a fixed-rail mass transit system. Oklahoma City’s MAPs 3 temporary sales tax expires in December 2017. In previous iterations, readily available goals framed large slates of projects. Municipal leaders elected in March 2014 will reign through this deadline, and they will likely shape the next rendition of the urban revitalization initiative. Future efforts will likely focus on integrating into the national economy and carving a role in the international marketplace. This plan links several neighboring residential districts to the main entertainment and employment hubs, following the prescription defined by new urbanist intellectuals.\(^{373}\) Combined with an investment in branding neighborhoods and infrastructure spanning residential areas, this approach focuses on improving the local quality of life with many small investments connected with expensive rail service. Not all of these ingredients mix smoothly. Three major thrusts identified throughout urban commentary appear as emerging as priorities for MAPs 4. First, cultivating and capturing human capital into a highly productive work force would create an economic advantage for increasingly mobile capital. Second, investments in scaffolding for small and technical businesses with infrastructure and subsidies can buttress the labor advantage strategy. Finally, investments to


incite diverse urban subcultures among neighborhoods through strategically placed anchor attractions and cultural amenities. These broad strategies will likely include several small tactics to implement the big ideas.

*Mass Transit and Streetcar Expansion*

Oklahoma City’s MAPs 3 provides seed money to redevelop the Replica City’s mass transit system beyond busses. Various public outreach initiatives suggest that streetcars will be the next big project for Oklahoma City. MAPs 3’s management team elected to implement a streetcar plan that connects Bricktown, the Central Business District, the Oklahoma City (Bombing) National Memorial, and the adjacent residential districts in Midtown and Deep Deuce.\(^{374}\)

Oklahoma City plans to roll the new streetcars out in two phases.

Oklahoma City’s current streetcar plan includes a currently unfunded extension into neighboring districts, indicating an expanded vision for the streetcar system.\(^{375}\) Previous MAPs programs have produced overlap, and MAPs 4 will likely underwrite transit. Notably, the first phase of MAPs 3’s transit component will be ready near the sales tax’s sunset. MAPs 4 is among the easiest options to raise revenue for potential expansions, given the political brand’s popularity and ability to generate revenue.

Expanding the streetcar network aligns with Oklahoma City’s infatuation with New Urbanist principles. Oklahoma City commissioned prominent New Urbanist Jeff Speck to analyze the central business district’s walkability, a key cornerstone to the movement. By connect major job centers to nearby neighborhoods, Oklahoma City could apply Duany and

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Plater-Zyberk’s theory to foster clusters of development around transit stops. Recent branding of various neighborhoods and districts reinforces this trend toward local pods, each of which are discussed below.

**Midtown, Deep Deuce, and Downtown Residential Development**

Similar to commercial anchor attractions in Bricktown and the Adventure District, infrastructure can serve as residential attractions. Recent research by the National Association of Realtors finds that those moving to a central city value the neighborhood quality, convenient access to work, affordability, neighborhood design, access to friends, access to entertainment, shopping and recreation, and access to public transportation. A majority of families with children indicate that access to and the quality of schools are influential. Oklahoma City’s investment in its downtown appears to pursue each of these objectives.

Transit is the foundation for easy access to work, services, and amenities. Following the logic above, streetcars could provide easy access to job centers. Beyond mass transit, Oklahoma City implemented Project 180, a streetscape program aimed at making the central business district more walkable. Designated bicycle corridors – connecting nearby neighborhoods with the central business district – paired with pedestrian initiatives to provide alternatives to autos, at least for those within walking distance.

Continued investment in the area’s entertainment districts provide the entertainment, recreation, and private amenities desired. Oklahoma City’s investment in its high arts district

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mirrors the phenomenon highlighted by Strom, where the arts community coordinates with local political and philanthropic leaders to subsidize amenities. The promised spillover effects include a higher quality of life and an anchor attraction for those seeking access to high arts.

Finally, education will likely remain a priority for targeted parts of downtown Oklahoma City. Rex Elementary School serves as an anchor for young families seeking (perceived) quality education. Eventually, other revitalization-friendly educational facilities – including additional exclusive schools – will be required to solidify these gains. Rex Elementary creates a precedent: de facto exclusive enrollment policies designed to capture only revitalized residential districts, encouraging residential gentrification with both private and Oklahoma City Public Schools resources. Eventually, these students will head to high school, which may inspire an investment in more seats at the city’s exclusive magnet school system. Currently, Oklahoma City Public Schools’ Classen School of Advanced Studies is the central city school district’s most prominent exclusive school. An expansion or additional campus may be necessary to meet additional demand.

_Disconnected Areas: Plaza District, Classen Curve and Capitol_

A fledgling neo-Bohemian community has emerged approximately two miles west of the central business district and adjacent Midtown neighborhood. With easy access to two interstates and a retrofitted boulevard streetscape, the Plaza District is a rapidly growing alternative for Richard Florida’s creative class to live and create commerce. Four miles northwest of downtown, the Classen Curve shopping development aims to attract high end shopping. Adjacent to the

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378 Strom, Elizabeth. "Converting Pork into Porcelain: Cultural Institutions and Downtown Development” _Urban Affairs Review_ (38:3)
Chesapeake Energy headquarters campus and nearby wealthy enclosed suburb Nichols Hills, the posh shopping district lies along a boulevard that formerly contained a streetcar line. Shopping within the complex targets high income families, providing a venue for wealthy-friendly private amenities.

The state capitol and Oklahoma University Health Sciences Center lie one mile northeast of downtown. The surrounding capitol complex has added several new attractions, including the state history museum. Farther south, the city’s first tax increment financing district has subsidized an extensive medical treatment and research agglomeration. Anchored by the University of Oklahoma’s medical school and multiple hospitals, the district is one of the metropolitan areas’ largest employers. Recent investments in nearby infrastructure have spruced the nearby neighborhoods, refurbishing some of the city’s oldest residential areas.

Each of these districts conceivably fulfill different cultural tastes for residents, but are separated from the city’s downtown hub. Relatively short commute times provide ease of access to downtown, but these districts are likely as future targets for fixed rail mass transit expansion. The logic seems to mirror new urbanist arguments that mass transit stops can serve as loci for neighborhoods, instilling both community and commerce to neighborhoods.380

**Maintaining Momentum in Bricktown**

To increase commercial balance in the Bricktown area, Oklahoma City may consider building an anchor on the eastern parts of the district. Currently, western Bricktown enjoys the most traffic, with easy access to the convention center, arena, and baseball park. Eastern Bricktown remains underdeveloped, with large swaths of asphalt parking lots and fields awaiting commercial

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development. A new anchor to the east of Bricktown could even the commercial distribution. MAPs 3 allocated resources for outdoor recreation, including a whitewater kayaking facility, while local corporate sponsors have developed world-class rowing facilities along the waterfront. An eastern anchor attraction could come in several forms. Some combination of the canon projects will likely be placed on the radar. New professional sports facilities, exposition space, museums, performance arts facilities, or other downtown attractions could headline MAPs 4 as a way to keep Bricktown’s momentum going.

**Bikeable, Walkable City**

Bicyclists and pedestrians complement the mass transit arguments made in new urbanist literature. By creating cocooned corridors, city planners can facilitate pedestrian and bicycle traffic, which in turn can increase local commerce. As discussed at length in Chapter 8, the power over place allows local leaders to manipulate foot traffic towards or automobile traffic away from small-scale commerce between anchor attractions. Walkability and bikability rely on similar principles: a corridor along which to travel, physical protection from automobile traffic, diversity of travel (not going to sameness, through sameness, from sameness), and access to origins and destinations. Shorter city blocks contribute to these phenomena, because they reduce the need for “curb cuts” (times that cars turn off of streets into driveways or alleys), introduce new buildings more frequently at the end of each block, and provide options and access to new paths.

Oklahoma City engaged a walkability study to help synergize the emerging residential gentrification near the Bricktown district. Speck proposed several revisions, ranging from street

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parking to two-way streets.\textsuperscript{382} Oklahoma City answered these proposals with a comprehensive restriping of downtown streets aimed at increasing walkability. Similarly, Oklahoma City’s Project 180 and other reconfiguring campaigns have expanded the city’s bicycle lane network. No bike lanes are “protected” – provide a physical barrier between auto and cycle traffic – but the network tentatively connects the districts mentioned above to the central business and entertainment districts.

By closing city streets to build “superblocks”, Oklahoma City has directly impeded the area’s walkability. Large convention centers, expansive parks (with walking paths far from the perceived safety of buildings), and new arenas create superblocks, resulting in an uncomfortable walk or bike ride reduce traffic, ironically undercutting the announced goals of larger plans – or the lifeblood of capturing economic spillovers and the point thesis driving downtown investment.

\textbf{Future Work}

In 1889, homesteaders in Oklahoma City closed the American frontier. In 2015, research approaching Oklahoma City hopes to kick open the door to new frontiers in political science. The preceding discussion opens the door for future research in several directions. First, strengthening the argument above with more evidence is a straightforward priority. As with any research focusing heavily on a single case study, collecting more evidence from other cities can increase confidence in generalizability. Expanding case selection beyond the United States could also provide unique insights, particularly whether or not the vacuum created by a lack of federal urban policy contributes to the privileged position held by external experts.

\textsuperscript{382} Speck, Jeff. 2012. “Downtown Walkability Analysis and Recommendations.”
Second, future analysis could consider the different subnetworks associated with other parts of the standard package of amenities. The discussion above focused on the three largest expenditures by Oklahoma City’s MAPs programs: education infrastructure, indoor sports arenas, and convention centers. Other programs found on the MAPs menu include mass transit, outdoor stadiums, waterfronts, green spaces, libraries, health centers, and walking trails – each of which likely involve policy communities with unique wrinkles within the constellation of city building networks.

Third, pursuing a better understanding of how public infrastructure interacts would help flesh out the power over place’s potency. The short discussion above provides a cursory glance of how anchor attractions interact in leisure spaces. Future research could employ GIS technology and heavy quantitative resources to flesh out this highly qualitative argument. Further, other venues – including residential, non-leisure commercial, and industrial spaces – all remain viable avenues for future analysis.

Fourth, applying the analysis for urban agenda setting to other political theaters could provide valuable insights to other subfields. Perhaps the key finding in the study above is that local leaders have a limited understanding of the world, are willing to employ experts for advice, and that this relationship appears to produce a standard among cases. These traits can be found across several political worlds. Similar to their million-man brethren, many smaller communities face global challenges in the face of leaderships’ bounded understanding of the outside world. States and subnational governments face similar problems, despite their larger size. The largest departure from urban politics includes economic development programs pursued by nations on the global periphery. Similar to urban America, states often exist in a self-help world – both
militarily and economically; meanwhile, their leaders are often willing to listen to and implement advice from foreign experts.

Finally, replicating and refining the presented evidence is a necessary part of any research. Examining new segments of the standard package of amenities, tackling new metropolitan cases (both foreign and domestic), and reprising the analysis above is a welcomed part of the scientific process. This dissertation set out to expand the traditional boundaries of studying urban governance, specifically including actors beyond the city’s borders. Evidence produced in the study affirmed the hypotheses that a network of experts outside of cities influences the local agenda. More importantly, the dissertation above has opened a new window into urban politics that includes analyzing the organization of actors both within and outside of a city’s jurisdiction. This approach will hopefully prove valuable for researchers well into the foreseeable future.
This manuscript proceeds from two major goals. The first objective is to earn approval as a dissertation from five prominent scholars, each with a specific interest in related studies. The second goal is to produce work that is accessible to those outside of the academy. In order to accomplish these two goals, the work builds around the narrative rather than the homogenized expectations found in scholarly writing. This appendix aims to fill the absence of a dedicated methodology section.

The primary research question asks “What role do experts play in urban politics?” The dissertation relies on a bottom-up approach built around a single case study: Oklahoma City from 1990 through 2015. The primary hypothesis is that the role experts play has changed over time, and the contemporary model transfers agenda setting power from locally elected officials to consultants. The analysis focuses on three prominent issue areas (education, downtown arenas, and convention space), chosen based on Oklahoma City’s largest public expenditures for revitalization.

The argument assembles an extremely diverse set of documents obtained through archival research. No formal interviews occurred, however the author did conduct several informal discussions asking for assistance regarding data collection. Nearly all of these informal occurrences occurred via telephone and asked simple clarification questions about publicly accessible documents. In several cases, conversations produced a refined understanding about the issues covered throughout the manuscript. This work includes no quotes from these impromptu, quasi-interviews to protect confidentiality concerns. Nonetheless, these interactions played a role in building an accurate portrayal of Oklahoma City's politics.
Early chapters engage a literature review camouflaged within a larger narrative. When synthesized, chapters two and three are essentially a literature review, although care is taken to keep the discussion grounded in details from Oklahoma City. The text uses publicly available documents (newspapers, municipal reports, broadcast interviews) to tell the story of Oklahoma City. This narrative serves as a foil for contemporary theoretical discussions in urban politics—especially concerning local leadership. The work uses footnotes to keep the reader’s focus on the narrative, rather than engaging non-germane debates over specific definitions and reciting a laundry list of essential citations. Some additional theories enter the discussion later in the work to explain specific nuances to the discussion; the dissertation places these arguments within the narrative to maximize readability.

Chapters four through seven focus on Oklahoma City as a single-case study, although related evidence from other cities garnishes the analysis. Information from other cases helps to explain the context for decisions made in Oklahoma City. For example, the acquisition and transformation of the Supersonics into the Oklahoma City Thunder is incomplete unless considering Seattle’s perspective. The work cites publicly available documents, local history texts, and scholarly work to collect evidence regarding Oklahoma City and related cases. Oklahoma City provides a uniquely transparent public discussion about its revitalization efforts. Most public documents are easily accessible online, either through the city’s website or through the shortened link attached to citations. Various news sources move the narrative, although the discussion relies on the *Oklahoman*, Oklahoma City’s paper of record. Finally, other scholars have investigated related topics; this manuscript references these articles, books, theses and dissertations for their content. In several cases, the narrative references tables of data or maps. Tables present evidence from central cities in metropolitan areas with over one million
residents; this information aims to alleviate generalizability concerns due to a single case approach. Maps are edited from Google Earth. Maps provide visual evidence about geographic trends. For instance, the relationship between Oklahoma City’s downtown residential revitalization efforts coincide with a new elementary school’s enrollment boundaries; this relationship is most easily viewed through a map.

Chapter eight pivots the discussion to the focus on place and the power retained by local officials. The effort samples eight commercial districts: two in Oklahoma City, three from cities with the largest leisure and hospitality industries, and three from cities with the smallest leisure and hospitality industries. The work simultaneously uses the most-different and most-similar case selection approaches in order to develop hypotheses about economic revitalization. The narrative shifts to geographic analysis, specifically to examine the relationship between publicly funded attractions and private investment. All maps use Google Earth software and are used under fair use provisions as per Google’s terms of service.

Finally, chapter nine attempts to reprise the theoretical impacts of the research collected while identifying potential pitfalls subject to the analysis. The narrative concludes by synthesizing the information collected into the theories established by previous authors. The work ends by pointing towards new routes for future research.
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