PROCESS, STRUCTURE AND USE
OF URBAN AND CITY CENTERS
IN COLUMBUS, OHIO

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

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June 2001
PROCESS, STRUCTURE AND USE
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BY

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Notes
Introduction

Where in a city’s neighborhoods and communities can authenticity be found? Why be concerned about the authentic in the human built realm? This thesis will address these questions using Columbus, Ohio, as a case study. Columbus is a state capital, and an economic, cultural and social center both to those living within its Metropolitan Statistical Area and those visiting the city. Columbus became the basis for this project because I grew up in a suburb on the capital’s urban fringes. Being familiar with the city, I realized that some places were comforting to visit while others did not feel so inviting. A walk could produce friendly surroundings, homes close to the sidewalk, flowerpots, and street life, while some streets, too wide and isolated, appeared empty and hostile. I felt most at ease in the places a community’s presence in person and through caretaking was most evident. I wanted to determine why, in the same city, situations, as displayed in the organization of centers, vary with time and space.

How does an authentic city center appear? This seems to suggest two related questions: How does an authentic center come into being? What qualities dominate the structural organization of space? Or rather, what is the process of creation, who participates and in what form? And what is the structural organization of space produced by that process? Finally, I will address a third question critical to accessing authenticity. What are the uses within structures? For purposes here, authenticity will be closely associated with local citizen involvement in the process, as I will explain shortly.

Processes establish urban and city centers, which serve citizens and may or may not represent the attached community. One thing to consider is that city centers differ
depending upon both intended and actual uses engaged by officials, developers or citizens more generally. Meaning and use often are mutual factors within a center; for example, a center without a mix of uses implies that its producers did not consider diversity crucial to its success. In order to identify the meanings implied in building urban forms, it is important to understand the larger cultural context, the actors who conceived centers, the population that centers were designed to serve, and the population who actually used these centers.

Those processes involved in creating the structural organizations of space as embodied in centers can be understood as: technocratic (government), corporate (business), bottom-up (individual) and authentic (community). While not exclusive to these key city participants in Columbus, I found that the processes convened by them are typical of decision-making methods. While technocratic, corporate, and to a certain extent, bottom-up include what some would consider official participants, the bottom-up and an authentic process emphasize vernacular intentions. The resulting structures, while reached through differentiating processes, can end up being either unique or similar to one another. Still, the first three all pose threats to authenticity—even bottom-up; for within its process, participation, a necessity for authenticity, may not be truly inclusive.

The central question of this thesis is how does a government, business or citizen construct a city center symbolic of their intentions, and how might a local community’s intentions be realized authentically? Centers comprise both structure and use. There are competing understandings of centers in the literature on which I draw. Sennett defines centers as spaces of recognition, but whether he means structure or use is not at all clear.
Emphasizing the structural aspect of centers, Alexander finds that neighborhood centers tend to locate closest to the larger town’s center.\textsuperscript{4} Duany and Plater-Zyberk believe the center to be a place of public use including open space such as a commons.\textsuperscript{5} Many members of the architectural and planning movement they helped to establish, the Congress for the New Urbanism, share their conclusion. Others tend to be mixed in their assessments. Calthorpe leans heavily toward a mix of uses as a necessity in a center and conceives of a structural element in that they are “focal points and destinations… They gather together neighborhoods and local communities into the social and economic building blocks of the region.”\textsuperscript{6} Drawing on a number of these definitions of centers, this work proceeds from the view that a center should represent the place-bound resident community through the spatial organization of structure and use at their highest intensities within that community; this is not always the case.\textsuperscript{7} If centers are to be viewed as transparent urban expressions of purpose, then reviewing the process of Columbus’ historical development may suggest the degree of influence on the part of local communities and their ability to cohesively realize their intentions in built form. A study of these processes is a starting point for assessing authenticity.

Assessing the authenticity of centers requires acknowledging the distinction between types of centers. The first is an urban center signifying the place aspect regardless of purposes or intentions determined by citizens. The second is a city center, which denotes a heightened amalgam of inter-related interests honed by individuals and possibly shared by communities alike. People denote urban and city centers for a number of reasons and interpret them in as many different ways. Since urban implies place (from
Latin word *urbis*), we are able to distinguish between various centers in Columbus. All centers can be considered urban, but not all centers should be thought of as city centers. \(^8\)

Though people did designate centers of city and urban origins, only those that could not exist without citizens will be considered city-oriented; in this work, most are city centers. Cultivation by citizens transforms a place from urban to city. Without place-bound alterations or citizen connections, a place remains an urban distinction based solely on location. This differentiation is most noticeable with the establishment of the state capital.

The term city denotes a phenomenon more than a location. For Kennedy, “a city was a consequence of a purpose…where a large number of citizens congregated...”\(^9\) I take a step further in addressing Columbus: centers built paying minimal respect to the citizens living within an urban place should be considered city and not authentic centers. An authentic center has no singular intention, but rather a multiplicity of such. Of course, the intentions within centers are not always transparent, but the processes involved determine the degrees of commonality and of authenticity. For authenticity to occur, the process must be participatory with each resident presenting his competing interests. When this process is not adhered to, competing intentions do not produce consensus. The extent to which one intention dominates others would be difficult to resolve, and rarely would that intention be a community intention. And for the participatory process to be fully achieved, the individual must not present him or herself as simply one dimensional, as strictly a consumer for instance. Rather the process must recognize that all residents are simultaneously consumers and producers, citizens and family members. The process must provide the opportunity for residents to express needs and interests as they arise out
of this complex of relational identities. Therefore, authenticity can be considered a standard to approximate the intensity and the extent to which individuals within a specific place participate and direct the process of creation.

To clarify and defend the attention paid to these variables of centers, each chapter lays out processes and participants in these processes. Chapter one charts the government’s development of the capital over time. Next, chapter two discusses the corporately created centers of commerce in the second half of the twentieth century. Chapter three shifts to a more authentic center through analyzing revitalization efforts on the part of individuals within the city’s historic villages; and chapter four concludes with an authentication process, in which those who live in an area participate to create the center’s form. The resultant structures and uses reviewed in the first three chapters are useful in questioning how an authentic process might produce different results.

This thesis strives to present these concepts in an accessible and brief form with an eye toward the encouragement of activism. Therefore, I do not hold a critique until the conclusion, but rather I remain both critical and engaged throughout the analysis. By calling attention to the significant role of process—over strictly structures or uses—in facilitating authentic centers, I hope to facilitate additional participation in the city’s future, or at least, spur the prospect for a unique, though long-off city experience.
CHAPTER ONE

Government overlays

Introduction

Government has played significant roles establishing urban and city centers throughout Columbus’ history. At the capital’s founding, decisions of legislators and executives steered process, structure and use. From stability in pressing times to ease of city life, urban and city centers owe their existence to government guidance. Technocratic decisions transformed Columbus from a physical location to a phenomenon, a site to a social situation. In the first section of this chapter, I lay out the planning processes instigated by governing bodies. I organize this chapter in terms of historical and contemporary periods examining the process of planning, the structural organization of space produced by the process and the actual versus intended patterns of use. These all interrelate and affect the development of Columbus’ city centers.

Historical development of technocratic process

Columbus as the State Capital

For a time, Columbus existed only in the imaginations of former Virginians. As early as 1810, the Ohio General Assembly had deemed it necessary to locate a permanent site for the capital. Residents of all corners of the thinly populated state believed their region worthy of the recognition. A bidding battle divided state legislators.

In the thick of the negotiations was Lucas Sullivant who had founded and platted Franklinton, locating the settlement at the eastern edge of the Virginia Military District. Though the original site lay closer to the Olentangy River’s junction with the Scioto
River, Sullivant moved the settlement a hundred yards west to avoid repeating the torment triggered by a flood only a year after its founding. When Sullivant and a delegation from Franklinton entertained commissioners appointed to select a permanent capital early in the process, their hopes were dashed as the commissioners balked at the idea of placing a capital in a flood-prone area. However, the legislators had agreed to locate the site near a navigable river and the state’s geographic center. A center in this instance is merely an urban distinction; whereas, the places near the geographic center that legislators favored, Dublin and Delaware, both found upstream from Franklinton, can be considered city distinctions thanks to the cultivation of the land by citizens. However, Dublin’s Sellers brothers were only able to muster three hundred acres and the houses already built on the property. Delaware offered: “a state house, an office for the auditor, secretary, and treasurer” on over four thousand acres. Apparently momentum shifted back toward a few Franklinton settlers who held land across the Scioto.

Franklinton, no longer a possibility as capital, witnessed another proposal develop upon the high bank east of the Scioto. A prosperous group on the river’s west side hoped to reap financial success by persuading legislators of the viability of their location. One member of the General Assembly and the Franklinton lot had long been convinced: Joseph Foos, who represented Franklin, Madison and Delaware Counties, including the landholders on the high bank. Together they offered 1,200 acres for the new capital—forty acres reserved to the state. They also promised “to lay out the town, to convey ten acres of land to the state for a public square and state house and ten acres for a penitentiary, and erect buildings to the legislature’s specifications. If the buildings’
combined worth did not total $50,000, then the men would make up the difference. A month after the proposal’s delivery to the Assembly, legislators settled on the high bank as capital to Ohio—the third designation in nine years of statehood. Once the state buildings were in place, the General Assembly would leave the former capital, Chillicothe, behind.

What troubled some legislators in the House was not only the size of the deal, but the excessive lobbying. Thomas G. Jones of Trumball County led the protest of twelve representatives against the final decision, which they believed to disregard the earlier consensus. They felt “due regard should have been paid to geographical centre [sic] and to the probable future centre of population,” which, in fact, the General Assembly had agreed upon. These legislators preferred Delaware because of its proximity to the center of the state and the unlikelihood of flood, while commissioners favored Dublin or Lancaster. The questions arising from their disagreement dealt with the process, specifically with the heavy-handed lobbying by senators. Had the House been duped after commissioners failed to officially select a site? Why was the public not allowed to participate in the debate? Before answers became available, the representatives ended their squabble over the deal. The immediate gain to a new state overwhelmed the twelve representatives’ protest. By electing to select a site without a pre-established settlement, legislators were free to design as they pleased, without being accountable to townspeople, as they would have if a community had been in place.

Subsequently, residents of Franklinton looked on as the new capital arose on the opposite side of the river. The costs to the town’s future were not immediately apparent;
in the beginning, Franklinton benefited from business before Columbus grew populous and competitive. Those who benefited most immediately were the proposition’s stakeholders, men who held land on the east bank. Senator Foos ran a ferry service and other residents had bought cheap land. The location for the permanent capital lay squarely in the Refugee Tract (1798) allotted to Canadian Revolutionary War sympathizers. Once the Nova Scotians and veterans accepted or declined patents, obtainable due to their services to the country, the government opened the remainder of the land for public purchase. Accordingly, the participation on the part of the gentlemen from Franklinton in land speculation on the Scioto’s east bank paid off.

Site and situation influenced the legislature’s conceptions of the center. Hunker, a geographer at Ohio State University, utilizes these terms in presenting his understanding of the state’s decision. “If situation is a relative concept—that is, a relationship between places [or sometimes, as perhaps the case for Columbus, between parties’ monetary offers.]—site is an absolute concept, highly specific and unique in that it deals with the physical characteristics of a single place.”¹⁴ For purposes of this study, situation could be understood as a phenomenon. The relationship between entities or people transformed the high bank from a location or site—covered with mainly old growth beech, maple, oak and hickory trees, and deep ravines that ran their courses through the site to the Scioto—into a settlement magnet providing means to administer and govern a state.¹⁵ The structure technocrats envisioned was an empty and flat site—without a situational history. Features at the site, other than a navigable river, did not affect the original street plans in the least. However, the site’s characteristics of place, its natural attributes, would
unavoidably shape its situational reality as a planned capital. While legislators awaited their city, attributes of the site became less abstract as the construction of the capital began.

Tree stumps remained in the roads long after these Central Low Plains were overlaid with a street grid. The streets bisected one another at right angles as envisioned by Joel Wright. Though not a town planner or architect but, like Sullivant, a surveyor, Wright was named director to the town. His grid honored the existing grid of Franklinton across the river with intent to bridge their main streets once funds were available. Legislators also charged Wright with designating sites for the Capital Square and penitentiary. Development of the remaining lots depended upon independent buyers.

The grid enclosing relatively equally sized lots allowed an orderly dispersal of the property. At nation building, this strategy symbolized the independent urges of individuals. A single buyer could purchase a square property, and then if he pleased, subdivide the property into smaller parcels. However, as noted above, features found on site mattered little. Denying complexity and difference, the grid was a way to neutralize the environment. "The grid was primarily concerned with the squares of private property that lay within the gradients, not with the gradients themselves, or how the two related with one another." The community, symbolized in this organization of space, was little more than the aggregation of private individuals. A public realm defined by streets and places was clearly a marginal priority.

This rational method of land dispersal dominated frontier development thanks in part to its advantaged economy. There existed a stable predictability of street numbering
and intersecting that could be reassuring in an as yet untamed wilderness surrounding settlements. In the grid’s simplicity, an immediate order—the identical dissecting of lots appearing equal to original landholders (prior to subsequent land subdivision resulting in inequality)—could be established. The replication of this street pattern throughout American communities represented a commitment to “democratic and accessible openness.” Administratively beneficial, a site shown on a map alongside equally proportioned plots did not require actual viewing to be purchased, simplifying growth from within the nation and abroad. A critic would find it hard to disagree with the grid’s abstract appeal to geometric simplicity, apparent neutrality, and democracy. But practically, ignorance of terrain, under-appreciation of a place’s aesthetic qualities, and lack of centrality were common criticisms, as were suspected self-serving motives by way of land speculation. The repetitive nature of the grid “spawned towns composed of blocks unmodified by devices of civic art, checkerboard towns without visible centers, open spaces, odd little corners, or places set aside for the public’s enjoyment.” On most occasions, planners had little foreknowledge of soon-to-be-residents or their needs. The grid allowed them to anticipate and accommodate change. The gridiron also posed a practical solution to massive expansion. It tolerated the easy absorption of growth through extension of the street pattern without applying too heavy an authoritative hand in the process.

Instead of a center that could be passively viewed along a thoroughfare, Wright designated the capital between the northern and southern boundaries within a block a few streets east of the Scioto River. Capital Square would have to be actively viewed; to
notice the capital, the onlooker must turn attention to the interior of the block framed by High and Broad Streets, the two main axes. Built by the Franklinton proprietors, it loomed in the center of a cleared area now containing a dozen or so century-old trees. The capitol was developed as planned and is a good example of Georgian architecture in Ohio. The skyscrapers that envelop the site are held a satisfactory distance back by the wide streets so as not to crowd the grounds. Private lots have always surrounded Capital Square; today, two government towers are found alongside the skyscrapers. The majority of city and state buildings were positioned closer to the river, near Front Street. The river stops the buildings from marching onward, an impediment to further expansion.

After Wright laid the grid, settlement could occur relatively unregulated in the nineteenth century. Though he could designate the few public places, he could not control the development of the lots. To provide for the town’s survival in the early years, a mix of uses came into being thanks to adventurous settlers. A tavern, general store, lodgings and individual homes were the first to be built on the high bank. Clay from ancient architecture in the area—nearby American Indian mounds—was used in buildings. The capitol building did not reach completion until almost mid-century, but already the community, for the most part, had sprung to life in and around Capital Square along High and Broad Streets. While these uses adjacent to the square varied and ultimately changed year after year, Capital Square as center to the state’s administration remained unchanged, and in fact, only intensified.
The 1908 plan

The 1812 foundation of the eventual city reflected mixed intentions from the outset. Though civic leaders desired it, almost a century of growth in population and businesses left a profound imprint on the area. Something needed to be done to humanize the city landscape. In 1907 the city addressed some key urban problems. To deal with the effects of a transportation structure that facilitated a residential dispersal some distance from the downtown core, Columbus City Council compiled a planning commission consisting of architects, a civic advisor and a sculptor, all specialists from the East Coast; no citizens were included in the process. Within a year, the commission presented a plan of significant departure from the city’s current growth patterns.

Significantly affecting the city’s development at the dawn of the twentieth century, many influential transportation innovations had occurred since the capital reached city status in 1834. First, the U.S. Congress called for the extension of the National Road from Cumberland, Maryland, to Wheeling, West Virginia. By 1833, a year after cityhood, the National Road reached Columbus along the east to west thoroughfare Broad Street. The completion connected the city directly to the east coast, so that an increase of trade ushered in more commerce and people. Second, a feeder to the expansive Ohio-Erie Canal also allowed trade between the scattered rural towns along the Ohio River to Cleveland, and offered affordable travel to Columbus by European immigrants arriving in Cleveland’s port.

Another overland means of immigration to the land-locked capital was the railroad. At the time railroad companies were opting for a position in transporting city
dwellers, Columbus consisted of two square miles; however, by the latter half of the nineteenth century the city would quintuple in size as inter-city rail spread out in the four compass directions from the city’s core. Developments such as Victorian Village to the north, which were mainly residential except for commercial strips along vital thoroughfares, blossomed as upper middle class communities. Industries located in the South End degraded some of the area, but nonetheless, a vibrant German community had laid roots there. The city’s first parks came into being within these two areas that had been established along High Street. The National Road (Broad Street’s) enclaves spread to the horizons. Franklinton lies to the west. From a bird’s-eye-view the expanding city appeared as a “Maltese Cross.”

This narrative of the process of Columbus’ historical development provides the context for an analysis of structure and use. The pathways leading from the city’s core are considered structures in this work. The structure clearly designated their use as public thoroughfares. Structure and use may be two distinct terms, but within actual applications the two can be hard to differentiate. For instance, an absence of structure resulted in an absence of use in Columbus. The 1908 plan’s commission desired to close the gaps left behind by the railroads in the city, to no longer ignore the four pie-shaped areas without major public rights-of-way. The original intent at the creation of the commission was to determine a course of action in addressing the miniscule park system. Is a park a structure or is it a use within the structure of a block or district emphasizing a singular use? Often in this thesis, it is difficult to separate use and structure; so at times, the two terms appear mutually entangled within the same discussion.
Another differentiation is between intentional and actual. The participants of the process had intended to implement an expanded park system, but in actuality, whether it is a structure or use, implementation can be almost unrelated to original intent, as is the case with the 1908 plan. The commission’s all-encompassing design envisioned diagonal roads radiating out from the center that led to a parkway encircling the city three miles out. Neighborhood parks, sculptures and monuments would replace utility poles and their wires as landmarks. The effect would create a beautified city with utilized open space.

As the only major adoption of the 1908 plan, the riverfront received further improvement: In 1919, a linear park system edging the Olentangy River was begun. However, a nationally funded project far eclipsed the intent of 1908. In the mid-1960s’ emphasis on renewing the city, Interstates-70 and -71 substituted for the radial roads called for in the 1908 plan; a decade later, two circumferential freeways, innerbelt I-670 and outerbelt I-270 came to be the periphery parkways of a larger scale. Government took on a metropolitan outlook. This typifies the technocratic organizational scheme to provide more efficient travel into the city, while justifying the harm done to the communities in path of the interstates as losses for the greater good of the city and downtown businesses.

The regional quasi-governmental organization, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, oversaw the construction of the fifty-five mile long I-270 roughly ten miles in all directions from the downtown. The outerbelt made it possible to establish businesses outside the city’s main thoroughfares on a convenient transportation corridor to the country at large. These businesses did not desire the congestion of the central city,
but required the ease offered in interstate accessibility to all compass points. This allowed for the efficient automobile movement of goods and people in the region. Located along the outerbelt, numerous exits led to suburbs experiencing profound growth and the exits helped stimulate further development within the edges of Columbus. Regional specialists had intended the I-270 structure to be used as a shipping route, but actually it made leaving the city easier and assisted the process that contributed to suburban development. This continued to reorganize the city’s form—a process in practice for eighty years.

**City of Columbus: 1920-1970**

To combat the problems introduced by industry amongst residential areas, a planning commission in 1923 implemented the city’s first zoning codes. This commission intended for the codes’ segregation of uses to create a healthier city. However, since adoption, the codebook has swelled to nearly two hundred fifty pages of color-coded maps and symbols. Individual communities were altered for good by zonings policies. I did not find evidence to suggest that the city sought input from community members.

Zoning greatly affected use of city space. Its first ascribed alteration was the separation of uses within an area into distinct districts. Hence, by design a district contained an intensification of single uses. Examples of this are residential, commercial, and business, or recreational as in a park. While uses may still be mixed in a district, they remain predominantly one use. Therefore, the well-established neighborhoods nearest downtown were impacted the most from the new code. As mixed-use neighborhoods of residential districts stymied under oppressive zoning designations, their residents increasingly left for the new subdivisions, ordained separate in use at conception.
The codes did not come under review until 1950 after the appointment of the city’s first planning director since Joel Wright left the post a hundred years prior. Throughout the ensuing decade attempts were made to correct oversights from previous decades, namely the decentralization of activities caused by developments beyond city limits. Whereas zoning segregated uses into central districts of their own, the city as a whole experienced the exodus of businesses and residents from its downtown. Adding wind to the fire was a practice called annexation.

While Ohio’s early roots were primarily agrarian, it has with time become increasingly urban. Over eighty-percent of the state’s population lives in urban (as opposed to rural) areas in only twenty-seven counties. But for a few counties containing central cities, Metropolitan Statistical Areas are home to rural farmers and millions of suburban dwellers. Yet the predominant image of Ohio is substantially industrial. Land is still farmed extensively, but land farmed fifty years ago is not necessarily farmed today. Columbus knows this well.

Beginning in the 1950s under the direction of former Mayor Maynard D. Sensenbrenner, Columbus annexed surrounding land at a staggering rate rather than watch independent suburbs reap development on their own. Reaching beyond suburban areas to the hinterlands, the city now provides services for over two hundred square miles—a fivefold increase in the city’s size at the beginning of this period. In comparison, Cleveland and Cincinnati each consist of approximately seventy square miles. Annexations enticed by water and sewage allowances fueled home and road
building in prime agricultural lands. This movement further decentralized the city by encouraging growth on the outskirts through those infrastructure incentives.

The initiative protected and still cushions Columbus from losing investment to independent suburbs. Whereas Cincinnati and Cleveland were politically landlocked, in part, due to powerful suburbs, the capital city captures the unincorporated pockets where growth in business, industry and residential properties located. Therefore, the suburban tax base contributes to the city’s accounts, yet the extension of city services requires an increased budget. Annexation begins a cycle of costs without a clear end, as services must be balanced with taxes. During Sensenbrenner’s revered reign, annexation turned out to be a sound policy because more and more people were moving into the suburbs. However, the policy also focuses development outside the central city and stretches resources, until the city, already the seat of the state, requires a large managerial staff to keep the services running. This catch-22 does prevent the city from floundering unlike other Ohio ‘Rust Belt’ cities, and the acquired land may contribute to the city’s ability to remain relatively unaffected by national economic slowdowns. The 2000 Census revealed Columbus to be the only large city in the state to experience an increase in population. That increase was most substantial within the city’s suburban residential districts.

**Contemporary place**

As it currently exists, Downtown Columbus includes the area within the innerbelts (clockwise starting at north) I-670, I-71, I-70, SR 315; suburbs attached and detached with their own centers envelop the area. The city is mostly contained within the circle of I-270. Geographers conceptualize regions with a central city surrounded by
smaller cities and towns as multiple-centered or multiple nuclei. Columbus’ multiple centers were more numerous to the north than the south. It would not be surprising if in the next ten to twenty years all remaining unincorporated areas surrounded by the outerbelt are annexed as part of Columbus or nearby cities. As it now stands, Columbus services cross over to other municipalities in order to provide for their constituents. The city claims most of the immediate area surrounding the original city.

Also struggling with their own destinies not far from Columbus’ original borders are existing cities—most notably Bexley to the east and Upper Arlington to the west. In some places, Columbus extended past these established suburbs’ jurisdictions to annex farmland experiencing suburban development partially in response to the city’s enticement. Job location, too, may have attracted residents, or perhaps bedroom communities attracted crowded commuters. Regardless of the motivation for original growth, the suburbs of the region today offer both jobs and housing. The city hopes to lure middle class suburbanites, at least those who work downtown, into central city housing. An increase in local residents could decrease commute time with less traffic on the interstates. However, this concept of the multi-centered city is different from the same concept applied to an older multi-centered city such as Paris. A distinction between the two will be discussed in the following section.

Multiple centers

Columbus can be viewed in two ways. First, the city itself may have only one designated center surrounded by the centers of its neighborhoods—a multi-centered city. Or Columbus is a region with one central core and outlying business and residential
centers within and beyond the city limits. If Columbus is to be understood as a multi-centered city, its core makes a weak center, for the downtown lacks key ingredients such as housing units that would nurture the center. Downtown can clearly be understood as a district specializing in commercial, with a mix of cultural, activities. While a district is by definition single use and not a center, downtown should allow for a multitude of activities and encourage development of structural centers to absorb them. This underscores the lack of clarity of connections made between downtown’s centers and other centers in the city. Pathways do not readily distinguish a clear centrality. However, Columbus in its current state suggests a strong nuclei region. Connections, though primarily made by automobiles, signify the downtown as center of the region more clearly than as a multi- or primary center of the city.

The Paris designed by Baron Haussmann under the command of Napoleon III better represents a multi-centered city. Perhaps Columbus of the latter half of the twentieth century shares with the Paris of 1850 common desires to be better connected and coherent. Paris had become a big city in the grandest terms; population had pushed the walls out and created areas in such high density that the streets had to be made closer together forming narrower paths. Open space in the city was nowhere near that provided by the city’s praised parks. Less familiar are the smaller, but more accessible neighborhood parks scattered across the city. To place these parks within walking distance of every Parisian required extensive knowledge of the city’s layout. No thorough city map existed before 1850, and a massive effort in triangulating it was necessary to create an accurate map. Haussmann called for the demolition of property in order to make
way for his plan of boulevards and civic buildings. Boulevards, as well as tight medieval streets spared demolition during the nineteenth century rebuilding, connect the various centers of Paris. A whole network of underground rivers were built in order to efficiently rid wastes from the city. No doubt these efforts created a social outcome as they did an aesthetic realization for the city. Napoleon III and Haussmann wanted Paris to remain a big city, but also desired it to become more efficient and “legible.” No doubt that Columbus’ grid makes for a legible movement through the city, but it lacks distinct connections to centers. The park system, as well, does not provide the pedestrian with pathways. While the pedestrian may stumble upon centers more easily than a commuter, who must seek them out, centers are more reserved to the communities they call home, than open to the city. Embodying few of the apparent attributes that make Paris a multi-centered city, Columbus when viewed as a region constructs a slightly more coherent vision.

The original builders of Columbus were able to start anew, but the plans were predicated on a vision of the future for the capital. The steps they took have significant consequences in the city today. Similarly, the planners to follow Wright made decisions that continue to impact the situation of Columbus. Chiefly connected by the automobile rather than the pedestrian, Columbus as a nuclei region stretches over a large, diffused area. The completion of a peripheral outerbelt was intended to create jobs and allow for through-traffic avoidance of downtown. Actually, it allowed residents to travel easily between centers and greatly affected the success of later suburban developments.
Chauncy D. Harris and Edward Ullman have developed a peripheral model of the city which applies well to Columbus. The peripheral model differs from a multi-centered outlook in that distance does not factor into the model as much as do the relational connections between economic activities; these connections are actualized through the use of the automobile. The 1997 model of the metropolitan area includes a peripheral circumferential highway. At the core still exists the central city and filling in the space in between, suburban residential districts mix with shopping malls—the centers of the suburbs—outside the periphery. Downtown functions in this model as a center to the region, but no longer does it demand the attention of city residents as it may have once had. But according to Harris and Ullman, “the periphery is not composed of completely separate edge cities; it is still a functional part of the metropolitan complex.” Radial highways that transport suburbanites of the periphery cut through the city, slicing the central city in places. Harris’ description of attributes to the model could have been compiled from Columbus, but his model describes a number of urban developments in the United States and Canada. The car redesigned the shape of many cities and has allowed people to avoid the central city altogether and keep to the periphery. Columbus’ problem of the center is replicated throughout American cities. So perhaps the concern for city technocrats was more logistics than aesthetic, efficiency above all, but the grid and the roads built to correct the grid’s deficiencies have had an enormous effect on the formation of centers.

In downtown, Broad Street cuts east to west across the capital abutting the public square. The civic buildings recommended in the ill-fated 1908 plan never materialized.
Instead, Capital Square appears reserved surrounded by private skyscrapers, home to banking and insurance corporations. Broad Street measures 120 feet across—twenty feet greater than High, and thirty-eight more than most of the original streets. Since the 1908 plan, paths for Columbus never did seem far-reaching, only incremental focusing development in particular areas. The city’s formal façade abuts the river, recently enhanced with open space and public buildings. Divvying up shoreline property to sellable dimensions proved difficult and it was best to leave the land to the city or state than to worry about a dispute. Thus, the Penitentiary’s placement was near the river.

Unlike Paris, Columbus’ multiple centers exist at a regional scale and are lacking at a city-scale. This concerns the difficulty of determining pathways to the urban and city centers of the city within Columbus’ grid. Considered in the same light as Paris’ boulevard connections, the pathways in Columbus do not make similar coherent connections to centers. Nodes to each center, usually points of entry, seem unrefined and ambiguous in Columbus. Passage from center to center goes unnoticed because the path fails to materialize fully but other than in the four compass points. Columbus’ development barely breaks from the original plan’s “Maltese Cross” main streets. Yet, breaks in the form of interstate paths cutting across the city also create interruptions for pedestrians that may not be so overwhelming for a commuter. The insignificance in Columbus may be that it rarely signifies centers visually, other than by name; the administration of a capital did not esteem such a course. However a city necessitates centers by more than name. Centers of Columbus never bare much fruit because they have never been focused with an intention to transform other than superficially.
The clarity epitomized by the grid’s right angles does not easily produce terminating vistas like the boulevards of Paris. That effect, missing from Columbus, creates focal points and landmarks. If the city is to be experienced in full, it should work for both pedestrian and commuter. In journeying through Columbus, one may remember the course followed to a destination, but may fail to recall accurately landmarks along the pathways. The visual designation of landmarks enhances the experience of the city—not an image from outside the city, but within. For many years, the city had been concerned that though quality of life seemed secure it suffered an image problem. The development of the skyline came to symbolize the emergence of a greater Columbus, but its grid has few places with a visual resting point, such as a building terminating a vista, so commuters and pedestrians must consciously focus gazes on less discreet landmarks. Not many Columbus landmarks exude notice within the urban fabric, but that does not imply that non-existence. Through a conscious effort of its own, the city has been in the process of refining its urban and city centers. I conclude this chapter by detailing this new course of action and how these efforts are made possible through government direction.

**Contemporary development: the region**

A regional approach can often be tricky and cumbersome for a city of Columbus’ size—the fifteenth largest in the United States. First, quality of life remains an important source of pride for the city. Second, the first factor signifies the success of the city’s other attributes, such as transportation services, variety of housing and communities, and social options. More choice usually leads to higher quality of life standards. However, when focusing regionally, natural and financial resources can be stretched when the city is not
careful in regulating development. Columbus zoning has not always allowed a mix of uses within neighborhoods or districts. Therefore most of the commercial and residential, and public and private, opportunities available remain separate and result in an increase in commuting and congestion. Accordingly, regional orientation can play a key role in complementing the multiple centers—though separated from the city’s core by distance—as much as it can detract from it by way of heightened traffic.

As far as connectivity is concerned, easy flow from center to center is considered of the utmost importance in the nuclei regional view. The same can be said in a multi-centered city. However, the outerbelt has become more an intraregional mode of traffic distribution as cars roam from suburb to suburb and not necessarily downtown. It would be easy to understand the desire to avoid downtown when one keeps in mind the traffic crawl caused by the intersecting of two interstates. This again may be another reason to reestablish the core city for one’s cultural and economic needs to remind citizens why it exists in the first place—as an intensified collection of uses and structures. This struggle for focus shows more vividly that the city’s stated desire to elevate the downtown to not just another center of the region is confused with the actual desire to be a multi-centered city.

The Columbus Plan: 1970-1990 acted as an initial attempt at monitoring growth throughout the region and not simply within the city. However, it should be viewed as a reevaluation of the city’s purpose and responsibility to the region. Like the 1908 plan, this one attempted to access the impact of recent growth. At this time in the city’s history, a hundred and fifty years after its beginnings, the region was not so dependent upon the
city for economic, social and political needs. Suburbs had blossomed all around the urban fringes, but were heaviest to the north of downtown. They had their own activity centers, though usually more decentralized than their counterparts in the city. But the city, too, took on a more suburban look made obligatory by the zoning codes. *The Columbus Plan: 1970-1990* recommended that annexation to the outerbelt remain in effect, as it is still today, in order to better manage the area. The period, after the city replaced a policy of urban renewal with annexation, solidified concerns for quality of life. In order to retain a healthy, booming population, City Council and the Planning Division housed in the Department of Trade and Development, established in the 1960s, sought to monitor further growth with stricter guidelines. No longer would the city disregard *site*.

At present, Government conceives particular centers within the outerbelt’s core as both ripe for development and worth preservation. To administer environmental, aesthetic and social outcomes, Columbus updated its strategy by adopting the *Columbus Comprehensive Plan*, the second master plan in the city’s history after Wright’s original sketch. It recognizes the concern for quality of life. If followed accordingly, the comprehensive plan “accomplishes this by fostering orderly, manageable, and cost-effective growth and establishing a framework for future land use decisions.” A scan of the far-reaching goals includes the following: 1) vitality and diversity of neighborhoods, 2) growth: how much and where, 3) transportation, 4) recreation, 5) natural resources and environmental quality, 6) historic preservation, 7) aesthetics, 8) role of the downtown, and 9) seeing to the implementation of the plan. The plan consists of recommendations without the full support of law unless parts become codified. In other words, though City
Council adopted the comprehensive plan in 1993, these recommendations must become chapters to the Columbus zoning code to be considered law.

On May 21 2001, City Council approved inclusion in the code of a recommendation addressing strategies for development. The plan recommends that neo-traditional planning be used in new building and neighborhood design. The Traditional Neighborhood Development code positions each building structure and roadway to its respectable location within an urban transect. “Our society has forgotten what makes a great neighborhood,” said Councilman Richard W. Sensenbrenner. Ideal components he hopes the plan will reintroduce embody the transect: a hierarchical ordering of thinly populated edges to highly active centers. The result of such an ordering would appear similar to a small town from the turn-of-the-century with mixes of housing and commercial types within an integrated street grid. These techniques will likely have their first test in Columbus through the development of the Southeast Area. City Council’s Southeast Area Plan combined with the brief thirty-seven-page TND code calls for the restricted development of its remaining rural corporations.

The Southeast Area

The Southeast Area rests largely in Franklin County’s Madison Township. Roughly measured at 12.4 square-miles, the area borders Blacklick Creek on the western and northern edges. Fairfield County’s western edge and U.S. Route 33 designates the southern boundary. (See Appendix B.) Large parts remain unincorporated, however. Columbus plans to annex those portions during the implementation of a new plan. The area is primed to actualize the goals cited in the comprehensive plan.
Wet hydric soils cover the ground, which could be a contributing environmental factor to delays in corporation. In fact, 30.3% of the ground cover sits either in the 100-year floodplain or in the floodways of Blacklick Creek and the two forks of Georges Creek. This wet environment makes agriculture difficult because the farmer must first deal with issues related to drainage. Without proper drainage, the area would revert to a wetland state. Grains, including barley, were grown on the fields. Mills became a substantial business in the vicinity. By 1839, the state led the nation in grain production. Not until the Ohio-Erie Canal’s lock 19 passed west of the recently established Winchester (now Canal Winchester) did farmers immensely benefit from trade. Winchester Pike, the main thoroughfare to the growing capital, passed diagonally through the area. The early settlers, though already well off, were prospering in agricultural trade, leaving behind stately homesteads and barns—heirlooms to a rural way-of-life that would fall under the threat of suburban development.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, some of the best agricultural lands the state offered succumbed to strictly residential, singular use design. Many historical structures were lost forever in the transformation, and though the interior comforts of life stood firm, the environmental quality of life inevitably suffered. Imposed upon the flat terrain were winding roads and prefabricated houses, dressed to appear as rural homes with urban amenities. To the city, the new houses threatened the integrity of the area’s past—the single-family farmers subsisting on what was drawn from their land.
weekday to work mainly in the service sector exists as a stark antithesis to the goods-oriented 160-acre farm or what remained in the vicinity.

This nostalgia for the short-lived rural existence accompanied by an admitted aversion to single uses found throughout suburbia, encouraged City Council to act aggressively to protect what is seen as the city’s frontier remnant.\textsuperscript{38} Though it is unlikely that any ground in the Southeast Area remains untouched by the agriculture methods at hand—especially in wake of efforts made to drain the fields—City Council regards the preservation of the barns, Adam-style brick homes and aesthetic character of the place as important to a community’s well-being. Prior to adoption of the \textit{Southeast Area Plan}, it was zoned rural residential, single family residential, and suburban. Before sprawl’s predicted path could be interrupted, City Council had to affect reconsideration.

The \textit{Southeast Area Plan} does not halt development; it does not necessarily slow it, either. The plan does “allow for urban development…in a pattern sensitive to the unique nature of the area and its important environmental, agricultural, and historic attributes.”\textsuperscript{39} Developments slated to occur in the area are neo-traditional and hamlet/open space in orientation. Neo-traditional villages consist of mixed-use buildings (residence, office, and commercial) within defined town centers, maintaining a five- to ten-minute walking radius from the outskirts. Outside these villages, hamlet developments should occur, involving a clustering of residences in open space so as not to damage existing ecosystems. Providing a mix of income and housing types will allow social and spatial mobility of residence within the same neighborhood.
These neo-traditional plans look reminiscent of William Penn’s Philadelphia. The layout for Winchester Pike involves street grids and diamond intersections—dominant in midwestern cities. A common green in the village center midway through Winchester Pike’s crossing of the area recalls both Midland and New England towns. While nostalgic for the rural life and the planned village, and in spite of the Mid-Atlantic hearth origin, the city considers New-England-esque developments—the hamlet/open space designs—to be integral units. This mixing of two unique structures does not seem out of step for Ohio, which is divided in thirds by the New England culture of the North, the Midland culture already mentioned in the central part of state, and the Upland South influence of the southern portion of the state. However, clustered single-family homes along winding roads are analogous to New England’s cultural landscape.

As far as preservation is concerned, fifty percent of the land within the plan’s confines ought to remain open space, of which, thirty-five percent may be in the floodway. This elevates the natural landscape as not center, but as connections and edges to the area. A natural environ in the area is Pickerington Ponds Wetlands Wildlife Refuge, which reverted to its former state after a 1952 fire melted the clay tiles used for agricultural draining. In the absence of protest, parts of Bowen Road and a stretch of Wright Road will be vacated as buffers to the wetlands. How much of an effect increased contact, though confined to densely populated sections, would have upon the environment remains unanswered. These requirements will be enforced with time, unlike the imminent village plans. In the village, preservation efforts will keep in mind
downtown’s cultural and economic primacy; the area’s assets should serve local residents and not be dependent on attracting visitors.\textsuperscript{43}

\textit{Downtown}

Also crucial to the development of downtown’s assets will be input from the citizen population. The \textit{Scioto Peninsula Plan} of 1989 relied on public involvement: “recommendations have also resulted from surveys of community groups, the input of more than 600 school children, and two design charettes [sic].”\textsuperscript{44} Residents with the most to gain in this plan were those of the settlement immediately across the Scioto from Columbus—Franklinton. The town annexed by its younger sibling in the 1860s again is the focus of attention and perhaps development. Franklinton has long awaited prominence; it may one day become fully integrated with the capital. One hurdle to the town’s rebirth was the 1993 dissolution of the six-year-old Downtown Columbus Inc., authors of the peninsula plan. Downtown is one of the few districts in Columbus without an association representing it at City Hall.

City Council and the Mayor look to restock housing downtown. Most recently, first-term Mayor Michael Coleman made increasing downtown vitality priority one, calling it “the physical, economic and social center of a dynamic and growing region…our city, our county and beyond.”\textsuperscript{45} What is available within the central city is hardly adequate, almost non-existent, and the costs to building on existing infrastructure keep developers working on the fringes. The program the city government offers to defray some costs involves instituting a new economic incentive program. The funding
for such programs is currently worth five million dollars. Mayor Coleman announced at the 2001 State of the City Address that:

Soon you will hear new terminology like downtown development zones, civic districts and the east bank, and new ideas to generate real, live, doable projects. In order for our downtown to realize its potential, it must also be an eighteen-hour-a-day, living, breathing, urban experience. It must connect the unique elements of downtown as a place where people work during the day, play during the night and live all the time.46

By redirecting housing inward, Mayor and Council solidified disdain for an expanding urban landscape that denied downtown’s urban centers investments.

**Conclusion**

Downtown Columbus continues to be dominated by the service industry and surface parking lots. Banking and insurance companies’ headquarters dot the capital. Surface parking often is cheaper than remodeling or rebuilding, so government had not in the past intervened in demolitions as it does now. High and Broad Streets to this day usher commuters into downtown along with the interstates. The innerbelt also has been redesigned in recent years to increase the flow of traffic in and out of the city. The picture emerging includes millions of commuters and few residents. So housing downtown makes sense to local politicians. New high-rise, high-priced condominiums on the riverfront opened last year. In the works are two projects financed through a joint city-business fund. One aims to assist low-income families. The other will be developed by the Casto organization, operating in the city for over seventy years. The following chapter examines the role businesses have played in shaping the centers of Columbus.

Simply put, the city administration and businesses would like downtown to be the focal point of the city. However, through annexation the city has engulfed a multiplicity
of other centers and finds it difficult to favor one. So the city now appears to be focusing on the downtown and the centers in near proximity, hoping the success of one benefits those nearby. Does the success of the city as a whole depend on the success of the downtown? How important a role do centers play in the vitality of a city? Right now, acknowledging the downtown as a place desperate for development may be the surest step but correcting the situation swiftly proves difficult.
Introduction

Businesses and corporations exerted comparable authority over centers, just as
government had over the past two centuries worth of development. The centers that the
corporate process built vary in structure, but are similar in their commercial uses. While
local residents still were not key participants in the process, where they lived and spent
their savings mattered considerably. By the mid-twentieth century, businesses no longer
found it necessary to establish shops along the main streets of the gridiron. Commonly,
development on the urban fringes trumped an infill opportunity downtown. Businesses
considered profitability as the key variable in decision-making; the business required
customers. Yet their customer base was draining into the suburbs at an alarming rate.
Below, I begin a brief overview of the process that necessitated business conceived
centers.

To counter the fallout in home building caused by the Great Depression, President
Roosevelt’s administration created the Federal Housing Administration. FHA guaranteed
extended (as much as thirty years) long-term mortgage loans with low down payments.
The idea was to put people and businesses involved in construction back to work,
essentially building new homes, while ignoring the maintenance of existing structures,
which happened to be nearest the city. The process assured stagnation for the city and left
behind immigrants and African-Americans. Fueled by government subsidies and tax
breaks outside the city core, suburbs flourished on the urban fringes. Businesses found it
cost-ineffective to build within the downtown’s decaying infrastructure and buildings. So
rather than provide the resurgence the city sought, firms built where land was cheap and the incentives were enticing. By the time annexation allowed for new water and sewage lines far from the central city, little could be done to reverse the trend. Each new ring increased the price of moving outward. So subsequently, the residents with higher incomes located along the suburban peripheries. Businesses followed the expendable incomes.

**Historical Development of corporate process**

The Casto family began in 1928 the trend of suburban shopping in Columbus. In Grandview Heights, a suburb west of the city, they built the Bank Block Building, a national first intent on accommodating automobiles and women by emphasizing safety, convenience and proximity to the homemaker with an expendable income. The unit is an early yet familiar model of the suburban strip mall. Casto continued the evolution of the shopping center outward from a decaying and congested central city. The 1950s experienced the opening of eight similar strips built in the direction of the suburbs. As people left the congested city, the retail followed. The announcement by Mayor Michael Coleman this past February of the Casto Communities’ 60-unit complex proposed for downtown extends their reign as developers of Columbus. Since their first strip mall, the organization has built both commercial and residential enclaves. The new complex will be their first foray within downtown’s urban fabric. But historically, their developments were positioned in an environ all their own. Their residential projects attracted customers with the latest amenities and their private qualities separate from the urban grid. Their
projects’ tenants, the commercial businesses, achieved notoriety over the actual places built.

In the 1950s as suburban shopping centers were popping up, a study was conducted to measure the advantages and disadvantages of downtown and suburban retail. Jonassen, a sociologist at Ohio State, concluded that the major advantage to downtown shopping was a larger selection of goods. At the time the commercial hubs in the suburbs were rudimentary and small, and their major disadvantage was a lack of selection. Downtown’s variety also meant convenience and lower prices, but parking and congestion were major disadvantages. Distance was insignificant so long as parking was available. Better hours in the suburbs and plenty of parking agreed with the consumers and once the suburban centers eclipsed the downtown’s superior traits, the rest is history.

Interestingly, Charles Lazarus, serving then as president of the local Lazarus downtown, met Professor Jonassen in the 1960s. Lazarus recognized his name and cited his research for limiting the store Lazarus from expanding into the suburbs before the suburbs had caught up with the downtown’s variety. The convenience of place still meant something for a time. A community of commerce had established itself downtown since Joel Wright first designated High and Broad Streets as the major compass routes. An economic community developed around the central point, as urban theory would suggest, and was supported by both commuters and individuals living nearby.

When Christaller defined central place theory, he looked at functions in human communities across time and not the appearance of the town:

Those places which have central functions that extend over a larger region, in which other central places of less importance exist, are called central places of a
higher order. Those which have only local central importance for the immediate vicinity are called, correspondingly, central places of the lowest order.  

Columbus’ downtown would then function as a central place of a higher order, while newly formed suburbs function as central places of the lowest order. But over time, the downtown’s designation as center became threatened by lowest order central places.

It is worth considering the spatial alterations produced by commercial positioning. When business left the city’s storefronts for the periphery, the edge became the “point of vital development, and the center became of ever less value.” In an economic context the center may have been turned inside out. How did this impact the city as a whole and the singular centers strewn neighborhood to neighborhood? How did a focus upon central places of the lowest order alter the city’s development? The case studies included in this chapter attempt to address this impact. The business centers conceived by developers will be viewed within the their district or neighborhood borders. Who was welcome to participate in the process remains key to understanding the resultant structures and uses that found life outside the central city.

Brice

This case begins late in the corporation’s history in Columbus. Present since founding, corporations’ contributions to the city are immense, yet the look and feel of centers do not really take on a consumer-driven appearance until later in Columbus’ history. There are a number of reasons to begin with the Brice/Gender-Tussing corridor. First, it continues to attract tenants in its building structures, like a revolving door as new businesses replace older ones. Second, it is prominently positioned east of Columbus near
residents with a range of incomes and wants. The vicinity, residential and commercial to the north, is thin in commercial venues for those residing east and south of Brice. To the north, the city of Reynoldsburg offers mixed commercial options, but Brice is more—more name brands, larger stores and corporate images in the form of logos and signs.

The small town of Brice had consisted primarily of farms ten miles east of Columbus. When I-70 and the I-270 outerbelt were completed in 1976, Brice found itself bordering two major thoroughfares. Planners not long after the interstates arrived zoned Brice residential and commercial—the area’s farms came under the threat of development. The sensible thing for the farmer was to sell, hopefully, for more money than the years left farming could produce. Farms sell for the amount the land is worth developed, not farmed; therefore they are also taxed according to development potential. The possibility of someone purchasing a farm to cultivate is almost nil in a market such as this with no participatory process in place to alter the course sought by developers.

The soil lay fallow as the developers laid the surface with steel-framed stucco buildings, both square and rectangular, and tons of black pavement. The commercial structures at the opposite end of the parking lots from the street often connect at anchor stores into massive barriers, like a walled city. Though, usually more than one-story tall, only the first floor is utilized by customers, or else, the upper stories are left open, like an atrium. Nearer the road float lone buildings, stranded in a sea of parking. Here, fast food and most sit-down restaurants rest at the lots’ peripheries secluded from the street by twenty yards of piled-up dirt where grass and on occasion, trees grow. We can easily
imagine a field still in place for the flattened landscape. Is this the achievement of civilization: farm to commercial scatterings, and production to consumption?\textsuperscript{54}

From the dispersed retail and food lots, a center would be hard to distinguish.\textsuperscript{55}

No technocratic-designated center like Capital Square in downtown graces the site. When asked what the center of the Southeast Area currently is, a city planner cited Brice.\textsuperscript{56}

Much property in the area belongs to municipalities other than Columbus, so his reply makes sense. But where is the center to the Brice commercial district? Shopping centers lack a definite position in the absence of connections connoting a site as center. The roads, from interstate to the smaller suburban streets, all seem to collect automobiles sending them pass the store lots, and not directly toward a particular destination. Perhaps choice reigns supreme, here, in the inception of the suburban street network. The results seem as if the traffic engineer had said, “The driver may decide what is center for himself.” But if the “Maltese Cross” of Columbus can be seen as an example, then the intersection of Brice and Tussing makes the best candidate for a center. Yet, it is distinguished as a center not so much by the structural organization of space as by the intensity of use.

Structurally, there are obstacles to this site as a traditional center. Connections at Brice do not converge at the center. The right-angle intersections do not permit an intensification of connections because the blocks are extremely large. The job of connecting the development to the existing street network, is both immense and an afterthought. The developer of the property would have that job. Consequently, each lot has developed in a manner separate from its adjacent lots. Even within those developed
by a single firm, connectivity comes in the form of a parking lot—hardly a pedestrian connection to the street. Two choices exist: either the driver could maneuver through parking lanes laid so wide they necessitate speed bumps to slow traffic or drive down feeder roads lined by curbed-off parking on both sides. For a car the connections are superficial, quasi-readable and inefficient (in store to store jogs), but made necessary by the low density; for the pedestrian, this is difficult to traverse—overheated in the summer by car exhaust, frigid in the winter’s thin unprotected landscape. Open space is highly depleted due to surface asphalt and building arrangement. Brice contains nowhere near the density the central city offers.

Despite this, with a heavy emphasis on consumer goods, Brice is home to many national chain stores. Operating in the area today are middle class shopping havens, Old Navy, Bath and Body Works, Target and Best Buy. A smattering of restaurants, mostly chains, can also be found along Brice. However, the structures could be made adaptable to a number of functions, but the commercial enterprises in the area remain foremost, basically ruling out a switchover to a different use for the time. The large media stores look similar in all parts of the country and so, too, do their interiors—even the products on the shelves, except for regional differences, fluctuate slightly. Diversity comes in the form of a price range—nothing more than market demand and labor combined. Brice has a surreal visual diversity that fails to complement the boxy structures’ prefabricated façades. Brice is very similar to other commercial development in the suburbs of Columbus. Most of the lots were developed in the same manner and represent the corporations’ similar structures found elsewhere in the state.
The artery road, known as Brice (or Gender depending on how far south one goes), consists of stop and go automobile traffic, yet the pedestrian’s use of crosswalks is rare. Automobiles replace pedestrians as the urban participants. Parking lots substitute for plazas resulting in a colorless landscape. For the lot appears similar to a plaza in size and flatness; however, nothing distinct can be readily found in the parking lot. Its outward appearance does reinforce the poor use of space for the individual, but so long as the consumer attends, the design of the space was not in vein. Consumers realize that centrality is a product of their individual transportation and consumption capabilities—cars in turn are necessities.

What Brice highlights is a condition present throughout America—a disregard of place. This area used to produce large farms but now produces commerce—little is made on site. Even the food for most “establishments” comes pre-processed. Corporations were attentive to consumer presence in the suburbs. Businesses locate near consumers; yet, cities came into existence as a means to bring commerce and people together. In turn, the city lost business to suburban growth. When this occurred, the lines between urban and rural blurred. The suburbs market themselves as rural and rustic, the American Dream, private homestead and all, but there is little about this structural organization of space that resonates with the rural. President Thomas Jefferson proposed the national grid as a means to distribute square sections of land west of the Ohio River to individual yeomen. He helped foster the rugged individual representation of America. “In terms of rural life, the grid institutionalized the trend toward scattered farms, rather than agricultural villages, giving physical expression to the powerful myth that only lone individuals
mattered in America.” As place no longer refers to precedence or landscape and simply relies on a mass of individual choices and ease of mobility to shopping facilities, site’s significance wanes.

**Contemporary development: neo-traditional**

Centrality, in the context of the suburban shopping center, revolves around consumer movement, not geography or site. The invention of a center is provisional until consumer movement intensifies elsewhere and attracts a different one. Since the metropolitan area expanded in absence of density, the meaning and structure of center greatly diffused. As developers reconstructed centers in a capitalist framework, the meaning centers formerly harnessed slipped into nostalgic imagery minus actual stimulation as part of a forgotten ideal of a center. The best example I know in the United States of both development’s spread outside the urban core and the attempt by developers to weight a center to a place is located outside Atlanta, Georgia, and honestly named Periphery Center. However, the attempt fails, for where is the center of a circle’s periphery? Easton Town Center along Columbus’ outerbelt, however, embodies the nostalgia for a center or the New England commons. Understanding the concept center is made easier if examples like these were to be referred to as *centers by name*—not by connections or public use or other expressions that embody typical centers. As example, Easton’s developer built a town center in absence of a town.

**Easton**

Easton Town Center differs from other suburban developments of its nature because a plan signified a center prior to its implementation. This practice is more akin to
the origin of Franklinton and downtown Columbus. Where this differs from those two is that the structures, building and all, were laid down without a residential community in rapid numbered phases; phase one is complete and phase two opens late 2001.

Easton is the dream of Columbus entrepreneur Les Wexner. The Limited Inc, Victoria’s Secret, Bath and Body Works, Structure, and Express clothing stores, to name a few, are some of Wexner’s investments. His foray into town planning was heralded in Columbus and all over. Arnold Swarzennagger, an investor in the project, has been on hand on a number of occasions to survey constructions and openings. To Les Wexner, its founder, Easton is more than hype, it is a commercial Mecca that will bring prominence to the mall he has conceived; a mall he hopes “will serve as a model for retail development in this country—if not the world.”

Wexner also has been involved with the private residential area of New Albany. New Albany is home to gated communities. In fact, developments of this type are becoming increasingly popular in America. The gated communities seem to contrast with the openness Wexner praises Easton for offering; perhaps, this represents an unrealized desire to protect community from consumption while still using property values to evaluate the community. Or perhaps this complements his vision at Easton Town Center of a privatized public realm. Regardless, Wexner places commerce as public center. Commerce merely does not locate to centers in towns and cities, it establishes centers.

Positioned in the middle of phase one’s street grid, the resulting center to Easton Town Center is a commons area of grass surrounded by storefronts. The rest of the center is a collection of large department-like stores housed primarily in brick structures. They
sit adjacent to four main streets framing the green; instead of any civic institutions near this arrangement, an interior mall stands at the greens’ east end. The mall, the center’s tallest structure, is reminiscent of a converted train station, yet before the center appeared in the late 1990s no train had gone through the former farm fields. However, as far as internal structures are concerned, Easton typifies a town center that may have been created by a community, but the absence of a community in the process of creation dilutes any chance of authenticity, no matter how active the officials attempt to foster a community. At issue is the overall accessibility of the place. The nearest thoroughfares, the congested Morse Road and the northeastern quadrant of the I-270 outerbelt, form the town’s northern and western border, respectively. The streets are laid out for multiple paths but cannot be accessed through multiple varieties other than really the car along two arteries, so connectivity to the center by name’s surroundings is minimal. This results from lack of residents on site and by building few feeder roads from Morse Road. Whereas the auto-dependent Brice development directly west of the large Independence suburb is disconnected from its nearby uses, Easton allows for easy pedestrian travel within, but is without a mix of uses in a five-minute-walking distance. Residents of nearby New Albany must still drive to the center.

Beyond the superficial, Easton offers little community designated diversity in structures—the chain stores found in developer selected conspicuous building styles offer goods at similar upper echelon prices. Easton attracts mainly the upper classes both black and white, for like Brice, diversity can only be measured in terms of costs. On Easton’s periphery are big box retailers more typical of suburban development. But any diversity
in the structures age is absent due in part to a rapid build out period. Architecturally, the mall and some of the larger freestanding structures vary in a sort of Post-modernist sampling of historical styles. (On site are found Art Deco, Mt. Vernon, Restoration, etc.) No store is set apart from the rest in purpose other than the interior mall. In a city, an arrangement of this sort can be invigorating to business owners. No store is singled out as having lesser goods for its façade. At Easton, however, all the goods within seem to be priced for the upper-echelon of income levels in the city.

Easton Town Center’s structure, though accessible to the pedestrian, accommodates high-cost consumption retailers that virtually price out many income brackets. Diversity of price is one important factor, which is wholly lacking at Easton (Wal-Mart is located just off Morse Road to the north), snubbing its name “center.” The center apparent at Easton Town Center seems to embody equality in appearance and in use; however, this has the effect of creating an unequal center to those who might be tempted to visit but unable to buy. A commute to the site provides dining at Ocean Club, local restaurateur Cameron Mitchell contribution, the Cheese Factory, and shopping at national catalogue stores such as J. Crew, Pottery Barn, and Banana Republic. As at Brice, nothing is really produced. No real civic institution exists because the site is not designated for these purposes, and security would likely prevent unregulated organization. The commons green is not public, but a privilege provided to customers and the general public by the individual property owners.

Easton may have been developed differently from its brethren of commercial strip malls and typical parking lots (Easton has garages and street surface lots), but a
community still is nowhere to be found. Residences will not be available until later this year. None are planned to be within the town center. In the near vicinity, housing is almost non-existent. Walking to the town center would be ridiculous, much like the walk through the Brice parking lots. A 30-screen movie theater acts as the meeting place for now. In the summer, national musical acts perform free shows on the commons. But most often the grounds are for relaxing after shopping, or abandoned in the winter. A community that gathers at Easton must arrive by automobile or, perhaps, bus.

The automobile represents the inequality and individuality of Easton as a center. Public transportation poorly serves consumptive centers, where private developers did not create enough connections for the consumer’s retail demands. The bus stops available often have neither shelters nor benches, so even if transit served efficiently, these are harsh environments for such a method. Left to the car, which many people struggle to go without, consumers arrive at the shopping centers in their foreign or domestic cars. The center can be a place to show off luxury or deficiency. Regardless of make or model, the car is usually the only way in and out of these centers, it protects and serves—acting as armor as much as transportation.

Commoditization of place

Kevin Cox has argued that debates on the derivation of communal living concern recognizing either community or commodity. With respect to community, residents and their reciprocal interactions within a place-bound community derive concepts of space and value. In other words, within a communal living space, people and their contributions to a community are valued, and place-bound, in that the “Neighborhood as community is
not only people: it is people relating to one another in the context of a specific space. Communal living space as community is personalized and particular beyond profitability. However, communal living when viewed as commodity puts a price on space. Values reflect purchasing and renting prices within a space. Rights to access can be bought and sold. Cox describes further communal living as commodity:

A variety of property-value studies take [consumer satisfaction with space] as their fundamental behavioral tenet. They find that resources as school quality, public safety, quiet, and even views of the Pacific sunsets, are indeed reflected in home values.

Whereas community in this sense recognizes the value of mutual supports found throughout the neighborhood, communal living as commodity focuses value upon an individual home adding the opportunities available in the neighborhood. This can be explained through the fetishism of space: relations come to be viewed between areas and not social actors. In viewing places as immobile commodities weighted to a space (such as a ghetto, or environmentally damaged area), certain areas achieve enterprise while others remain desolate—hence, a self-fulfilling vision. Therefore, concentrations of growth occur overwhelmingly in concentrated areas and thus, demand complementarily uses—suburban housing followed by suburban retail. The succession described above helps to explain the growth of the suburbs as commodities and as centers catering to individual consumers, sidestepping communal living as community.

The concept of community in communal living cannot be understood in the absence of capitalism, because community renders the system bearable for it insulates against the self-image as a buyer/seller in capital. Once this concept is embraced as a marketing tool, however, community expires and the buyer-seller self-image dominates.
What community does exist consists of consumers momentarily purchasing access to space and not necessarily relations with the neighborhood. *Community centers* differ from the *individual centers* of the communal living space as commodity because they include a mixing of uses supported and created by residential interaction. Value, nonetheless, for money is a critical standard to understanding communal living as commodity. Like in Easton, attempts are made elsewhere in Columbus to build through this view of living space.

*The Southeast Area*

In the southeast section of Columbus, the new Traditional Neighborhood Development Code designed by a founder of the Congress for the New Urbanism, appears to continue a vision of communal living as commodity. Recall that in the last chapter, the Southeast Area would serve as a test of Columbus’ efforts to monitor growth from its inception. That test is in the form of the optional TND Code. Though, not required, city planners are betting on the code’s utilization. They prescribe to the philosophy of urban planner and code designer, Andres Duany: “Let the market decide.”

But first, Duany says planners must create real successes to help convince the market and the people:

> Our democracy is a representative form of government, there are elected officials and planning boards, and we should speak only to them. The citizens themselves are a distorting influence because they are specialists, just like traffic engineers are specialists. Their specialty is their own backyard, and only rarely the community as a whole.

Under Duany’s view paralleling the communal living space as commodity, the resident participant may find involvement in the new code no more convenient as in the old urban
codes. The “CNU approach ultimately rests on a collection of physical design formulas. Local participation is directed into and within that framework.”

The TND code can be compiled in a fashion convenient to the builder and developer. To be considered TND, the design must add up to a number of points distributed in, as far as I can see, a random manner within the elements of a TND neighborhood. For instance a neighborhood center with the following amenities gives the developer so many points. Once a design complies with fifty percent of the point system, the TND requirement is reached. Columbus builders White Ash-Tiger Construction and Dominion Homes already are preparing designs inline with the new code. The process these two builders must go through to gain approval is familiar to the current zoning practice. The design review committee has been deleted from the code, so City Council itself reviews the applications. Yet the attractiveness of the new code lies in the fact that it is easier for a novice to understand than the current codes, and in its innovativeness of fitting a design within a regional context. These strengths have peaked developers’ interests.

A competitive market in Columbus should produce—as both Columbus planners and Duany agree—a neighborhood design that offers a balanced mix of structures and uses to accommodate most members of the neighborhood. Duany and his partner Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk of the Miami-based firm DPZ base the traditional neighborhood on the 1929 New York Regional Plan—advocating pedestrian-scale neighborhoods.

The following are the principles of an ideal neighborhood design: 1) The neighborhood has a center and an edge; 2) The optimal size of a neighborhood is a quarter mile from center to edge; 3) The neighborhood has a balanced mix of activities—dwelling, shopping, working, schooling, worshipping and recreating;
4) the neighborhood structures building sites and traffic on a fine network of interconnecting streets; 5) The neighborhood gives priority to public space and to the appropriate location of civic buildings.

Thus far, only the original capital design dealt with some of these principles in its design. Nonetheless, the New Urbanism movement holds the above principles as key to reintroducing a place-bound community within a neighborhood—a way to combat the degradation of farmland with limits to a development’s size. While Duany concedes that edges may vary within neighborhoods from natural edges to low-density housing, they affect neighborhoods in crucial ways. Combined, the neighborhood center and edge acts as a focus and a limit that might contribute to the community’s identity. An edge could be natural or landscaped; it may be built up infrastructure where workplaces or stores connect neighborhoods with one another and therefore, are transformed into a center. Centers are necessities: “The center is always a public space, which may be a square, a green or an important street intersection. It is near the center of the urban area unless compelled by some geographic circumstance to be elsewhere.”

Centers “are necessarily mixed use in nature: they combine housing of different scales, businesses, retail, entertainment and civic uses.” Neighborhood amenities should also fit its overall size, confined to a five-minute walk from edge to center. The schools or primary public facilities should be spaced and sized accordingly, so that residents living within walking distance easily can make the journey to their functions without necessitating automobile use to and from neighborhoods joints. A neighborhood accommodates those less mobile residents and the young, who do not drive by offering a mix of uses within a single neighborhood. Transportation, in other words, should also be
mixed providing numerous opportunities for travel means. This means humanizing the landscape so that it is accessible to various means—transit stops that are inviting and not along blank walls, pedestrian paths both along streets and separate from them, etc. By reducing the need for daily automobile use, the CNU hopes to increase the availability of affordable housing through design.\textsuperscript{73} The annual costs usually reserved to an automobile’s care may then go toward a mortgage payment. To make this possible a neighborhood would need to be conceived as a whole unit. “The suburban practice of locating government buildings, place of worship, schools and even public art according to the expediencies of land cost is ineffective.”\textsuperscript{74} This passage suggests that Duany might also disavow commoditization of space.

However, in a recent criticism of the CNU, one of its own members stated that:

Good design and sensible spatial combinations of land uses are important goals, but both are always in service of building the economic and political capacity of disenfranchised members of a community, not merely improving local property values. …For the CNU, the photogenic results of the built environment and the policies and codes that will achieve them, after all is said and done, still seem to be the end purpose…\textsuperscript{75}

This is an approximate example of what Cox views to be communal living as commodity through the building of a neighborhood too conscious of property values. While the CNU and the Columbus planners attempt to respect community in the Southeast plan, as does Easton’s design—also categorized on some listings as New Urbanist—neither of these developmental stages has a community to speak of, so it is difficult to assume that value will be anything other than money in the beginning or that the center will be other than by name. The plan deemed the land too valuable to waste frivolously, the city too
precious to spread horizontally any longer. This was not about community, in the communal living sense.

The Arena District

While the Southeast’s center will serve local needs—outside consumers are not expected to visit often—the individuals living there are expected to visit downtown for unmet cultural needs, which had been considered lacking up until now. Hype and attention surrounded the construction of the Arena District and local preservationists’ efforts to prevent the demolition of the old Ohio State Penitentiary, former occupant of the site. The demolition had all been forgotten once the district became a concrete reality until a planners’ conference in Philadelphia weighed in on the city. Though pleased the development was privately funded, participants were troubled to learn that no part of the penitentiary’s architecture was saved. Like it or not, state and city history gave way to a new era. Local elites, Nationwide Realty Investors and the Dispatch Printing Company financed the entertainment and office district that houses Columbus’ National Hockey League team, the Blue Jackets. The Wolfe family, owners of the sole daily paper in the city and WBNS-TV and radio, contributed ten percent of the costs and Nationwide, the insurance giant headquartered in the city, funded the remainder, hence the arena was named Nationwide Arena.

Though the Dispatch did promote the opening extensively, it was probably little more than any other paper in the area would have publicized the district and team’s importance for the city’s image and goals. The Arena District is not only an attempt to bring people into the city to be entertained by sports and concerts, and employed in office
space, but also it will be capable of housing them in urban living. The Arena District suggests a challenge to the suburban narrative. The design’s uniqueness preserves the pre-established grid if not the Old Pen. The district respects the urban fabric and mixed uses desired in city life.

For decades, Columbus, the private and public, had waited for the time when a downtown sports arena would be built. As early as 1962, plans had smoldered again and again, each year a higher price tag, and acknowledgements to wait a few more years before something would transpire. The Columbus Crew received their stadium in 1997, but it was located adjacent the fairgrounds and the Ohio Historical Society. The land around it has not been developed in the least. When talk that a National Hockey League expansion team would go to Columbus if an arena were built, Nationwide and the Dispatch, for the most part, silently negotiated a deal with the NHL to win expansion rights. Land west of Nationwide plazas One through Three had sat undeveloped for half a century but for the Old State Penitentiary. Though costs would run over a few million to renovate the Old Pen, it was demolished anyway to spur development that still was slow to take off. The site, owned by the state and other businesses, was valued at over forty million dollars. The opinion of residents in nearby areas, the Victorian and Italian Village and the Short North, were mixed on the benefits of adding a large entertainment magnet to the city. But the companies with deeper pockets saw the Arena District as an incubator to further development downtown and the city’s leadership agreed.

The integrated street grid connects at an equal spacing as typical for downtown Columbus streets. Therefore, the Arena District slips in as if the site had always been
utilized. The main thoroughfare of the district is the Nationwide Boulevard, which is repaved in brick. The Arena, the park, eateries and other uses line the boulevard. Arena Square, at the west entrance to Nationwide Arena, serves as a gathering place surrounded by restaurants and clubs. “Planners envision special lighting, video boards and large signs to create a mini Times Square on the Scioto atmosphere.” Acting as the district’s center is Arch Park, a grass mall longer than it is wide. The park's south end is capped off with grass terraces leading down to the riverfront. The opposite side includes the relocated Union Station arch, designed by famed architect Daniel Burnham. Like the Old Pen, Union Station was demolished to build a civic center in its place. The Convention Center now resides over the site of the train station; it recently increased its structures size to oversee more visitor traffic. Clusters of brick, upscale apartments will be built west of Arch Park. A total of 350 units, built on the former Ohio Penitentiary site, will include views of the river and park—symbolizing the two as center.

Entertainment venues will include a cinema complex that will be run by the operator of Bexley and Grandview Heights’ Drexel theaters. Theater Operator Jeff Frank programs art and non-mainstream features, for the most part. The ten-screen multiplex will show a combination of independent and Hollywood films, as well as be home to a Science Fiction Marathon. Currently, the area is planned to include 200,000 square feet of retail/entertainment development around Arena Square at the corner of Nationwide Boulevard and West Street; a quintupling of this will be provided in office space. O'Shaughnessy's Public House is one of the restaurants that add a bit of local influence
into the district; lessening the feeling of being dominated by national chains as one might feel at Easton Town Center.

Residents living in the developments to the north could walk to the district and therefore a community could more easily develop than would be the case at Brice or Easton, especially once housing is in place. Unfortunately, like the earlier discussed centers, this one still caters to consumerism. Though a rowdy community meets at each Blue Jackets home game, the consumption in the stands far out numbers the production on the ice. Two crucial acknowledgements can be said in the district’s defense: One, the park does feel like a center and could be used for purposes other than consumption. Two, the space is called a district, which connotes this as an area heavily emphasizing a primary use, which is spelled out in its name: Arena communicates sports, entertainment and showmanship.

**Conclusion**

The Arena District does prevent the predicaments faced by declining suburbs. As those who could afford to do so abandoned older suburbs, a patchwork of uninhabited store lots, built in manners detrimental to resale—as in cheap material, and box-like exteriors—were reminders of the area’s better times. These structure slow or prevent the area’s redevelopment. Built for one use, the structures are not easily adaptable. A good example in corporate Columbus is the fate of the Sun-TV megastores. After going out of business, most stores were bought by similar entertainment appliance operations whose current buildings were proportionate to Sun’s. In essence, while vying for the same customers, one defeated the other in the market and a new one entered. The city cannot
afford to depend on businesses to always be malleable, so, by building in a fashion that has shown in the past to accept change, the city may avoid unworkable structures left behind by constantly shifting centers, as is the case today.

In the past, concentrations of development caused the volatility. By limiting developments in size to enhance attention to details, the city hopes businesses will respond with similar investments throughout the city, and namely, in downtown. By acknowledging Nationwide and the Dispatch’s gesture, the mayor asked for business to help prolong the rejuvenation occurring there. Many banks present in the city’s service industry often finance the suburban developments. Meanwhile, underutilized lots currently used as surface parking surround their offices downtown. At the same time, the city begins testing a new development strategy for the hinterlands in the southeast that have not witnessed the suburban vivacity seen to the north. For it is that type of horizontal growth, the city hopes to avoid in the urbanization of the Southeast Area. With the assistance of principles embraced by the New Urbanism, they intend to bridge the gap between business and community opened in the pursuit for the consumers. Forgoing the chase, they desire a center to retain a sense of permanency, bound by place. Though, like the business of today, the city and the CNU establish centers, the center’s resilience should not be completely dependent on consumptive practices, for citizens and not consumers derive the center. Therefore, in the next chapter, I present three villages that developed at roughly parallel moments in Columbus’ history. All greatly depended on local residents for nourishment, but were also indebted to businesses and government for their ends and revivals.
CHAPTER THREE
Neighborhood associations

Introduction

A couple of city centers near downtown seem to embody formal attributes more in line with an authentic community. Yet, by studying these places today, while something satisfying about them remains—especially in comparison to other substantial centers by name in and around the city—authenticity is still in question due to disparities amongst the intentions of current and original tenants. However, this chapter gets nearest to an authentic place as a limited overview of Columbus allows. A key focus is how does the development of official review boards authorized to preserve the neighborhoods affect authenticity. These initiatives, for the most part, have been individual-led revitalization efforts; though, corporations and government have played vital roles in reaffirming these neighborhoods as residential enclaves. Considerable time has past since these centers first were established and, since that time, a new flow of people have continuously moved into the area and at times affected the condition of the centers. What problems do a changing population and competing interpretations of tradition pose for authenticity? How do introducing reinterpretations or multiple interpretations further complicate authenticity’s relationship with place? Which interpretations are legitimate?

Historical development of bottom-up process

A presentation of the processes that established the centers continues to be an effective method for calculating intentions within the designs. The first center discussed in this chapter belongs to German Village, it name denoting the ethnicity of working
class immigrants who manned the breweries and built the community within the neighborhoods. The second center is shared by Italian Village—once again, the name indicates the major nationality at the settlement’s building peak—and Victorian Village. Both centers are unique in use and structure, for German Village’s is a park and the two villages connect along their edges to form a center.

German Village

German Village was not always known by this name, but its heritage is evident in street names such as Kossuth and Schiller. The lots that would define the streets were platted by a Scotsman who supported the call for American Independence prior to the area’s German settlement. Little is known of John McGowan’s life, but records show in March of 1802 he claimed 328 acres at the Chillicothe land office. His allotment came from a tract “four and one-half miles broad from north to southeast that stretched from the Scioto River eastward for forty-eight miles” before being divided into half sections. The claim’s southern portion would one day produce German Village. Thus, from its earliest history onward, Columbus residents knew it as the South End.

As development accelerated beginning in the early 1840s after Columbus’ founding, German-speaking immigrants built a strong sense of place based on community. Friedrich K. M. Bohm describes the elements to this community:

This sense of community resulted in a neighborhood pattern with all the houses close together, a living room oriented to the street and a rather large family kitchen, as one of the centers of family activity. The kitchen as family center is an element found typically in German rural communities. [Most Germans who settled in the South End were from rural origins along the Rhine River Valley.] The basic houseform of pitched roofs and simple details was directly transferred from Germany, although many architectural details and materials
changed. The doorsteps directly ending on the sidewalk were the typical “bridge” to community action on the street, a separator and a connector at the same time between community life and privacy within the family. The open front door and people sitting on the front steps seemed to have been the first step of community life, as compared to the front porch of the American houses of the time.\textsuperscript{82}

While Germans constituted perhaps the entirety of the South End’s population, in actuality, many more lived outside the district; and throughout the nineteenth century, one-third of the total Columbus population was German. A 1923 study of mobility within Columbus reported that “the most stable precinct lies in the center of the old German neighborhood…\textsuperscript{83} “Stability of residence…implies home ownership, which in turn give[s] rise to local sentiment and interest in neighborhood surroundings and community.”\textsuperscript{84} Not until mounting social hardships caused by world wars, a Great Depression and prohibition did the city’s German influence and community fade.

The story of a German Village center involves an absence of one. Unlike the centers discussed in the earlier chapters, the one found in the Village has little to do with goods and services. Today the center is known as Schiller Park, but its relationships began with the Village as Stewart’s Grove, “an empty piece of land far out on the south side of the city, where people came for church socials or family outings.”\textsuperscript{85} The open land complemented an experience familiar to Germans but lacking an American counterpart in Columbus. “Compared to the old “organic” street pattern of German towns, [the grid] street system created a totally new environment; a planned straight pattern with the lack of the old German “central plaza”, traditionally the center of all activities.”\textsuperscript{86} Thus, Stewart’s Grove became a meeting place where people could informally gather, intermixing and integration of different land uses produced multiple gathering places.
Home and business building first occurred along the present day Village’s north and west sides along City Park, Third Street and Livingston Avenue. East of Third was vastly uninhabited by mid 1800s, but to the west closely-knit, mixed-use neighborhoods were thriving. Businesses grew out of the first floors of homes and residents lived above their shops helping to form a stable community. The larger manufactures, such as the brewers and brick-makers, located in what is today called the Brewery District, were part of a German area that stretched westward to the Scioto. In 1873, six breweries in the area, fourteen bakeries, seven broom-making firms and thirteen brick-making firms employed over 400 people. The booming economy helped incorporate Stewarts’s Grove: “By 1872 area development forced Columbus to extend [the southern] boundary. The city turned Stewart’s Grove into a city park surrounded by empty building lots in 1865. When it was named Schiller Park in 1891, those lots were not so empty.”

That same year, a number of German organizations, satisfying and enhancing the needs typically met in a public meeting place, proposed and partially funded the casting of a bronze statute for City Park. The statute of German poet Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller arrived from Munich, and not until after its installation as the park’s centerpiece, did the park bear his namesake. The statue’s addition and name change reflected the residents’ desires to establish a center that displayed their heritage and influence in the city. Not long before, Columbus elected George Karb mayor—the first of German ancestry—who spoke at the statue’s unveiling.

The openness of the original parkland gave way to the city’s recognition of the area through its incorporation. This official process allowed for an increase in
development in and around the park, though remaining residential in character. Schiller Park is shaped like a trapezium, meaning from above it appears like a quadrilateral with nonparallel sides. Those four sides respect the public right-of-ways: City Park Avenue as the western limit, Reinhard Avenue on the north, Jaeger Street to the east, and Deshler Avenue at the southern edge. Through the years, the form had been open land with unclear boundaries. The edge of the German development of the South End consisted of trees and grassland. But when the city bought the grove, it also extended the building boundary to include the area surrounding the park. The encroachment occurring through the harvesting of the lots bounded the space while defining it. The park was redefined a few more times, though not in structure or use, but in connotation, through processes that included residents while some actions were attempts to protect them. In the next sections, a review of major city policies illustrate the decline and rise of what is now called German Village.

It was at this same time that the South End slowly deteriorated until both citizen and official procedures paved the way for a rebirth of the German tradition that first erected the settlement. Unlike the establishment of a city park, city government actions began to negatively effect the South End. The beginning of the end came by way of the 1923 zoning ordinance for the city. Recall that this was the city’s first foray in zoning. Columbus zoned the South End for manufacturing and commercial use. Though the area was substantially residential, it did include a mix of both manufacturing and commercial uses and structures. The commercial properties had been inter-dispersed throughout the blocks and neighborhoods—a practice the new zoning code no longer would allow.
However, the code permitted land uses that could damage the residential character that contributed to the area’s stability. The quality of life in the South End already had taken damage from public policies and paranoia since the outset of World War I. The *German Village Guidelines*\(^9^0\) effectively recalls the decimation of place caused by swings in opinion:

Social and political changes combined to send the neighborhood into decline. As Germans became Americanized, they depended less on traditional German community. Perhaps most devastating was the onset of World War I which stirred strong anti-German sentiment in Columbus’ largely American-born population. German books were burned, German newspapers closed; speaking German was also *verboten*. Officials renamed Schiller, Germania, Kaiser, and Bismarck streets as Whittier, Stewart, Lear, and Lansing streets. Schiller became Washington Park. When Prohibition (1920-33) closed the doors of the South End breweries, the German workers were forced to find work elsewhere. They also found homes elsewhere as a trickle of South Enders began moving to newly developed suburbs. After World War II, that trickle had become a flood, accelerating the neighborhood’s decline.\(^9^1\)

Though Schiller Park withstood another name change, the neighborhoods themselves fared poorly in the un-friendly social climate. Property values slid as an increase in absentee landlords and renters filtered in. In fact, over ninety percent of the units were rentals. Before the decimation caused by prejudicial policy, the South End had supported a mixed income community. The intensification of low-income renters without ownership, that former tie to the neighborhoods that had held the community together, created a self-perpetuating environment that inadequate maintenance could not alter in the least. This fall from stability helped flame fascination over the South End’s eventual turnaround. A resident who grew up outside its eastern edge along Parsons Avenue remembers German Village as being a rundown neighborhood in the early 1960s.\(^9^2\) He
was advised to avoid it simply because nothing worthwhile existed within its neighborhoods. The city seemed to concur.

Urban renewal took its toll on the South End. By declaring the northern third (from Main Street, south to Livingston Avenue,) “blighted,” the city justified uprooting some of the South End’s oldest structures and replaced them with a sunken interstate highway as a means to spur development with speedier transportation. Yet, one citizen disagreed with the city’s assessment and he would lead a residential movement to prevent further demolition.

Frank Fetch had bought a house in 1949 to restore it and hoped to light the spark to revitalize the decaying neighborhood. Eleven years of preservation activities by Fetch and others homeowners resulted in the founding of the German Village Society. That summer, Columbus City Council would recognize the group’s efforts in two crucial ways: First, the city renamed the South End German Village, and second, an advisory commission was set-up to advise the city of needed preservation legislation. The German Village Commission received the authority to review design in the 1963 Chapter 3325 addition to the Columbus Zoning Code. This time the code would assist with a restoration process convergent with the area prior to the cities detrimental involvement as approved by the Commission.

Two other alterations to the code efficiently preserved the urban neighborhoods’ character. In 1960, at the outset of the Society, German Village was rezoned strictly high density residential. Gone were the heavy industrial uses. In 1972 the Society once again succeeded in convincing City Council to limit uses; now only one- to two-family
structures were permitted inside the Village. The result of this resident-led revival of architecture and place created an environment supportive of public amenities such as parks (Schiller renamed once again by 1930), schools, libraries and a living museum to the past, and was done without public funds to subsidize the restorations. In 1974, German Village was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Italian and Victorian Villages**

The area planners refer to as the near north side for its proximity to downtown, just north of the railroad tracks, includes Italian and Victorian Villages and the High Street commercial district, better known as the Short North. Here, the center serves more as a link to the two villages and their many neighborhoods. Prior to the mid-1800’s, the land occupied by the near north villages comprised several large farms owned by the Neil, Hubbard, and Starr families, for whom streets are named. “Area growth was first stimulated by the Columbus-Worthington Pike, now called High Street, built in 1823.”

As noted in an earlier chapter, development occurred at a more rapid rate north of downtown than to the south, however, the two villages came into existence roughly parallel with German Village. Their declines are similar, too; urban renewal at their southern edges called innerbelt I-670 razed homes, businesses and whole communities. An irony that appears often in this work, expansion of the city’s transportation system contributed to the decline of these communities as speedily as they encouraged development at their commencements.

An excerpt from the *Italian Village Guidelines* describes transportation’s role in the near north:
In 1863 the first streetcar service began along High Street. The cars were drawn by two horses and went as far north as Russell Street, where stables were located. The North Columbus Street Railway Company served Italian Village from 1871 to 1874. High Street was paved in 1876 and the streetcar service was extended. By 1881 the first electric cars had appeared on High Street. At that time, High Street was still the main thoroughfare to downtown Columbus and travelers down Summit Street had to turn west through Italian Village to get to High Street. In 1895 North Fourth Street was extended to downtown by a viaduct constructed over the railroad tracks. High Street by 1890 was a thriving arterial corridor providing commercial and retail service to the adjacent neighborhoods. Many of the High Street historic commercial buildings had been built by 1890. By the end of the century, the population had increased considerably since its annexation in 1862.\(^95\)

Kindled by a mix of transportation, the near north developed rapidly through the 1870s and 80s’ building boom. Fueling the need for new construction and providing the hands were recent immigrants. The Irish were the first ethnic group to settle in the area. The Italians followed not too long after and their craftsmanship can be appreciated in the architecture. However, the Italians tended to cluster closer to the West side of High in an area, called ‘Flytown’—a victim of urban renewal, unsalvageable today.

While mass transit ushered people into the near north, the area’s economy and amenities kept them there. “Within walking distance were goods and services, recreational facilities and workplaces including the North High Street Commercial district, Goodale Park, [the City’s oldest, donated by Lincoln Goodale in 1851] and Jeffrey Manufacturing, which employed 800 people in 1901.”\(^96\) The railroads at the area’s southern and eastern boundaries also were major employers. Italian laborers may have lent the area its charm, but the role of the entrepreneur and corporation in its development should not go overlooked. They were the driving force in laying the framework to allow communities’ establishment. By increasing the opportunities in the
near north, they were also able to sustain the community. Once options became available outside the villages in the form of post-World War II suburbs, the middle class left and lower income residents, displaced by slum clearance tactics on the behalf of the city, took their place. The effect was the same as attributed to German Village’s decline. Large single-family homes, especially the Victorian style homes (hence the name) were divided into multi-family residences. Though widening High Street (1915-1923) had placed twentieth century facades on the buildings and had little other effect, the lowered purchasing power of the new residents and new shopping malls on the city’s edges wounded its vitality.

The processes thus far discussed produced the structural center evident today. The Short North cuts down the center of the two villages serving as the center, and at the same time, as edge. The edge in this instance does not present itself as a barrier, but as a node, an entry into a separate place. This transformation from residential street running east to west onto a commercial thoroughfare with traffic and transit makes quite a juxtaposition, therefore deserving recognition as a node, edge and center. Italian Village stretches seven blocks east of High Street. Victorian Village amasses approximately the same area to the west. Their streets are designed as a grid system with major north-south arteries and lesser east-west streets. By 1899 the original street system (before urban renewal) was complete and most of the historic buildings had been built. An extensive alley system behind residences built to service horse stables now all accommodates utility wires and poles, guesthouse and automobile traffic, and garages.
Interestingly, while Victorian Village’s grid respects true North, Italian Village’s negotiates both the true North grid and the older grid based on the original Columbus survey. Therefore, a few peculiar intersections form where the two grids meet—one called Christopher Columbus Square. Some of Italian Village’s grid has been disconnected and its southern edge has been decreased by almost a third due to I-670. The grid does not recognize a considerable structural center nor does one by name exist within the village itself, but for a few religious institutions. On the other hand, Goodale Park can be found in Victorian Village and does provide a sizable landscaped open area and center. Russell Street used to run from Italian Village east to the park’s main gate. However, the extension of Summit Street south to downtown with the addition of the I-670 entrance ramp cut Russell in two, eliminating the direct route. While the innerbelt may have been conceived as a boom for business downtown, it had the affect of thwarting a quick revival of community in close proximity to where energy was sought.

**Contemporary place**

Another irony to add to the near north’s history is that the entrepreneur may be responsible for the Short North’s revival and therefore the villages’ resuscitation. In 1973, the mayor appointed two new Village Commissions along with recognizing the villages as historical districts. The late 1980s saw the rebirth of the Short North and Victorian Villages—its Victorian homes were an easy sell to the upper-middle class who may have been contemplating the large home in the suburb. Urban pioneers bought properties along High Street at low prices and took advantage of the high traffic volume from downtown workers to uptown students. Kunstler writing on the Short North’s
turnaround: “In a way, it was the natural occurrence of what was being done in Providence—letting artists and bohemians serve as the shock troops of urban rehabilitation.”

A recent addition to the Short North, Victorian Gate, is the realization of local developer Jack Lucks, who claims responsibility and regrets much of the development in Columbus’ suburbs. The three story brick townhouses with store frontage along high act as a point of entry to Victorian Village. It has the effect of replacing the attributes of an edge with a path. Passing through in either direction, the development works perfectly as a node. The style and size of the structure is meant to fit seamlessly with the existing urban fabric. Today the Short North is home to many eclectic, though upscale, businesses begun in the late 1980s. Art galleries, dining, cafés, ice cream parlors, and mostly independent specialty stores line High Street for blocks after the bridge over I-670. On the southern side of the bridge are the Columbus Convention Center and the North Market. For over a century, the North Market has given the opportunity for farmers to provide fresh produce to city dwellers. With the placement of the Arena District all but enclosing the market, the North Market today has a counterpart to its vital connection within Columbus’ urban fabric and purpose.

After reviewing the process that created and reestablished the Short North and the two neighborhoods, the question arises: what makes this center take on a feeling different from the centers by name? Restorations of Italian, Victorian and German Villages and thus reestablishment of their centers were initiated through private funding. This not only says something about the determination of the people involved, but also suggests a
process neither corporate nor technocratic, because the reinvestment, at least at the outset and for most of the following decade, came from within the neighborhood. And in their efforts, the citizens, artists and developers alike restored a sense of place and community comparable to a time that had faded into memory. They were capable of harnessing again that energy preserved in the building designs and the urbanisms of the past. The feeling I found by strolling along these centers, as a child of the later suburbs, captures an experience of satisfaction with the human altered landscape unlike that experienced at a mall or even Les Wexner’s Easton Town Center. Perhaps this is a result of the proximity to residences and mixed uses or the variety of structures. While diversity in structure is stronger along High Street as it is around Schiller Park, the unity found in both harmoniously reflects an acknowledgement of the connections to city and neighborhood, an attention to the place existing and to exist after, and an appreciation of the people who will live amongst the designs.

Commodity as a historical place

The products that are being sold in the Short North are partially valued on space. The traditions being honored—local economy, urban grid, pedestrian-friendly—belong to a place from the past with contemporary culture selecting the choice representations. Store operators offer the new made from the best of past traditions. When the corporate process does this by selection of representations of community as embodied in place, the results rarely create comforting destinations for some—see Easton for example. And if the grid was always considered the most pleasant experience, the bulk of consumers and businesses would not have abandoned it in the first place. Nonetheless, the
commoditization of place involves more than simply real estate, but the selection of traditions, of styles. This is unique and similar to the invention of tradition Hoelscher writes about in *Heritage on Stage*. Hoelscher, presenting the theories of other social scientists, paraphrases the research of two authors when he writes that all traditions are real because all tradition is invented, but attention rather should be paid to the selective process that chooses segments of the past to represent a culture. By combining theories of Anthony Giddens and Raymond Williams, Hoelscher asks that we forego what counts as tradition but instead focus on how the tradition is derived and continues to be nurtured and whose interests are served. What traditions of the past were most practical for adaptation in the present and therefore were tangible for commercialization? One such tradition was a mix of uses with a central focus.

The selective versions of tradition fall along approximate lines of the Kevin Cox commodity-place theory proposed in the last chapter. The commodity in the Cox theory and as represented in the villages is the real estate within the neighborhood or center. You purchase access to the place. Social relations between people come to be viewed as between areas instead. Though community in Franklinton may be as strong or stronger than in the villages, the decision where to locate becomes a choice between neighborhood—property values—and not community. Regardless of the choice to be made, both are place-bound; but one deals with the value of reciprocity and the other values the building set amongst the place. Therefore, living nearer to the center of the villages increases the likelihood of higher property values. This quite possibly reflects both place-bound values combined, however: the monetary value is an assessment of the
individual home, office or store positioned where people relate “to one another in the context of a specific place.” In the villages, the developers, residents and employers understand the selection of traditions from the past, “the way things were,” are important to attracting new residents, visitors and customers alike. To do so, they can either advertise what it is they have to offer to the city or they can do so in a manner less transparent: “all publicity [would have] to be carefully hidden from view in order to not [sic] taint this fragile vision of authenticity.”

Though the continuation of tradition requires a conscious consideration of cultural practices, the continuity of authenticity may involve a cautious relationship with the utilization of tradition. Though a resident may be aware of his or her community’s sense of place, any unwarranted attention or impure intentions could threaten authenticity. This is an impossible standard to bear if an official review board can exert a very public discussion of what is authentic and what is not, therefore, in this respect, stifling any possibility of authenticity.

**Official versus vernacular culture**

At least two vantage points of what counts as authentic seem delineated. In German Village’s redevelopment, the residents as represented in the German Village Society do not diverge too obviously with the members of the Commission, which is made up of appointees chosen by Columbus’ mayor and two representatives selected by the Society. However, the Society can also be thought of as the decision-making body—the official spokespersons—for the Village. How likely is it that their official doctrines do not interfere with the vernacular culture there before their interest in the 1960s or at
present? Again, both officials and common participants select traditions not only to represent, but also to be utilized within the community. One way to assess the extent to which this vision of tradition is snared is to ask whether the Society assisted residents in restoring their houses to a satisfactory condition or if residents who wished to not restore sold their properties to enthused buyers. This would determine if the community accepted the motion to preserve and if they were allowed to participate in the final decision. The answer to the first question is yes and no. The society did help participate in maintaining (though, not restoring) homes of those who could not afford to do so on their own. But the society could not prevent the property taxes from increasing 478% in the past thirty years (Columbus as a whole—German Village included—rose by 100%) and thus, pushing out residents with lower incomes.

An obvious break in the progression of German Village as a German community had occurred before 1950, and a decline occurred in the Short North as well. But, who is to say that decline in urbanization does not produce progress; if it were not for the decline that had a negative effect on property values, those interested in revitalizing would not have been given the chance. The restorers most likely chose to continue certain traditions, not all traditions. To do so, would be an impossible task and hardly worthwhile. And a good posturing of the contemporary tradition could not be avoided in restorations or additions, for modernization in building techniques had occurred unabated. The guidelines only regulate appearance, not the tools used to derive that appearance. The fact of the matter is that the official view became one in favor of restoration, just as before the official view supported urban renewal and its assault on the characteristics that the
restorers considered to be the area’s charms, and therefore, assets. Darrin Wasniewski, German Village’s on-hand historic preservation officer agrees with this assessment by noting that rehabilitation took the South End in a different direction, an old one.\(^{101}\) The community of the Germans had dissipated. Amid an abundance of rental units, a sense of community could not be established without home ownership.\(^{102}\) The revival of the homes and businesses and the creation of a “German center” restored community as well.

However, a disagreement over official versus vernacular readings threatens what is deemed authentic. Whereas cultural authorities reinterpret the past to avoid interests that compete with their own, the vernacular account could challenge the official standpoint by contributing first-hand experience in small-scale communities.\(^{103}\) If vernacular practices are to continue, they often must acquire legitimization by the official, thus, blurring a differentiation. When a differentiation can still be discerned, the question becomes which interpretation, the city’s or its residents, is most authentic? for what time? for whom? Before I can answer this, I need to acknowledge Columbus’ deficiency of centers either official or vernacular—a realization necessary to mediate the two cultures that may be found through closer scrutiny of the edges.

In the context of Columbus, development has occurred on the edge of settlement. Within schools, children are taught of America’s expansion. Before it was Manifest Destiny, now it is termed suburban sprawl. The pursuit for the edge has given Columbusites opportunities that are not so present in smaller, more densely populated cities. The culture can be described as both mobile and volatile. Because the apparent non-scarcity of choice offered by various neighborhoods, Columbusites are capable of
living wherever it is they desire to go so long as they are able to afford the place. (And if occupants desire to upgrade or downsize their living arrangements, they most likely will have to move, because homes ranging in price are not often found within the same neighborhood—another catch-22 situation) By focusing on the edge, we have avoided the intensification of the centers. However, recently released census figures, cheered by the technocrats, have shown a population upswing in Columbus, but this may reflect annexation of unincorporated land experiencing suburban development. Thus an increase in population overall may offset a loss or stagnating population in the denser city.

Regardless, given the opportunity, citizens can choose where they desire to live based on costs, and if a German Village or a Victorian Gate appeals to them they may go there. This simply does not match with the necessities of an authentic place, which requires a community to tend it, as I soon explain. Packing up and starting anew should not be the only option for individuals; this would lead to the reduction of value in community. Practically, options are not infinite. When individuals view them as limited (as they truly are in neighborhoods valued on space and amenities) or the role of the Commissions or Societies as infringement on rights, individuals feel incapable of finding a place representative of their intentions. And if they are unwilling to go elsewhere, communities as individuals must influence change within their neighborhoods. This begins with a reevaluation of the codes.

While the guidelines offer stricter codes than those presented in the zoning codes, zoning and land use designation takes place throughout America but may vary in its involvement in design. The Columbus zoning code would seem to be more concerned
with the urban planning rather than the architectural style like the guidelines, which describes what style of house, windows, transoms or gutters may be installed within the villages. The way to build is laid out for the residents or developer. The reinterpretation of meaning works beneficially for those who decide to live in the villages in a manner consistent with the guidelines—the same goes for the individual who lives in the corporation limits and abides by the zoning codes. In many suburbs, civic groups and neighborhood associations meet to determine what is to be considered allowable within the confines of their jurisdiction.

Urban codes affect both official and common people to the same extent as long as the two act in unison. Yet because beliefs of the former are more transparent than those of the latter, the commonality of the interpretations goes, for the most part, unproven unless those practitioners of the vernacular, who, too, invent tradition, participate in the debate. Through direct participation in the debate, all residents would be allowed to share their conceptions of the good. By coming together to reinterpret the neighborhood, residents can reorganize the codes or guidelines from appearing as infringements on rights into doctrines of shared intentions of the community whole. This especially can be a positive action for those confined to a place because of income, handicap or neighborhood tie who cannot easily pack up and leave.

Many techniques exist and more still require invention to fuel participation in the design of neighborhoods, and the arrangement of both uses and structures within the centers—all to allow for more commonly shared spatial and social environments. An experiment with one such participatory technique is taking place at the eastern edge of
Italian Village. Though the energy is focused on the edge, it may succeed in balancing
the neighborhood between center and the current desolate landscape caused by the
closure and demolition of a large manufacturing company that left behind empty slabs of
concrete.

**Contemporary development: charrette**

*Jeffrey Square*

From September 11-15, 2000, city officials, architects, urban designers, and
residents convened “for several days to make suggestions, discuss options, and address
concerns related to the design and character of the site to be developed.” The site had
been the location of the Jeffrey Manufacturing Corporation that closed its doors in 1999.
Ever since its closing, residents had been concerned about the nature of the site’s future
development. The process that brought them together with officials and designers is
called a charrette, which involves direct community participation in structural design, and
which is advocated by the New Urbanism and grassroots organizations. The process as
described by one of three professional firms that comprised the charrette team is as
follows:

With this focused and immediate contact [that the process and charrette team
provide], ideas can be incorporated into the site plan as they are raised. Three
public presentations were held during the week to present the plans as it
progressed; informal drop-ins were also welcome. The final charrette design is a
conceptual yet thorough one, full of ideas and information from all of the
participants.

They met in the former building that housed Jeffrey’s headquarters, and thus the
new development was named Jeffrey Square. All along the team and participants had
desired to design a plan that would make allusion to the nearby neighborhoods not just by proximity, but also by incorporating prevailing designs of the Village. The goal was to make the design “look like it has always been there.” Main concerns included calming traffic along a major north-south thoroughfare by adding crosswalks and bump-outs for parallel parking, increasing amenities for the whole village, and seamlessly connecting the new and existing sections of the village “both physically and visually.” The participatory process enabled development of schemes that met both the concerns of vernacular and official participants.

The resulting plan not only makes seamless connections with the existing village, but also “multi-centers” the community. An attempt is made to connect as many of the adjacent and complementing uses as possible in the Village where major automobile arteries caused discontinuity in the grid. Open spaces are placed within five-minute walking distances of every home. Retail and employment opportunities are available throughout Jeffrey Square. Less pedestrian-oriented uses and larger structures are placed near the innerbelt and train tracks. These include parking garages and a telecommunications switching station that buffer the village from noise and visual pollution. The tracks remain for a Central Ohio Transit Authority proposed light rail right-of-way and station that would connect the village to the downtown and to area to the village’s north. The Ohio to Erie bike trail crosses the tracks at the site of the station and acts as a regional connection and state pathway to this mixed use development, a subsequent center.
Italian Village one day might excel as a multiple center to Columbus. For this to occur connections between centers must become more civilized in scale. Either officials will have to recognize the situation caused by convenient yet damaging (singular use pathways capable of decimating mixed use neighborhoods) connections available through interstate highway transit or citizens as community developers must participate in an authentic process to bridge the chasm between official and vernacular future visions.

**Conclusion**

Through closing disjunctions between the official and vernacular standpoints the intentions of the group responsible for human-built structures may become apparent. The authority of official positions will perhaps be contested. In doing so, the result should be a legitimized vernacular tradition.

Does legitimization allow the vernacular to remain vernacular? Perhaps it becomes authentic in that people who live in a place are responsible for its appearance as I witnessed early on in my walks through the city. I was most familiar with German Village before this work began and had noticed what I perceived to be a vibrant community. Yet Darrin Wasniewski of the German Village Society felt the continuation of a vernacular community within the neighborhoods was in jeopardy. One reason for this, Wasniewski pointed out, was the arrival of younger couples who worked for large retail corporations in the city, some owned by Les Wexner. These couples knew they were most likely transient employees; they could be in the city for only a few years, but desired to live in the Village for its historic urban living. In reaching out to residents, the Society is forced to take a more active role as they had in the past. If the community
became unstable, Wasniewski worried about its survival even though the Society is yet to officially acknowledge the claims he was making. The following chapter imagines what another attempt at an authentic process might look like if a community were to remain in place and work to refine centers. First the definition of authenticity, as it is directly related to community, must be narrowed to a concise, approachable and utilizable concept.
CHAPTER FOUR
Community assessments

Introduction

What is authenticity? What does it mean for Columbus? And why frame it as the evolving structures and uses resulting from an ongoing place-based process. First, if the authentic derives from a process including all residents of the area affected, then the residents could invent tradition openly; in essence they would practice vernacular planning—vernacular in that it visually embodies a practical utilization of a tradition.

What is “authentic” is widely disputed in academia and beyond. Some thinkers believe that shortly after first settlement the authentic expires, becomes inauthentic, or foreign traditions creep into social practice. Others construe authentic as “not fake”: “the American imagination demands the real thing, and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake.” Hoelscher writes of an academic bias against capitalistic involvement in cultural affairs as dirting clean water implying that the authentic lies outside or prior to capitalism. In other words, assessing the degrees to which phenomena is ethnic produced as compared to phenomena capitalist in origin would determine the authenticity of place. Post-modernist schools of thought would seem to discount the debate about authenticity all together—reducing it instead to a question of power: “Who is to judge what is authentic or not?” Regardless, the gap in the understanding of phenomena needs to be bridged, for once a place moves beyond urban to be viewed as a city, other traditions, whether conceived as original or alien can easily be introduced; but only at certain key junctures—though hardly predictable—will new traditions find support. One such key juncture is during a place’s first cultivations.
The city center as phenomenon and not merely location requires time to develop a diverse potential for acceptance by citizens to lead to an authentic process. Columbusites have not always accepted change or newness so readily. First, acknowledgment as a gathering place should be an indication of a center’s popularity. But if the center were by name only—the commoditization of land—support may eventually wane or rather turn out to be merely a projection of unequal representation favoring consumers above non-consumers. Though citizens can play the role of consumers, as a group they would not likely build a center as a place for strictly consumptive purposes if the process allowed all to participate. Second, an emphasis on consumption, not community, leaps conspicuously to mind in an overview of city centers. Where to find phenomenon of community-based origin? Transparent traces of community are found in the three historical villages. Must the city be made over as a historical district to encourage the actualization of community participation by residents to renovate existing structures and uses to accommodate residents’ own wills than those of outside capitalist profiteers? Rather, sense of place seems to instill community devotion amongst citizens.

Authenticity becomes the integral term to revitalize community responsibly for the following reasons: In the near future, people may find it difficult to live with these forms that thrive on segregation of uses and structures based on property values. As energy prices rise, Columbusites may desire to live closer to complementary uses and design structures to allow for compact communities. Our centers by name, urban and many city centers without attainable goods and services will become as meaningless to the middle-class consumer as they already are to the marginalized who cannot afford to
take part in consumptive practices. Citizens themselves, and not the corporations who continually threaten to move elsewhere, should harness the power to decide the fate of consumptive centers, when they will stay and when they will go. Then citizens may determine the terms on which to integrate. The process I am advocating is often resisted as public control at the cost of private freedom; but the public “here” does not have a technocratic surrogate. Regardless of when and how a location or phenomenon originated, for a community to develop authentically, invention must come from within, as conveyed through a continuing process paralleling a center’s existence. Any completion in building would be only temporarily, for community may be place-bound, but it also is a growing “organism.” To illustrate the above standpoint, this works returns to Central Ohio’s settlement origins: Franklinton.

Because I was not able to produce a satisfactory authentic center—Jeffrey Square has the potential to be one—does not mean that one in accordance with what this work calls authentic (through a suggested process below) does not prosper in Columbus. The centers included here were primarily white middle class; Franklinton, on the other hand, supports a relatively mixed racial and income spectrum; as for others, they are missing from this study. However, what one would look like, though contrary to most of what has been written above, is imaginable to an extent. As a society living together (or apart) for so long, we all have our own ideas of what the city and its urban and city centers should look like. Therefore an image of one would be both familiar and unique. The final case study will be based on rumors and projects in progress as well as my own suggestions for Franklinton and Columbus’ future realities.
Historical development of an authentic process

The town Franklinton

Authentic centers and centers by name—the two “centers” discussed here—cause all kinds of invention. Corporations tend to conspicuously reinvent the phenomenon but fail because no sure formula exists—recall the Easton project. Authentic invention comes through residents’ direct participation in the creation of tradition and community. People are aware of desired places and arrangements that work comfortably for them, just as the corporations or government know what a community should embody. Past experiences play a defining role in the traditions advocated. The experiences found in Franklinton are no exception to the rule. Here, the community members take active roles in considering what attributes their community should exemplify.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the town’s founder had similar visions. Lucas Sullivant, the Virginian surveyor who was paid in land at the eastern edge of the Virginian Military District, chose the confluence of the navigable Olentangy and Scioto Rivers for the soil’s fertility and centrality within the state. If the town did not receive appointment of the capital it would not be far off, and the migration westward would surely pass through its town. “I would like to come back in fifty years and stand on this spot,” Sullivant had told his son, Joseph, in 1823, “I would not be surprised to see steam wagons running across these bottoms.” Sullivant died later that year.

Today Columbusites often think “the bottoms” refers to Franklinton’s economic woes and homeless shelters, but Sullivant meant and most understand the term to describe the low-lying town’s position so close to a river, which deposited the rich soil.
Sullivant had prepared to sell his first lots in the spring of 1798 when the Scioto breached its banks and sent a good many lots under rushing currents. After repositioning the town a hundred yard west, he resumed the sale by enticing prospective residents with free lots near the river. The street on which these properties lay came to be called Gift Street.

The new town center was positioned as an intersection of the two main roads. Washington Street ran north to south and Franklin, named for Benjamin Franklin, as was the settlement, spread toward the perpendicular compass points. Franklin was renamed Broad Street; it later held stature as the National Road. Sullivant did not mistake the settlement’s potential as a gateway to the West, but he did miscalculate its security from recurring flooding. The town’s future was almost in doubt in 1913 when a flood affected most of Ohio and much of the Midwest; in Columbus flooding killed ninety-three—all from Franklinton. The Town Street bridge collapsed and the Broad Street bridge was damaged enough to also require replacement. 20,000 were left homeless; nearest the river, whole streets were leveled to piles of wood and bricks.

The Federal Government did not step in to prevent flooding until 1986. By that time more flooding and other government initiatives had altered Sullivant’s twice-conceived designs. A major flood in 1959 left another 10,000 without homes and increased an exodus to the suburbs. In 1974 the population was hovering at 26,000; the present population has dropped to under 15,000. Under severe FEMA building and renovation restrictions since 1986, owners neither can build new structures nor improve existing structures beyond a limited amount. As a result, rundown, neglected and abandoned properties are prevalent. To clear this difficult economic hurdle, the federal
government and the city will extend the floodwall to protect the town from a 500-year flood. The floodwall’s completion in 2002 will either inspire the citizens or create yet another barrier that the river, though not very wide, already presents; the same can be said of key transportation arteries that cut through Franklinton.

These so-called barriers to Franklinton’s advancement are a crisscrossing, multi-leveled array of highways, interstates, railroads and water. Whether they were intended as a cure for Franklinton’s woes or for downtown Columbus’ decline—an attempt to efficiently move people from downtown to the suburbs—could not be less clear. Though the latter is more probable, because the end result negatively affected the West Side. Alleviating Sullivant’s original plan while still honoring it, the main north to south street, Washington, was sunk to below ground level and widened into State Route 315, a multi-lane, fifty-five mile per hour highway. SR 315 cut the town into two sections, east and west. The grid, left broken in many areas, no longer offered effective connections.

The Toledo and Ohio Central Railroad altered the town’s layout as well, earlier in Franklinton’s history than the SR 315 expansion. The railroad track crossing Broad Street was elevated so as not to interfere with automobile traffic, but instead posed a visual barrier. The T&OC Railroad station is still there, however. A landmark of the community, the station, oriental in inspiration, can be seen from an eastbound entry. The style called, pagoda, features towering entrances, elaborate overhangs and pointed roofs. The vertical expression startles the passer-by. At what time in this town’s history could this have been built? Open for Franklinton’s centennial celebration, the station christened arrivals. Another railway borders the river to the north, (the expanded I-670 now frames
the northern edge). However, no passenger train station is found within Franklinton or elsewhere in Columbus, though at one time many did flourish. The lone arch in the Arena District’s Arch Park and the T&OC Railroad station are reminders of a mixed transportation past.

Today, in Columbus, the automobile is considered the primary means when planners and engineers design pathways. Mass transit has proved a difficult sell in the city. Proposals for light rail by the Central Ohio Transit Authority have come and gone, but support of the highway innerbelts, outerbelts and interstates development remains high amongst technocrats and corporations. Orange barrels are as linked with the state as the buckeye tree—or at least Columbusites believe it so. A costly makeover presently occurs on a third barrier posed by transportation: Interstate-70 borders Franklinton to the south and west. The highway is elevated with overpasses and large bunkers reminiscent of the mounds left behind by early human inhabitants of the region. The effect of the elevation creates a protected atmosphere, like tactics used to protect a settlement at earlier times or perhaps not too long ago. The War of 1812 brought military bases to Franklinton; this time, the town was chosen to quarter Ohio’s defenses. Though a few shelters and social service facilities in the area fight to comfort suffering, no war presently is being waged in Franklinton, but the peripheries’ boundaries may lead one to think otherwise.

Community activist Carol Stewart suggests the barriers to be more psychological than actual. Franklinton conveys a feeling of a closed community.\textsuperscript{112} She likened it to living in a valley framed by mountains. Yet visually, barriers are present and not always
inviting. Stewart, however, made sure the city installed a grand entrance to Central Ohio’s first settlement. The whole city-over marked the five hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ landing in the New World, timing the opening of Discovery Bridge at Broad Street. Though Stewart sees the river as an escape, a rural reminder of her time in Missouri before moving to Franklinton thirty-seven years ago, she believes that the accessibility allowed by the bridges is not sufficient enough to remove the stigma of being on the other side. The completion of the floodwall she boasts about may lift that stigma. However the residents must alleviate the barriers collectively.

Along the Broad Street corridor, former structures built for uses as far ranging as fire stations to fast food now service as wide an array of different uses. Currently the Volunteers of America runs a family shelter inside the T&OC Railroad station. Trains no longer do more than pass. Yet, auto-savvy folk did not mind: The Ford Motor Company aimed to acquire real estate at the corner of SR 315 and Broad Street. Though the site happened to include Sullivant’s large home—located at the center of his town—Ford nonetheless demolished it, and built a car dealership. Graham Ford as it is called today, displays a few artifacts and the balcony from the house. Still other historic structures survived: The oldest surviving firehouse in Columbus accommodates an independent electronics store. Meanwhile, the city’s oldest fire station still in operation is located a few blocks west of the electronics store; Fire Engine House No. 10 has been active since 1896. Across the street, a fast-service fried chicken place with its signature restaurant design was welcomed to the town but soon closed; in its place, a check-cashing service opened, a disappointment to Carol Stewart because of it predatory surcharges. One
successful use has expanded from a single house to a health service district. Mount Carmel Medical Center began as Hawkes Hospital of Mount Carmel in 1886 and continues to grow into one of Central Ohio’s premier hospitals. Another notable, citywide success has been the Spaghetti Warehouse begun 80 years after the original structure’s occupant, the Crystal Ice and Fuel Company, began operation in 1898. Other structures along Broad Street and throughout the three-square-mile area, too many to present here, have been converted to accommodate a mix of uses.

The above process and structure should be familiar by now—a hybrid of the corporate, technocratic and bottom-up schemes addressed in chapters one through three. Initiatives by individuals reinterpret original uses and alter structures, though a collective push to do the same only has begun to gel. A more interesting process still in development remains to be discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to present a possible authentic process begun and administered by the individuals within the community. This process’ end is bent on reversing the trends that the past century of transportation obstacles have layered on the little town. The means to achieve the desired structure and uses is the process itself.

**Contemporary development: from within**

*The community Franklinton*

Central High School closed in 1982 due to low attendance in Columbus Public Schools. Though it would find occasional use after its closure, Columbus City Council seriously considered demolishing the structure. The community of Franklinton, many of them graduates of Central High could not allow the decision to be made without their
input. An initiative was begun to get an issue on the ballot concerning the use of the structure. After a committed campaign, too many of the signatures came back ineligible. Regardless, the effort had stirred City Council enough to halt demolition. Since being shutdown, Central High has housed a few touring exhibits. Most notably, Son of Heaven, displaying artifacts from Chinese emperor tombs, passed through Columbus at the site and enjoyed considerable press and attendance. In the fall of 1999, an even bigger event seized Central High. The initiative effort, a community-led process, also convinced the city’s Center of Science and Industry to relocate from their site on East Broad Street to Central High’s prominent position off West Broad Street. Central High, now COSI, faces the Scioto River’s west bank and the city of Columbus. The gateway to Franklinton now feels grander.

Carol Stewart does not think too much of her efforts. “I think of all the community service I do as my way of serving God,” she said in a Columbus Dispatch interview, “We tithe to our community.”

She also helped organize the Franklinton Bicentennial in 1997, when she practically parented the razing of a statue to honor the town’s founder, who can be seen looking up stream, adjacent the Central High façade. Stewart and the Franklinton Historical Society that she currently presides over have made attempts toward revitalizing the area. Most of the remaining structures in Franklinton, though historical, are few, and because of their scarcity, efforts to preserve them are stepping up. Interest peaked at acquiring an almost two-century-old wooden house; they at least hope to convince the city that its absentee landlord must maintenance the structure. Stewart believes that they will win this fight but such losses as the Sullivant
house are reminder of process gone awry by failing to entertain community interests. She finds comfort though that every assessment of the area returns signifying the uniqueness of the T&OC Railway station. One notable architect, Paul Randolph of Yale, called it “the most fascinating thing I’ve ever seen.” In the works for a vacant field between the Columbus Clippers’ stadium and Greenlawn Cemetery where public housing once stood is the West Edge Business Center. The planned structure with a workforce who lives nearby already has verbal commitments from a number of long time city businesses, most notably Columbus Paper Box.

More than she preserves, Stewart tends. Stewart and her group of “kids” as she calls them tend over fifty flowerbeds at medians and parks around town. In order to plant on city property she had to promise to be responsible for unkempt beds. So, she cruises the streets on her guided tours that can range from an hour to however long one likes searching for what needs fixed. Her oral histories of the town could inspire a generation. Carol Stewart may be an exception to most who service their community, but her activities are no less necessary than the traffic solutions sought by civil engineers. In fact, hers are even more demanding because she must invent solutions to their solutions as well. While time may pose more of a problem to citizens than desire, the effort necessary to create authentic community centers requires a significant amount of both, as it does concern the nurturing of community and not property values. Time cannot be viewed as a fact of costs and benefits but as an experience.

As much as Stewart and others in Franklinton would like to see the business center open, they know that its is just one part to a community mix of work, play and
civic pride. If the whole community were to participate in the creation of a center, then the process would unlikely produce a center based mostly on commerce, unless the community’s residents build it so. Therefore, the corporation that acts as the community when designing a center will base structure and use on commerce. On the other hand, a government designs the center to be most efficient for modes of distribution. Technocrats view citizens as an amalgam of individuals. The community as reducible to individuals (and not individuals as reducible to a community) is the only social actors capable of designing a center that equally reflects its combined culture, and thus, would be considered authentic to the outside observer.

**Contemporary place**

*An authentic community*

Community as individuals differs drastically from individuals as community. Individuals acting as the community created the urban and city centers by name. Whereas the community acting as individuals counts each individual as part of the social whole, individuals as community favors the powerful individuals, those with clout and financing. In other words, I am not suggesting that the individual be ignored in favor of the community, but rather that the community be thought of as a gathering of individuals. This latter group will be responsible for designing the authentic center.

Intentions should be known through the authentication process and not uncertain, as the case would be in most corporate and technocratic processes. Through direct participation all members of the community make their intentions known at some point in the process. The charrette process as explained in chapter three, allowed residents to
drop-in throughout the week to make design suggestions to the on-hand design team. The process should guarantee that everyone who would like to speak is given the opportunity. So the proceedings should be extended to accommodate all hours that an individual part of the community is available to take part in the procedure. For, I do believe that centers have been lacking in around-the-clock activity, and perhaps this results from processes being exclusive. Those homeless should be considered residents to a population in processes as they are in statistics. John L. Murphy, president of the Murphy Company in Franklinton, feels that his community cannot stabilize until they no longer share the brunt of the city’s transient homeless population brought to the area by the establishment of service organizations. He goes on to say that, “Of course, services need to be provided, but these services should focus on changing behavior, not enabling it, with consequences for those who refuse to change.” Yet, it is my belief, that if the homeless were included in the process, they might agree with Murphy’s insistence to assist change. So, they too should play a role in the direct participatory process. Once everyone has had the opportunity to participate by voicing concerns, the process moves a step forward.

Specialists’ designs by planners, architects, or engineers should not surface until step two. Though, the specialists may be present and are necessary to answer resident’s questions during the process’ first phase, they may find it difficult not to force their own predetermined conceptions of a center upon the community. So foremost in the authentic process, communities should seek specialists rather than the Congress for New Urbanism’s approach embodied in Italian Village where specialists sought community. A
CNU founder has said that he does not do “what the citizens dictate. We are not secretaries to the mob...”\textsuperscript{117} Certainly a mob would be expected from this mentality.

If the very idea of bringing change to a community and finding ways to achieve it is instigated by outside sources of capital, any effort to seek local involvement in someone else’s plans will always meet resistance, no matter what good intentions the design team may have of soliciting local input.\textsuperscript{118}

Therefore, the specialist should be at the service of the community. A specialist can present conceptualizations as intended by the individuals to the community as a whole after the community has advised them. By then, the designs should be familiar to some for they began as one-on-one sketches with the citizen who voiced the concern. The drawings should be accessible to all, and again, this means that residents should be capable of accessing them for a number of days in order to absorb the material.

The authentication process’ third step involves combing the community’s concerns and reconfiguring the designs after all have assessed the situation. The charrette process at Jeffrey Square had an overwhelming mandate to “seamlessly” connect the new structures with existing ones. This was evident in almost all the conceptualizations of the resident’s opinions and continued to be the guiding design consideration. Not all attempts at a direct process are guaranteed to have similar results. Because each individual may speak for oneself, the outcome will not always be unanimous. The stress caused by deadlock makes it important that specialists step up their participation at this point as mediator. Through their knowledge, they can offer compromises that honor all of the individuals’ intentions. The complexity to this can increase the stress level enough that any added stress caused by no decision or unsatisfactory compromise—when one set of intentions dominate another—makes for an inadequate process. However, some
intentions will be chosen over others. In order for this situation to not become what I have termed unsatisfactory, all residential participants must reach a sort of consensus even if it requires building a multi-centered community that would most likely consist of neighborhood centers and edges to appease the community whole. Diversity of use and structure must run throughout a district’s neighborhoods. This may take time and effort on part of many, but the result should elevate location past phenomenon to the creation of gathering places representative of the entire community—centers clearly linked to the city.

Implementation could be administered with the assistance of specialists, but I see no overwhelming reason for it to always be so. The process should create a plan or code that is not only adaptable for future events, but also accessible to the residents so that the community itself is capable of carrying out the plans solo. Planner Randall Arendt and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts support a design process of this manner: “We’re trying to reshape it [the system] so that towns on their own, without professional planning consultants, can implement it." Of course builders within the community can help execute the construction of the structures. Like the German and Italian Village examples, the skilled residents were an integral part of building the community’s housing and commercial stock. If the community proceeds in this fashion, the center continues to evolve from within the community with relatively minimal outside guidelines.

However, a city’s zoning code might recommend certain structures the whole city over. Process, again, may serve a permissible service to clarify this code’s intentions. The Columbus zoning code’s length and complexity deserves a second look to shorten the
piece into a digestible, *accessible* work that does not disallow the tradition or mētis that succeeded in maintaining authentic centers. Mētis derives from classical Greek to mean practical experience. A more mētis-friendly institution where an easy fit is possible as in the planning division helps temporarily simplify complex situations, and that may be the most to hope for in a large city. The health of the communities should be considered utmost important. “Knowing when and how to apply the rules of thumb in a concrete situation is the essence of mētis. The subtleties of the application are important precisely because mētis is most valuable in settings that are mutable indeterminate (some facts are unknown), and particular.” Meanwhile value judgments play an integral role in sorting though chapters of codes to determine which inclusion stymies tradition or halts damaging uses or structures; one thing to consider is that when and wherever possible, communities, themselves, should be capable and permitted to build a center representative of their whole with the possibility of eventual integration in a multi-centered city, and then go from there.

Recall that no finality in the city exists, so we can always return to earlier ideas but not return the past; to reclaim it would likely lead to nostalgia, and thus the inauthentic. Tradition instead can be revisited, but it must be reinvented to position itself in the modern world. For example, look to the Easton Town Center; in an attempt to recall the Main Street shopping *structure* of the past, the center by name replicated it following the tradition of the modern mall in use and in contextual structure. Nostalgia for Main Street may have been authentic, however, in practice, the process did not rely on
authenticity nor did the structure, by failing to reposition on the modern Main Street, but rather relocating to a cornfield. Here, the government can assist, but more on that later.

Though the process would be open-ended, I believe that there are broad parameters within which outcomes (plans for structural organization of space) will fall. For example, the authentic center would likely be mixed in structures, shape and size—from the intimate to the towering monuments dedicated to the community. The center might have an open or natural area featuring vegetation native to the community’s boundaries. Historic buildings may be utilized as both preserved spaces or renovated progressions. A renovated building suggests an appreciation for the community’s assets and a desire not to see them wasted on newly constructed buildings or merely preserved.

The process of renovation moves the original architecture into the modern world. A representation of the present is transposed onto the structure in a steady step forward, and not a drastic leap. The original style of the structure should be accommodated in the renovation to not offend the style and community members who appreciate it. However, renovating allows the community to transform the building into a centerpiece representative of the community. When done outside the center’s public space, yet still in the public viewpoint as a private renovation, the result can be an individual’s renovation to create a sense of place in structure appropriate for the present and not oblivious to the past. Rather, the individual as architect utilizes the past and simultaneously honors the existence of an earlier community. This illustrates progress in structure—in the authentic center or elsewhere in the community.
The center advertises itself to the rest of the city simply by being there. Though, it may be proud of the reinvigorated tradition found within the center, the community sees no needs to promote the center other than through the proper connections that link it to the rest of the city’s centers—the most honored and accessible promotion. Most importantly, the community must be capable of sustaining the center, if too much outside potential is sought for this purpose, then the center does not represent the actual needs of the community. However, a downtown exists as a center for the whole city. There is expected a diverse collection of outside participants in the center. If this were the case as in a civic center or capital building, the city as communities participates in the process that designs the center. The residents and stakeholders together design a satisfactory center that afterwards requires less promotion than the centers by name necessitate. For then, most who share an interest in the center will have been mutually educated through process and the resultant structure that encourages educational opportunities. Whereas in the building of a community’s center, an attempt to inform residents is made, a downtown project is too large for such an intensive campaign and would be a poor use of resources. Instead, government and business leaders should focus resources on the smaller communities in hopes the singular centers will in turn acknowledge their needs. Once multiple authentic centers are established, structures are in place to educate communities as individuals who help assist the process to create a downtown center. Therefore, the roles of the two institutions, government and corporations change in the wake of an authentic process.
Here, the role of government becomes the fair distribution of connections. To govern the city entire, a sufficient and humane distribution of mixed thoroughfares connect the various community centers, therefore elevating the city from fragmented to multi-centered. To heighten intensity of diversity and connection may be the duty of the residents within their own communities, but the government must establish pathways to take citizens there. Like the Paris example, I suggest boulevards or parkways within the city above highways as a more humane and less damaging link from center to center to edges. What makes a structure damaging is its inability to take on more than one use, so that it becomes damaging to citizens who for one reason or another do not utilize the structure. While form may follow function, ulterior function may soon follow in the future to alter the form. Functionality is key to good public-financed design. For at least those who choose to forego use may not always if the structure were capable of absorbing multiple uses presently or in the future.

To equalize the conditions of travel may at least be to offer a variety of publicly supported transit. Light rail may be one of many transportation options available in the city, but the links and nodes to these travel destinations should be pedestrian, respecting the embodiment of the individual within the community. In the pipeline for some time has been a railway connecting Ohio’s three major cities, Columbus, Cincinnati and Cleveland. Not long ago, MORPC conceptualized a structure to centralize the railway, the proposed light rail, bus routes, and car pick-ups. The design located the facilities on High Street near the convention center. Yet the railway never materialized and the Arena District moved in shortly after; therefore, attaining most the area eyed for the central
transit facilities—a favorable stall for the city. High Street works as a boulevard upon the Columbus grid. Rather than allowing a smooth connection from downtown to the Short North, the station would have been so oversized as to create a conceived barrier to passage similar to the ones found in Franklinton. People would have avoided the structure and this would greatly affect the revived Short North area. By catering to tourists and not to residents of the city in design, any attempt at equality is lost. A structure like this could be achieved, but next time, MORPC must consider the interests of citizens and lack of residents in the area; something this conceptualization failed to take into account.

The role of government should be extended to include restrictions on where structures can locate by enforcing participatory procedures. On the modest level, the government may put restrictions on development to require certain levels of open space or clean air standards to prevent harm that would affect the city as a whole or a single community. Of course the participatory process and community responsibility should absorb most possibilities for ill decision. Then a development such as Easton Town Center could not build in absence of a community. The designers would be forced to meet with a community, locate there, and then, if matters can be worked out, proceed to build a town center as a center for the community.

Corporations and the industrialist take part in the design of authentic centers, but they must do so in the same manner outlined earlier in the chapter. Accordingly, their participation remains at a level community in scale. Time may have altered the ways of the corporation making it multi-national, and less place-bound. But if corporations desire to be a part of an authentic community center, then they should make an attempt to locate
within the community and be part of the process. By becoming place-bound, the corporation would have more of a concern with the situation of the community and may be a more willing participant as neighbors with the residents. Corporations or entrepreneurs can contribute the funds to construct centers that many individuals cannot do on their own. Only through locating in the community as neighbors and not merely business partners does assistance in the form of funds not feel like payoffs. In other words, a corporation’s lack of community participation or refusal to allow residents to participate in the process that places their services or goods in the center would not be justified due to their charity.

The uses they offer may be present within the center—their traditions then should be considered authentic based on their success within the community. So long as residents agree upon the corporation’s presence within the center—as all structures and uses of the centers should be considered before construction—then the products represent both corporation and community. Businesses should not destine the community as a parasite affects a weak host. So, a mix of uses or the ability of structures to adapt is important for a healthy community, for the future can never be predetermined, only nudged one way or another with little certainty.

_The problems of participation_

Besides the difficulties of proposing that citizens gather to directly participate in the design of their community center, the greatest barrier to an authentic progression may be the ability of the majority to overrule the minority. This age-old issue that has troubled American political thought since its foundation has to be dealt with before an authentic
center can be established. As noted earlier, the process must be open to every citizen to participate, and every citizen collectively builds structures and uses characteristic of his or her community. Resistance by minorities is important because it suggests that center representations do not yet address the common conceptions of its producers. Without resistance, the process may occur at too rapidly and overlook or stifle the minority with little consideration. The minority has all rights to make their intentions known so the process may lead to a reasonable situation where all may view their center (and if necessary, multiple centers) as a whole made of their parts.

The second problem, which cannot be altered in the short-run, deals with community members’ positions in the world economy and marketplace. While everyone has their own ideas of what a center should look like, the likelihood that they differ considerably diminishes parallel with the size of the community. Thus, a smaller community located in a given area will have similar ideas of a center and community’s appearance due to closeness of the group in upbringing and environment. While this arrangement seems not to pose a problem, and in fact, suggests the possibility for mutual agreement in design matters, the chance of similarity is a concern. Communities, in the absence of the participatory process have accepted homogenous appearances of successful uses, such as fast food restaurants and wholesalers. What then might result early on in direct participation processes are similar centers that look not too different from centers before participation readily involved citizens. However, it is my understanding that this eventually will change as community members continue to reinvent tradition in an instrumental nature appropriate to their time and place.¹²⁴
Of course other problems exist and will continue to appear with the community-led transition to a process of direct participation. However, the benefit to this type of process is that it makes visible problems and irregularities that the technocratic planners or corporate disciples may not be prepared to resolve or else inexperienced in the consequences of things gone awry. Tribulations feel more severe usually within a community. Residents, combining their practical experiences, could minimize severity and invent solutions more positively and adeptly at a micro level. So the importance of the community participating in decision-making cannot be stressed enough. After introducing a process, such as the one outlined above, a community may proclaim with more assurance a part of it, center or other structure, as authentic.

Conclusion

Within a community, sense of place transpires through the individuals’ abilities to create one for his or her selves. For a place to be authentic, all individuals within that place are permitted to create and nurture a sense of it, showcased in exterior representations that have the power to be felt by non-participants. Where a sense of place within a city center is felt most strongly, a collective accord between the community’s individuals occurs, perhaps unconsciously, to incite a phenomenon that should be considered authentic. “The invention of a collective sense of place, like the invention of a public [official] history, is part and parcel of the struggle for cultural hegemony.”Therefore, as communities continue to survive, an ongoing process that requires direct participation is necessary to reaffirm its progression.
James Scott describes the subtle success of Maya Lin’s design for the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. The monument rises from the ground at one end of a black marble wall and gradually dips back into the earth at the opposite end. Engraved on the wall are the names of fallen Americans listed in the order they fell during the conflict in Vietnam. Relatives, friends and citizens stroll along its base surveying and searching the names. They participate in the sculpture by leaving mementos, touching and rubbing engraved names onto paper to take away from the memorial. Scott’s most glaring admittance is that “the memorial virtually requires participation in order to complete its meaning.”

“…A great part of the memorial’s symbolic power is its capacity to honor the dead with an openness that allows visitors to impress upon it their own meanings, their own histories, their own memories.” The same effect should be desired in an authentic center’s structure. The neighborhood involvement in Franklinton will more likely produce a place where structures and uses invite the participation of the community living within its borders. “We must recognize that once a particular spatial form is created it tends to institutionalize and, in some respects, to determine the future development of social process.” An unending process results in constant reinterpretations, so new meanings and, I hope, the prosperity of centers, but mostly, a community.
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Glossary of terms

**Authentic** – a process in which participants represent the whole local residential community, participants as all interests, not strictly as consumers

**Authentic center** – the spatial organization of uses and structure achieved through an authentic process

**Bottom-up** – a process in which participants represent individuals as the community, participation may not be all-inclusive

**Center** – a representation of the place-bound resident community through the spatial organization of structure and use at their highest intensities within that community

**Center by name** – a corporate invention, a reinterpretation emphasizing imagery or nostalgia over connections and mixed use

**City center** – denotes a heightened amalgam of inter-related interests honed by individuals and possibly shared by communities alike

**Commodity** – when viewed in the communal living aspect, a price on place

**Community** – residents and their reciprocal interactions within a place; usually sharing a common interest

**Community center** – a center of the community any process may produce

**Connectivity or connections** – linking of various paths, heightened at the center, as in the grid and surface parking often prevent high connectivity

**Districts** – medium to large section of a city, conceived of as having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters “inside of,” and which are recognizable as having some common identifiable character\textsuperscript{129} or – a section of the city consisting of smaller sections, such as neighborhoods, which are primarily dominated by a single use

**Diversity** – concerns structure, the variety in spatial organization; and use, the mixing of uses; physical elements are civic places, commercial uses, housing opportunities and natural systems\textsuperscript{130}

**Edges** – linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer, but may be utilized as centers with the proper structure, site and situation

**Landmarks** – external point references as simply defined physical objects, signaling out of one element form a host of possibilities

**Corporate** – a process in which participants are business or profit oriented, monetary value affiliated with communal living

**Individual center** – a usual outcome produced by individuals as community, either technocratic, corporate, or bottom-up, in that the center serves individuals and not the community

**Mixed use** – places that contain a broad range of uses and an array of housing types and people

**Nodes** – points, the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling
Nuclei region – a large urban area with multiple city centers and usually a central city as the core center
Pathways – the channels along which a pedestrian and/or commuter customarily, occasionally or potentially moves
Place – the spatial organization of meanings and associations that speak to individuals and their complex society, of their aspirations and their historical tradition, of the natural setting, and of the complicated functions and movements of the city
Place-bound – an organization or community that shares a direct relationship with a finite area.
Process – who participates and in what form to create space
Site – an absolute concept, highly specific and unique in that it deals with the physical characteristics of a single place
Situation – a relationship between places, a phenomenon
Structure – the spatial form or framework of a place or building
Technocratic – a process in which participants are governmental and specialist-oriented
Transect – a hierarchical ordering of thinly populated edge to highly active center, appearing as a small town from the turn-of-the-century with mixes of housing and commercial types upon an integrated street grid; see Duany and Plater-Zyberk, *Suburban Nation*
Quality of life – the realities of day-to-day practices and the effects, good or bad, the environment exacts on individuals
Urban center – signifies the place aspect regardless of purposes or intentions determined by citizens
Use – activities present in place, such as, but not limited to residential, commercial, and social
A. Franklinton
B. Southeast Area
C. Easton
D. Brice
E. Short North
F. High Street
G. Broad Street
APPENDIX B
The Southeast Area
Notes

Introduction

2 See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998, for discussion of vernacular. Here it is used differently than how social scientists normally use it to mean “the folk” as in architecture.
6 Peter Calthorpe and William Fulton, *The Regional City: Planning for the End of Sprawl*, Washington, DC: Island Press, 2001, p. 52. Also see glossary for mixed use and diversity from this text.
7 The structure of centers vary to such a degree that it would be impossible to come up with a definition to satisfy all or even a few tastes and designs. This thesis attempts to analyze and critique a sampling of centers found in Columbus, Ohio. What I found most often were centers by name denoting the lack of participation in the process of creation by a local community, an emphasis on appearance and value. But other centers do exists, as do varying intensities and extents of structures and uses. Some centers are closer to being considered authentic than others. Part of the goal of this thesis is to advocate the extension and intensification of authenticity in a center.
9 Ibid.

1. Government overlays

12 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
14 Ibid., p. 8.
19 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 51.
23 Lee, *History of the City of Columbus*, vol. 2, p. 3.
24 City of Columbus, Development Department: Planning Division, *Columbus Comprehensive Plan*, Columbus, OH: CPO, 2000, p. 3.
26 Ibid., p. 149.
30 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
31 In fact, one original street is under the river after flooding concerns prompted the city to widen the Scioto River. Ironically the street was called Scioto.
32 The only existing map drawn by Wright came years after founding and lists the streets as they then were, not as originally named by Wright who could not recall them from memory.
36 Ibid.
39 City of Columbus, *The Southeast Area Plan*, p. 5
40 Tim Anderson, Class lectures, Fall 2000.
42 Anderson, Class lectures, Fall 2000.
44 Downtown Columbus, Inc., *Executive Summary: Scioto Peninsula Plan*, p. 3.
46 Ibid.

2. Business volatility
47 Kunstler, *Geography of Nowhere*, p. 102.
49 Hunker, *Columbus, Ohio: A Personal Geography*, p. 213.
50 Ibid, p. 89.
53 “Every time the population grows by 10 percent, we consume 23 percent more land,” Michael Wilkos of the Columbus Development Department said. "The long-term consequences will create a social and economic system that won't support itself." For more see Alan D. Miller, “The Price of Progress,” a special section of *The Columbus Dispatch*, Sept. 8-12, 1996, [http://www.dispatch.com/news/special/priceofprogress/priceofprogress.html](http://www.dispatch.com/news/special/priceofprogress/priceofprogress.html).
54 Here I begin to take on a more active voice in my dissatisfaction of city centers. The discussion on Brice is based upon my journeys there in the winter and spring of 2001.
55 The problem, Phillip C. Laurien, development director for Franklin County, and others in the business say, is that zoning isn't planning. Yet all too often, zoning is substituted for planning. For more see Miller, “The Price of Progress.”
60 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 51.
62 Ibid., p. 433.
63 Ibid., p. 434.
64 Ibid., pp. 433-444.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Calthorpe, *The Regional City*, p. 52.
73 Duany, “The Neighborhood, the District and the Corridor,” p. xix.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., p. 809.
76 Steven Wright, “Pans, praise, for Columbus were plentiful at Conference,” *Columbus Dispatch*, October 11, 1999, p. 2C.
78 Rob Messinger, “The Site Where Columbus Officials Want to Build a Downtown Arena and Stadium Complex is Valued at $40 Million,” *Business First*, January 2, 1995, an abstract from Columbus News Index.

3. Neighborhood associations
84 Bohm, “The Origins of German Village, Columbus, Ohio,” p. 22.
86 Bohm, “The Origins of German Village, Columbus, Ohio,” p. 24.
4. Community assessments


112 Carol Stewart, Personal interview, April 21, 2001.


115 Hunker, *Columbus, Ohio: A Personal Geography*, p. 104.


117 Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles*, p. 78.


121 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 6.

122 Ibid., p. 316.

123 This is true of most advocates of deliberative democratic process. I follow Carole Pateman and Benjamin Barber in seeing this process as itself educative.

124 Hoelscher, *Heritage on Stage*, p. 22.

126 Scott, Seeing Like a State, p. 355.
127 Ibid.

**Glossary of terms**

130 Calthorpe, The Regional City, p. 46. Description of mixed use found on same page.