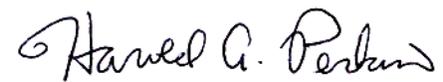


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THE GEOGRAPHY AND POLITICS
OF RIGHTSIZING TOLEDO, OHIO

A Thesis

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Kendra L. McKittrick

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Abstract

This research conducts an analysis of urban change in Toledo, Ohio. While not explicitly stated in planning, “rightsizing” strategies that are emerging in legacy cities across America’s Rust Belt as a response to decline are being implemented in Toledo. Targeted investments, particularly in the form of downtown revitalization, and targeted demolition alike are rightsizing strategies being implemented in Toledo. These strategies are being carried out through various forms of intergovernmental collaboration and public-private partnerships. They are being justified in the name of urban beautification, neighborhood revitalization, productivity, and public safety.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This research examines urban change in Toledo, Ohio with an emphasis on targeted investment and downtown revitalization. After decades of decline, over the past two decades, downtown Toledo has been experiencing a renaissance. Toledo has lost over 29 percent of its population since 1970, and downtown and surrounding areas is overrun with vacancy (Table 2; City of Toledo, 2022). Numerous strategic plans have been developed for neighborhoods in and adjacent to downtown to revitalize communities. In 2017, the nonprofit downtown development corporation, ConneCToledo, introduced a comprehensive masterplan focusing on revitalizing five downtown districts. This plan focuses on supporting public-private partnerships and economic growth, attracting new residents and visitors, and prioritizing development along the Maumee River (ConneCToledo, 2017).

Since this plan launched in 2017, downtown Toledo has received enormous investment. Over 900 residential units have been added to downtown since 2015. While the City lost population and the number of households throughout the City decreased, the number of households downtown grew. A total of 226 million dollars has been invested into green space with 1.3 million square feet of park space added downtown since 2015 (ConneCToledo, 2023, p.9). Developments along Summit Street- including Promenade Park and the renovation of the Glass City Center Convention Center along with the ongoing development of the newly opened Glass City Metropark have transformed the riverfront (ConneCToledo, 2023).

Alongside these successes, other communities have been left out of this planning. Many neighborhoods in the downtown area are poverty hotspots with long histories of segregation and oppressive urban planning (City of Toledo, 2022; Shetty, 2019). Recent developments and plans are catered to attracting higher income visitors and residents rather than addressing the needs of

existing communities. Nearly 1,000 housing units have been built, and housing demographics have changed. Rent has gone up 5% downtown despite remaining the same throughout the rest of the City. While downtown is growing, the rest of the City continues to face population and economic decline (Table 1). Wide-scale demolitions are taking place throughout Toledo often in collaboration with the Lucas County Land Bank (LCLB) and without reinvestment.

Toledo is a shrinking City. Since its peak in the 1970s, Toledo has continued to lose population alongside its manufacturing decline. Issues experienced in Toledo are experienced in most other post-industrial cities throughout the rustbelt which are often referred to as “legacy cities” (Tighe and Ryberg-Webster, 2019). Extensive research exists surrounding these cities, their decline, and revitalization strategies. Histories of segregation, redlining, urban renewal, and white flight that took place during suburbanization are critical for understanding the complex racial and economic dynamics present in legacy cities. Over recent years, many of these cities have begun to accept their decline and implement strategies commonly referred to as “rightsizing,” “strategic shrinkage,” and “smart decline” (Hummel, 2015). These strategies target areas of investment for growth while abandoning others.

In this thesis research, I build upon existing literature in the fields of geography, urban planning, sustainability, and political science by examining how rightsizing strategies are being implemented in Toledo. The population loss and economic turmoil experienced throughout Toledo is representative of legacy cities. However, Toledo has experienced less population loss than other legacy cities making it a great case study for examining these strategies.

1.1 Research Questions:

1. What is the legacy of decline in Toledo, Ohio?
2. How are rightsizing strategies being implemented in Toledo?
3. How are rightsizing strategies being justified in Toledo?

1.2 Methods

This research consisted of intensive study of government data, local news and media, local comprehensive plans and studies, and personal interviews. I researched population statistics and trends using data from the U.S. Census and American Community Survey and obtained planning documents and statements from the City of Toledo's website. I also visited the Toledo Lucas County Public Library to obtain data from historical planning documents. I used local news sources including *The Blade* and *WTOL* to track urban changes and public opinion. In addition to this media, I sourced data from media available from the websites of local neighborhood organizations including podcasts featuring local community members.

After receiving approval from Ohio University's IRB review board in July of 2023 (23-E-79), I conducted ten personal interviews with residents, employees, and business owners in Toledo. As a fellow Toledoan, I have connections to the City. After initially reaching out to people I know, I used snowball sampling to recruit interviewees. I created an interview protocol to guide me through these semi-structured interviews. While I made sure to ask questions based on this protocol, I prioritized maintaining a casual conversational dynamic between myself and the interviewees to ensure they were comfortable enough to speak freely. I asked follow up questions based on responses to initial questions derived from the protocol. With consent from the interviewees, I used an audio recorder to record and then transcribe these interviews.

I received grants from Ohio University's Central Region Humanities Center and Ohio University's experiential learning fund which allowed me to take several trips to Toledo while working on this research project. I spent time exploring and engaging with people who work and live downtown who participated in informal interviews. I did not record these interviews that took place during my field- work. These were informal interviews in which I used probing

techniques to guide conversation rather than asking blunt questions. I took substantive field notes immediately after the interview to ensure the data collected was to the best of my memory.

I used the software *NVivo* to code the transcripts and field notes. Line by line, I created open codes which I used to develop focused codes to organize this data. In combination with the data collected from local plans, newspapers, and media, these interviews provided me with lived experience and perspective to help answer my research questions.

Table 1: List of Interviewees

Interviewee 1	Life-long resident of Toledo; works downtown; age 35
Interviewee 2	Life-long resident of Toledo; lives in section 8 housing Uptown; age 38
Interviewee 3	Former downtown planner; age 72
Interviewee 4	Downtown community member; age 52
Interviewee 5	Downtown resident; works with downtown revitalization; age 27
Interviewee 6	Real estate investor downtown for over 30 years; age 52
Interviewee 7	Former business owner Uptown; age 70
Interviewee 8	Downtown employee; age 29
Interviewee 9	Toledo resident; bank employee; age 40
Interviewee 10	Worked on recent downtown masterplans

Chapter 2

Revitalization and Rightsizing in the Rust Belt

The term “legacy cities” was coined in 2011 by the American Assembly to refer to the heritages, burdens, and challenges faced by post-industrial, shrinking cities within the American Rust Belt (Tighe and Ryberg-Webster, 2019, p. 3). These cities, once pioneers of industrial production, have faced decades of industrial decline and population loss. This decline, accompanied by harmful federal, state, and local policy and planning, has resulted in extreme systemic injustices within these cities. Policy makers have responded to this decline with neoliberalist, growth- oriented strategies that seek to attract economic development with business- friendly policy. However, in recent years, many legacy cities have begun to implement policies that accept their decline. There is an abundance of literature that examines the histories and socioeconomic impacts of the decline of Rust Belt cities along with the emergence of these rightsizing strategies.

Legacy Cities: Continuity and Change Amid Decline and Revival edited by J. Rosie Tighe and Stephanie Ryberg-Webster examines the complex legacies of legacy cities and how they drive policy, planning, and decision- making (Tighe and Ryberg-Webster, 2019, p. 4). Collaboration between different levels of government and the private sector have emerged throughout the Rust Belt (Taylor, 2019; Tighe and Ryberg-Webster, 2019). Top-down, vertical collaborations enact policy in which higher levels of government influence local planning (Tighe and Ryberg-Webster, 2019, p. 24). This can be done through financial support like grants or loans, regulatory or institutional changes that encourage certain policy (Tighe and Rhyberg-Webster, 2019, p. 25). Horizontal collaboration exists between governments of the same hierarchical level including regional planning efforts (Tighe and Rhyberg-Webster, 2019, p. 28).

Cross- sector collaboration also influences policy and planning. Public- private partnerships with nonprofit sectors are particularly important for legacy cities (Tighe and Rhyberg-Webster, 2019, p. 31).

As the decline of urban centers was a national problem following World War II, the federal government began implementing new policies to attempt to save American cities. Urban Renewal practices were introduced as part of the 1949 National Housing Act as a plan to save American cities by demolishing and clearing units to encourage new growth (Taylor, 2019, p. 40). While “slum neighborhoods” were razed in urban centers, metropolitan development prioritized suburban home development (Taylor, 2019, p. 40). By the end of the 1960s, more than 51,000 units of housing had been demolished without clear plans for redevelopment (Taylor, 2019, p.107). Throughout the 1970s, national and global economies changed dramatically. Numerous economic factors including foreign competition, globalization, a recession, and the energy crisis forced industries to shrink, close, and relocate (Wilson and Wouters, 2003). This caused a dramatic outward migration of populations out of industrial cities across the globe spurring the extreme decline of midwestern rust- belt cities (Wilson and Wouters, 2003).

Systemic racism in both housing and labor markets caused further decline in Rust Belt cities. *The Color of Law* (2018) by Richard Rothstein examines the complex history of racial systematic segregation in the United States. The Federal Housing Association (FHA), developed to insure private bank mortgages to expand homeownership, worked with economic zoning to appraise neighborhoods. Predominately black neighborhoods were labeled risky and were appraised poorly (Rothstein, 2018). This process was known as “redlining,” and prevented black families from receiving loans and financial support available to whites. When Congress began to

relax discriminatory redlining practices in 1965, the goal was to help the flow of tax- base back into American cities (Taylor, 2019, p. 74). Real- estate brokers, mortgage bankers, and homebuilders worked aside the FHA to exploit profit from black homeownership (Taylor, 2019). Housing development fell dependent on private investment which profited from poor black communities likely to fall behind on payments (Taylor, 2019). This predatory loaning caused over crowdedness and deterioration of property in black neighborhoods which upheld and reinforced racist ideologies and segregation (Taylor, 2019).

The combination of deindustrialization, sprawl, and these racist policies have caused land abandonment in legacy cities. Hackworth and Nowakowski (2015) evaluate market- driven responses to land abandonment in Toledo, Ohio. The authors explain that foreclosed properties have typically been managed by neoliberal “market-only” approaches in which foreclosed parcels are strictly auctioned to the highest bidder (Hackworth and Nowakowski, 2015, p. 528). While the emergence of land banks allows local governments to manage the sale of these properties, the end goal of generating tax revenue remains the same (Hackworth and Nowakowski, 2015, p. 528). The study found that of 4,487 foreclosed parcels auctioned between 1993 and 2011, 2,989 (66.6%) remained vacant lots generating little tax revenue in 2011. 308 parcels (6.8% of the sample) experienced demolition without further reconstruction after auction, and only 217 properties (4.8%) experienced new construction (Hackworth and Nowakowski, 2015, p. 540). The study concluded that properties managed with market- first approaches with land banking were slightly more effective at generating new housing units than market-only auctions; however, not nearly enough to be considered an effective strategy for facilitating development especially in areas that have been abandoned by the market (Hackworth and Nowakowski, 2015, p. 546).

Since the 1970s, ad-hoc, house- by- house demolition has been on the rise in which local governments address code violations, tax foreclosure, arson, and other safety infractions in heavily disinvested neighborhoods with demolition (Hackworth and Nowakowski, 2015, 2016). In cash- strapped cities, ad-hoc demolitions have often operated on a complaint basis rather than part of larger policy; however, there has been a recent surge of support from all levels of government throughout the Rust Belt for demolition as urban policy (Hackworth, 2016). The rise of ad- hoc demolition as a form of urban policy has been accompanied by and supports the rise of rightsizing policy in the Rust Belt. Demolishing vacant property is increasingly being used as tool to reduce crime and improve property values (Hackworth, 2016; Rhodes, 2019).

While cities have attempted to respond to decline with neoliberalist policy that prioritizes market growth and abandons the social sector (Hackworth and Nowakowski, 2015; Taylor, 2019), many cities are beginning to accept these strategies will not attract investment reminiscent of their industrial period. Over the past two decades, many shrinking cities including Youngstown, Detroit, and Buffalo have embraced various forms of “rightsizing” strategies that intend to stabilize cities by consolidating resources, remediating vacancy and blight, maintaining populations, improving services and quality of life, and renewing economic investment (Rhodes and Russo, 2013). Because urban shrinkage is regarded as failure, “rightsizing” policy has been given numerous, carefully crafted names. The term “rightsizing” was coined by Schilling and Logan (2008) and is also commonly referred to as “smart decline,” “smart shrinkage,” and “strategic shrinkage” (Hummel, 2014, p. 398). In 2005, the City of Youngstown, Ohio became the first city in the U.S. to embrace its smaller size with the development of their 2010 plan (Rhodes, 2019).

Many legacy cities have begun implementing policy aimed to consolidate resources in response to decline. In 2005, Youngstown, Ohio released the groundbreaking “*Youngstown 2010 Plan*” that responded to decades of decline by embracing its smaller size after having lost over half of its population between 1950 and 2010 (Rhodes, 2019, p. 220). Facing degrading infrastructure, high unemployment, crime, vacancy, extreme poverty, and racial injustice, Youngstown’s 2010 plan set out to stabilize the City (Rhodes, 2019, p. 220). The plan proposed to consolidate its resources into areas of targeted intervention (Rhodes, 2019, p. 220) and reduce the imprint of the City and its infrastructure through demolition and the transformation of vacant lots into greenspace (Rhodes and Russo, 2013). The plan identified neighborhoods as either “stable,” “transitional,” or “weak,” to determine which neighborhoods could be stabilized from targeted intervention and ones that were “beyond hope of short-term solutions” (Rhodes, 2019, p. 221).

While Youngstown’s plan embraced its overall shrinkage and resources, even funds for demolitions, were primarily concentrated in transitional neighborhoods determined “viable” (Rhodes and Russo, 2013, p. 314, p. 317), growth- oriented economic development was carried out in neighborhoods chosen for targeted intervention. Development was facilitated through conventional public-private partnerships between the City of Youngstown, The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation (YNDC), the Ohio State University, and Youngstown State University (Rhodes and Russo, 2013, p. 312), business- friendly policies including public subsidies for private investment, tax incentives, state and federal stimulus funds (Rhodes and Russo, 2013, p. 312), and philanthropic entities (Rhodes, 2019, p. 224).

Daniel Hummel (2014) evaluates existing literature surrounding right-sizing paradigms and identifies four strategies: community development strategies, administrative strategies, built

environment strategies, and democratic strategies. Referencing Ehrenfeucht and Nelson (2011), Hummel (2014) argues that community development strategies under the right-sizing paradigm, including targeted economic and infrastructure development, are not that different from common urban development practices; however, cities focus these developments into identified salvageable communities rather than city-wide. Hummel (2014) argues that the built environment strategies and democratic strategies are the most central and important strategies within the right-sizing paradigms. The democratic aspect of rightsizing requires residents, local leaders, and planners to agree that the city will be smaller (Hummel, 2014). Hummel (2014) explains that most right-sizing literature discusses built environment strategies that involve “deconstructing/changing the physical composition of the city” and “reevaluating/reinterpretation of existing infrastructure to evolve fewer changes.” Hummel (2014) identifies five major built-environment strategies: land banking, rehabilitation, demolition, consolidation, and “greening.” Incorporating green infrastructure into shrinking cities can increase property values, improve public health, and create “green collar jobs.” (Schilling and Logan, 2008).

Rightsizing strategies have been met with overwhelming criticism within literature. Rightsizing strategies that justify the neglect of the most disadvantaged populations can enhance issues of systemic racism and poverty. Throughout America’s Rust Belt, the poorest and most disadvantaged neighborhoods are disproportionately Black (Hackworth, 2016; Rhodes, 2019). Most neighborhoods categorized as “weak” left out of Youngstown’s 2010 plan were disproportionately poor and black (Rhodes, 2019, p. 221). Rightsizing plans are also criticized for their resemblance of urban renewal and redlining (Akers, Béal, and Rousseau, 2019; Rhodes and Russo, 2013).

There are also concerns for gentrification in areas chosen for targeted investment. Aiming to raise property and tax values in concentrated areas without implementing programs to address these systemic socioeconomic problems can lead to displacement of disadvantaged populations being priced out of their neighborhoods (Elliot-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees, 2019). Many administrations enacting rightsizing policies have done little to address poverty (Rhodes and Russo, 2013). Hackworth (2015) argues that the most meaningful decisions about development, demolition, and equity are top- down, and communities lack voice. “‘Community input’ consists primarily of an elaborate effort to legitimate such decisions through local assistance in determining which houses should be demolished” (Hackworth, 2016, p. 769). Similarly, in addition to posing gentrification concerns, green strategies have been criticized for disguising negative implications of rightsizing. “‘Green’ solutions are at the forefront of managing decline, reframing the politics of abandonment and demolition while both obscuring the disparate racial impacts in the political imaginary of planners and public officials and reifying the racialized hierarchies of property markets” (Akers, Béal, and Rousseau, 2019).

Chapter 3

The Rise and Fall of the Glass City

Following a long history of settler-inflicted violence against the Ottawas, Wyandots, Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, and other indigenous tribes, the town of Port Lawrence was established by land speculators in 1817 along the Maumee River, named after the Miami Tribe (Floyd, 2018). Port Lawrence failed to attract buyers, and was returned to the government, though Joseph Prentice and John Baldwin stayed and developed a warehouse and lake shipping business. In 1837, Port Lawrence merged with its adjacent, rival town, “Vistula” to compete with neighboring towns, Maumee and Perrysburg, for a terminus along the developing canal system (Floyd, 2018). Once Toledo became a competitive candidate for the canal terminus, disputes arose between Ohio and Michigan regarding territory boundaries around Toledo. Lucas County was created for the legal precedent, and violence emerged between states (Floyd, 2018). The Toledo War ended in 1836 with the passage of the Clayton Act by congress that drew Ohio’s boundary line to include Toledo. The Wabash and Erie Canal opened in 1843 connecting Toledo with Lafayette, Indiana, and the Miami and Erie Canal opened in 1845 connecting the City to Cincinnati. The success of these canals established Toledo as the dominant settlement in northwest Ohio (Floyd, 2018).

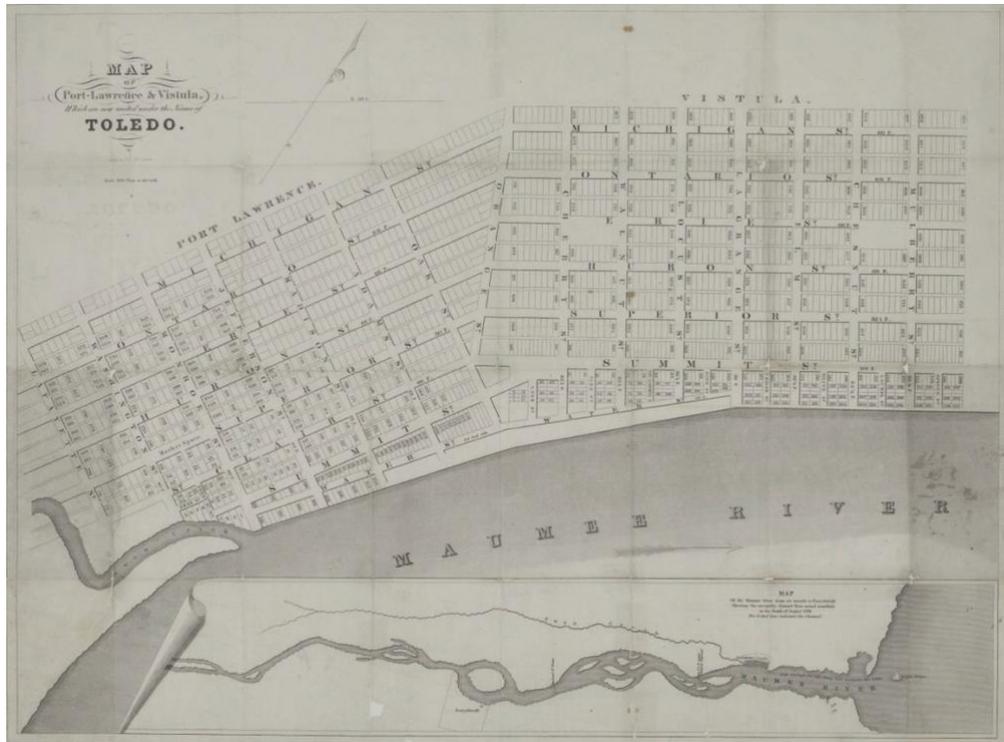


Figure 3.1: 1834 Map of Port Lawrence and Vistula (Toledo Lucas County Public Library Digital Collections, 1834).

During this same time, railroad lines were being constructed. These lines came together in 1856 to create the Toledo, Wabash, and Western Railway that became so successful that the canals were abandoned by 1870 blighting downtown with rotting boats and flooding. The economic prosperity the canals and railways brought to the City attracted migrants with the City's population doubling between 1850 and 1860 with the population of Lucas County increasing from 25,831 to 46,722 (Floyd, 2018, p.11). Like many northern cities, Toledo's development as a leading industrial City dramatically took off during the Civil War. In 1860, total capital invested in the City was 660,700 dollars; by 1880, it had increased to 5.5 million dollars (Floyd, 2018, p.12). Toledo became the largest manufacturer of farm wagons in the nation and expanded to produce buggies and delivery wagons, and later, bicycles. By 1890, Toledo was the largest producer of bicycles in the country (Floyd, 2018, p.14).

“The Toledo Businessmen’s Committee” formed on April 8, 1887 to promote the region’s access to cheap natural gas to industrial prospects, particularly glass companies, by running advertisements in newspapers throughout the country (Floyd, 2018, p.16). The Northwestern Ohio Natural Gas pipeline was completed in July of 1887 fueling a real estate boom in Toledo (Floyd, 2018, p. 16). Facing bankruptcy from the depression of 1873 along with strikes from the Flint Glass Workers Union (AFGWU) demanding universal wages across factories regardless of geographic location, the New England Glass Company negotiated with the Toledo Businessmen’s Committee and signed an agreement to establish headquarters for the later renamed “Libbey Glass Company” in Toledo (Floyd, 2018). Libbey opened several factories in the region and established a reputation for the City through the development of glass exhibitions. Owens-Illinois emerged from the licensing and production of the “Owens Bottle Machine” that could mold lightbulbs, lamp chimneys, and tumblers with revolutionary low costs of labor. “About 2,000 chimneys per turn of five hours at labor cost of \$6.50” (Floyd, 2018, p. 44). After competing to develop fiberglass, Owens-Illinois and Cording created “Owens-Cording Fiberglass Company” in 1938 which is still a leading fiberglass manufacturer headquartered in Downtown Toledo (Floyd, 2018, p. 103).

The automotive industry along with the military industrial complex played a great role in the development of Toledo’s economy. By 1915, Willys-Overland Motor Co. was Toledo’s largest employer with over 15,000 employees (Toledo Blade, 2011). “Libbey-Owens-Ford,” who produced automotive glass with its largest market being windshields for General Motors, produced bullet-proof aviation glass during World- War II. The Champion Spark Plug Co produced spark plugs for the military’s aviation. Arguably, the most important military development to come out of Toledo during the war effort was from Willy’s-Overland. Upon

winning a US Army- sponsored competition to manufacture a military-use four-wheel drive vehicle with what is now known as the “Jeep,” the company manufactured over 363, 000 of these vehicles for the war effort at the “Jeep Parkway” facility (Blade Staff, 2011; Gatrell and Reid, 2001).

Following World War II, business and the automotive industry in Toledo thrived. After producing Jeeps for the US Army, the company launched a successful civilian model. Willy’s-Overland was bought out by the Kaiser Corporation who opened a second plant five miles away on Stickney Avenue to keep up with increasing demand for Jeeps throughout the 1960s (Gatrell and Reid, 2001). By the mid- 1970s, there were four new car dealerships in or near downtown (Floyd, 2018). By 1960, Toledo was home to “six fortune 500 companies: O-I, which was then the nation’s 76th largest manufacturer, Dana Corp., Owens Corning, Champion Spark Plug Co., Libbey-Owens-Ford Co., and Electric Auto-Lite Co” (Messina, 2013).

As Toledo suburbanized, populations, business, and employment left the city center. During the 1980s, the six fortune 500 firms that dominated Toledo’s employment sector underwent dramatic restructuring, downsizing, closures, and buyouts. “Between 1977 and 1988, the number of manufacturing jobs in Lucas County declined from 57,934 to 45,454. Of the approximately 12,500 jobs lost, over 9,000 can be directly traced to downsizing, moves, and shutdowns by the Fortune 500 firms. By 1992, the manufacturing employment had further declined in Lucas County to 36,101” (Martin and Randall, 1997, p.3). Along with this white flight out of the urban center and decline in manufacturing jobs within the city, many previously thriving businesses central to the city’s identity at the time also closed their downtown stores. This included Tiedtke’s, Lamson’s, the Lion Store (Messina, I. and Reiter, J., 2015).

During this period of financial restructuring, Kaiser faced high, inefficient production costs along with the restructuring global economy. The company was bought out by American Motors company (AMC) who was hit hard by the recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and Jeep's legacy was saved from closure when it was sold to Chrysler in 1986 (Gatrell and Reid, 2001). Facing over-capacity with this purchase, Chrysler forced the negotiation of lower wages and the restructuring of profit shares when announcing it would close one of their plants in either Toledo or Kenosha. Again, in 1990, Chrysler forced Toledo's Jeep workers to compete against workers at a plant in Ontario pitting the American labor union, United Auto Workers (UAW), against Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) in what Gatrell and Reid (2001) refer to as "the labor version of the limbo- how low can you go?" These concessions repeatedly saved Toledo's plants from closure amidst global economic restructuring, but with great costs to the standards of Toledo's working class.

Table 2: Toledo Population Change

	Toledo	"Greater Toledo" Metropolitan Statistical Area
2020	270,871	646,604
2010	287,208	651,429
2000	313,619	659,188
1990	332,943	654,157
1980	354,635	
1970	383,818	
1960	318,003	
1950	303,616	

(U.S Census Bureau; various years).

Chapter 4

Reimagining the Glass City

Formal urban planning began in Toledo in 1913 with the establishment of the city's first Municipal Charter (Floyd, 2018). The Toledo City Planning Commission was established and began introducing formal industrial, demographic, and land- use surveys along with establishing plans for the city's infrastructure. Following World War II, American cities began to drastically reimagine urban space and land use patterns (Taylor, 2019). From the 1950s through the 1970s, urban planning in Toledo was heavily centered around interstate highway expansion and urban renewal. Mass demolition of historic architecture and thriving communities was justified in the name of future visions for the City. However, this future was never realized, and the City has faced decline ever since. National economic policies became centered around the private sector by the 1980s, and the priority of municipalities became the engagement in business- friendly policy aimed at attracting private development for revitalization (Wilson and Wouters, 2003).

4.1 "Toledo Tomorrow"

The process of re-envisioning a post-war Toledo began before the war was finished. In 1944, the Toledo-Lucas County Plan Commission issued "A Preview of Planning for Toledo and Lucas County" titled "What about our future?" "This study identified major areas that required careful planning to bring prosperity to the City, including neighborhoods, the downtown, public buildings, primary streets, industrial development, recreation, the Port of Toledo, an airport, and the overall need for capital improvements to the City, and the commission planned to release a formal masterplan for re-imagining the City the following year (Floyd, 2018, p.124). In collaboration with Paul Block Jr, publisher of the Toledo Blade, Norman Bel Geddes, one of the

best-known developers in the country at the time put forth the “Toledo Tomorrow” exhibition drawing national attention to the City (Geddes, 1945). The plan recognized Toledo’s geographical and industrial potential and called for a network of five airports to be the nation’s first union terminal and was aimed to be an “inspiration for future living” (Geddes, 1945). While most of the visions of “Toledo Tomorrow” were never realized, it inspired the development of a comprehensive plan for the future of the City. In 1945, the Metropolitan Planning Committee of the Toledo Chamber of Commerce issued a master plan that mentioned the “Toledo Tomorrow” exhibit (Floyd, 2018).

“They saw Toledo Tomorrow as an actual project underway. They saw it as not just a vision, but ‘this is the plan,’ so everybody saw demolition as opportunity. Even if it created just a parking lot, they were cool with it because ‘good we’re gonna have this, you know, new City because they were already embarrassed by what Toledo had- every old building was a reminder of the depression- the reminder of being, you know, terrified of life and looking for work, seeing your child’s crying eyes across the kitchen table and saying ‘we don’t have anything tonight.’”

-Interviewee 3

The City’s plans for highway development drew heavily from the vision of “Toledo Tomorrow.” In 1951, the Toledo-Lucas County Plan Commission released a master plan addressing population growth and distribution, land use and zoning, major streets, parking in the central business district, airports, schools, parks, residential neighborhoods, port development, railroads, transit, public buildings and city appearance, sanitary sewers and drainage, and the capital expenditure program (Housing Improvement and Urban Renewal Commission, 1958). It divided the City into 56 neighborhoods. In 1952, the Toledo-Lucas County Plan Commission released “phase-two” of the Master Plan focusing on the City’s transportation. The plan

evaluated the functionality and trends of current transportation methods within the City. The plan highlighted the importance of public transportation for economic prosperity and outlined new routes for transit as the City expanded its boundaries and transitioned from trolleys to busses. This same year, in 1952, the Toledo- Lucas County Plan Commissions released a plan to address the “relocation of homes in right of way of Detroit-Cleveland expressway.” The plan divided potential sites into three categories: “unplatted areas, undeveloped plats, and infiltration areas” (Toledo-Lucas County Plan Commissions, 1952). The plan assessed proximity to schools, school enrollment capacities, proximity to local shopping centers, and transit- accessibility to determine the best site for relocation. The plan suggested the Buckeye-Central area be used as a cite for relocation and development. “As of October 24, 1952, there were 30 tax delinquent properties this area, indicating a need for improving and stabilizing this residential neighborhood for the good of the future tax base and the community as a whole” (Toledo-Lucas County Plan Commissions, 1952).

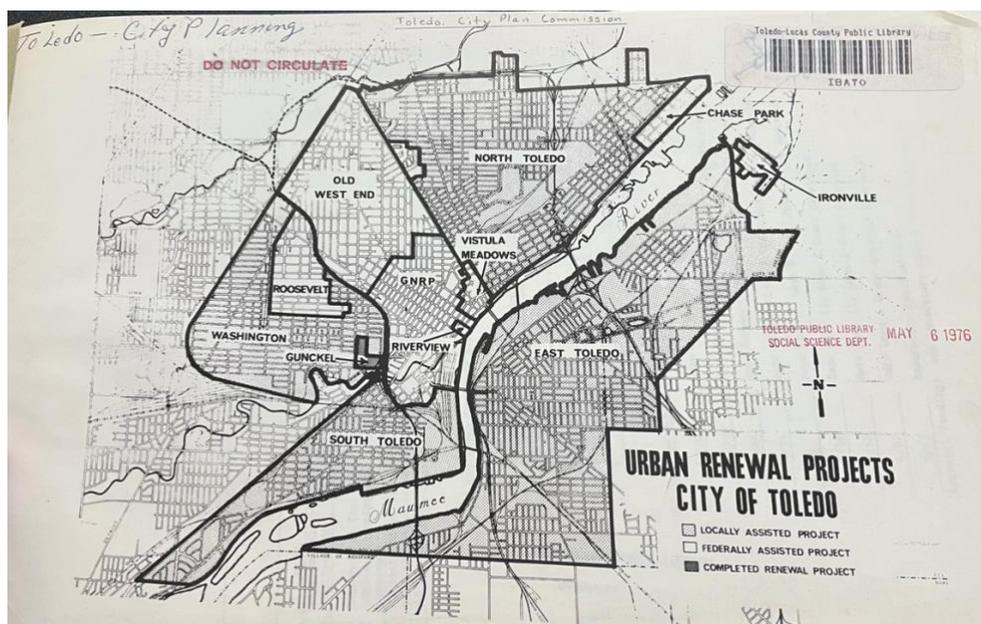


Photo 4.1: Map of Urban Renewal Projects (Photo taken by author) at Toledo Lucas County Public Library

Toledo's urban renewal agency conducted housing studies in which they evaluated properties and determined if they would be conserved, rehabilitated, or redeveloped. Projects that took place during this time included Chase Park, Gunckel, Ironville, Vistula Meadows, Riverview, Roosevelt, and Spring (Housing Improvement and Urban Renewal Commission, 1963). The Vistula Meadows project addressed blight along the Cherry Street corridor, commonly referred to as Toledo's "skid-row," by flattening and clearing 88 acres of blight from Cherry Street along summit to Jefferson (Blade Staff, 2015).

Section 221 (d) (2) of the 1954 Housing Act authorized "FHA- backed mortgages for housing in urban renewal areas and housing for families displaced by reason of urban renewal programs" (Taylor, 2019, 42). The era of urban renewal introduced community development corporations (CDC)s to city planning. Even with federally funded demolitions, cities still needed to attract investors to redevelop. Toledo was no exception. The Riverview project demolished blight to develop a high-rise office building and Levis Park. Following demolition, the project was purchased from the City by the "Riverview I Corporation," to oversee the development (Floyd, 2018, p. 149). Before construction began, estimated public and private funds in the development were 125 million dollars (Floyd, 2018, p.149). The skysrise became Owens-Corning's "Fiberglas Tower" where the company remained headquartered for the remainder of the 20th century (Floyd, 2018, p.150).



Photo 4.2: Demolition of the Paramount Theatre 1965 (Toledo Lucas County Public Library, 1965).

“One of the buildings that caused most Toledoans to finally walk away from downtown Toledo was the Paramount Theater. By then in 1965 when that 1929 theater was turned down, most of the department stores were already facing competition from the shopping center, so downtown as a shopping center was losing its relevance. It was demolished in prime- it was in great shape- condition all because it didn’t fit Paul Block’s vision.” -Interviewee 3

By the end of the era of urban renewal, Toledo was in a budget deficit. Owens-Illinois undertook its own long-range planning for downtown development. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was a nonprofit city-planning corporation that assisted in their studies and laid out a framework for private investment in downtown development (Floyd, 2018). Around this same time, “a group of business and political leaders formed the Convention Center Committee in 1969 to attempt to revitalize downtown by building a convention center and auditorium” (Floyd, 2018). A citizen’s group called ALERTA got the issue of a convention center on the ballot, and Toledoans voted against the establishment of a convention center with many believing the City had more important things to invest in (Floyd, 2018).

4.2 Public- Private Partnerships

As the nation shifted to more business-friendly policy, and the City of Toledo faced budget constraints, public-private partnerships became essential for downtown development. The Greater Toledo Corporation (GTC) and the Toledo Development Corporation (TDC) were created by Mayor Kessler in the early 1970s (Floyd, 2018). The GTC included representatives from 15 of the City’s corporations including the glass companies (Floyd, 2018). A Citizens Development Forum made up of 61 community members served as an advisory board to the TDC. With the help of three consulting firms, released a report titled “Toledo Looks to the River” focusing on river front development downtown suggesting beatification projects and new developments including a community center (Floyd, 2018, p.171). In 1975, Toledo Blade publisher Paul Block Jr. was appointed chair of the TDC and began his own master plan that didn’t include the multipurpose center that would have been built in collaboration with University of Toledo. He led an opposition to this project, and the project failed. In response to

this failure, the GTC then created the Toledo Economic Planning Council to find federal funding for downtown redevelopment. President and chief executive officer of Trustcorp, Inc, the holding company of the Toledo Trust Bank, was appointed chair of this committee (Floyd, 2018).

Throughout the 1980s, the City continued to support private development to attract people and businesses downtown as many downtown sectors shrank, sprawled, or closed. The City received 12 million dollars in an Urban Redevelopment Action Grant to assist with the development of a second O-I (Owens-Illinois) headquarters and the SeaGate project (Floyd, 2018). Completed in 1982, the new headquarters became the tallest building in Toledo. Two months later, the only major downtown hotel, the Holiday Inn, was taken over by five local banks due to financial problems. Department stores closed, and businesses continued to move out of downtown. Despite numerous voices warning of shutting off the river front from much of the downtown, Hotel Sofitel opened next to the SeaGate headquarters in 1984 (Floyd, 2019). That same year, the second phase of SeaGate included the opening of Portside Festival Marketplace aimed to generate 18 million dollars in sales and creating 700 jobs (Floyd, 2018, p. 185). Just two months after Portside opened, the last department store downtown closed. In 1987, a convention center, the SeaGate Centre, was finally opened downtown as a joint project between Lucas County and the University of Toledo that included classrooms for downtown workers to take classes. Upon opening, the center already had a 1.3 million dollars operating deficit (Floyd, 2018, p.88). During this development, the Toledo Trust was forced to sign over 75 million dollars in bad checks and was taken over by the Society bank of Cleveland in 1990 (Floyd, 2018, p.186).

“Seagate project and that's a remarkable thing again it's probably a 2 billion project because if it was proposed today, and it's it was no small thing, it's the one that goes from Cherry Stree all the way to Jefferson along the body from summit down to the river and it expands it also includes extending Jackson Boulavard all the way out to the courthouse.”

-Interviewee 3

In 1996, Chrysler threatened Toledoans once again with the announcement that the company intended to open a new Jeep assembly plant and would consider all possible sites within a 50-mile radius of Toledo (Gatrell and Reid, 2001). Competition was less defined than during previous threats of closure; therefore, concession strategies that had saved Toledo's Jeep manufacturing industry in the past would not be successful this time around. Despite Chrysler's commitment to retaining the employment of Toledoans by keeping the new plant within this 50-mile radius. This called for a community-wide strategy emphasizing “history, place, and shared cultural practices” in which Gatrell and Reid (2001) refer to as “a culture of production” (p. 397). Mayor Finkbeiner formed a 39-member “Project Jeep” team comprised of City, county and state employees, economic development experts, Toledo Jeep plant officials, and labor activists from the UAW's local and regional offices (Gatrell and Reid, 2001).

Urban renewal and highway development has left an important legacy within the City. “The construction of I-75 cut Junction and Uptown off from one another, created a barrier between Junction and downtown and displaced much of the area's Black community. In the 1970s, Dorr Street was widened to speed vehicle traffic between downtown and west Toledo and the suburbs. Hundreds of homes and businesses were demolished in the process, transforming the once-walkable street into a high-speed, high-traffic arterial. Much of Uptown's building

stock was demolished during the same period of urban renewal. Today, these neighborhoods – both majority-Black – have some of the highest poverty rates in the city” (City of Toledo, 2023). Like many cities throughout the U.S., Toledo’s vision was never realized. Many of the structures demolished during urban renewal remain vacant lots today.



Photo 4.3: Adams Street 1300 Block “Skid Row” in 1975 before urban renewal demolition (Howard, 1975).



Photo 4.4: Adams Street 1300 Block Today (Photo taken by author).

Chapter 5

Politics of Rightsizing Toledo, Ohio

Though Toledo's population has been declining since the 1970s, the "Greater Toledo" metropolitan statistical area continued to gain population until the 2000 (Table 1). Since the 2008 recession, new retail construction throughout the City has significantly declined. The retail market peaked in 2016, and closures and vacancies throughout the metro area have been on the rise since (Chavez, 2019). This spike in decline throughout the Toledo area has made decades of decline and disinvestment more difficult for local government to ignore. However, because the acceptance of decline is politically unpopular, terms like "rightsizing" that accept decline are not being used in planning. Rightsizing strategies are being implemented in the form of strategic planning and targeted (dis)investment. They are being implemented by multiple forms of collaboration between different levels of government and public private partnerships. These strategies are being justified in the name of productive land use, neighborhood vibrancy, and public safety.

5.1 Strategic Planning and Public-Private Partnerships

In 2015, the City of Toledo formed the "22nd Century Committee" comprised of local leaders of public and private sectors committed to economic development downtown through the advancement of public-private partnerships (ConnecToledo, 2024). The committee established a planning team comprised of public and private stakeholders in downtown Toledo, held public meetings to gain insight from local stakeholders, and established a master plan for the revitalization of Downtown Toledo. When launching this masterplan in 2017, the 22nd century committee became the new 501(c)3 downtown development corporation with the public facing

name, “ConnecToledo” (ConnecToledo, 2024). The masterplan highlights the importance of downtown economic development as downtown accounts for 17 percent of the City’s jobs in just 2 percent of the land area, and average wages downtown are 25 percent higher than the rest of the City (ConnecToledo, 2017, p. 16). Partnered with the existing Downtown Toledo Improvement District, ConnecToledo’s masterplan aims to benefit the region with downtown revitalization (ConnecToledo, 2024).

ConnecToledo’s 2017 downtown masterplan identified five districts of focus for downtown revitalization: Riverfront, Downtown Core, Uptown District, Warehouse District, and Vistula District (Figure 5.1). The plan included a comprehensive study of this area and outlines plans to connect these parts of downtown with each other along with the rest of the City (ConnecToledo, 2017, p.33). The planning vision includes establishing a network of parks, complete, pedestrian- friendly, two- way streets, and enabling continuous development. Along with attracting visitors with tourist developments including hotels, retail, and dining, the plan seeks to attract young professionals to move downtown with neighborhood vibrancy, walkability, and nightlife (ConnecToledo, 2017, p. 90-98). This vision for Downtown Toledo is centered around the Maumee Riverfront with the planning principle that “the river is a public good” (ConnecToledo, 2017, p. 34).

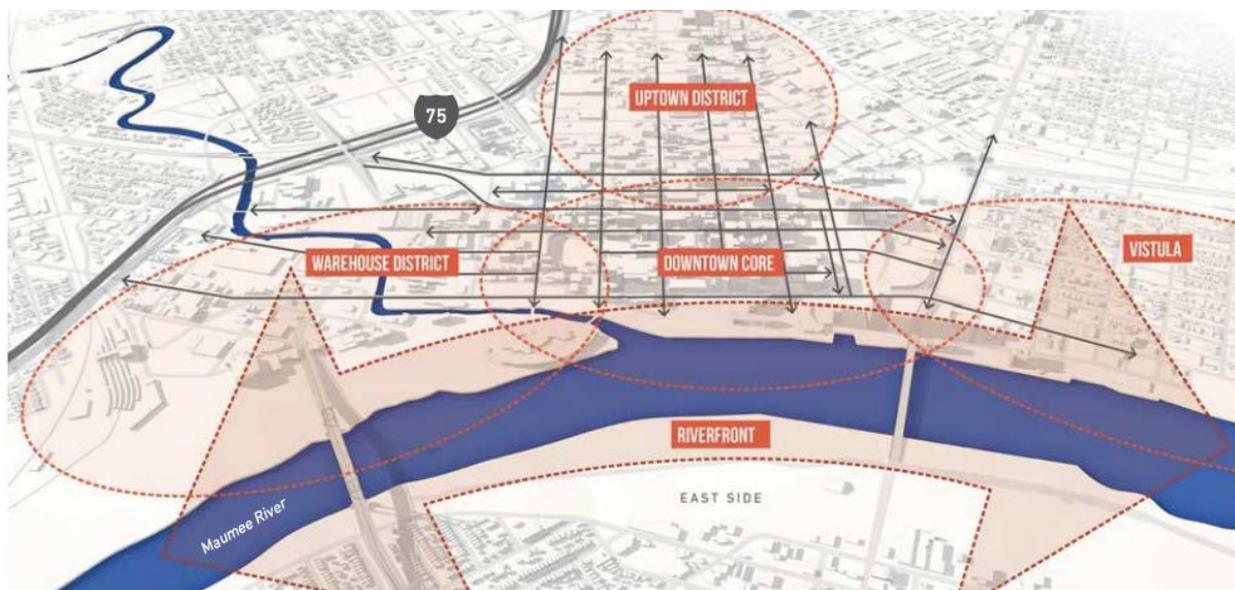


Figure 5.1 ConneCToledo's Downtown Districts (ConneCToledo, 2017, p. 33).

This past December of 2023, ConneCToledo updated the downtown master plan. It outlines the success of the 2017 plan and identifies new areas of priority to support a connected downtown. After engaging with the community through surveys and forums, conducting a market analysis focusing on “entrepreneurial ecosystems,” the plan outlines the next steps to leverage the success of the 2017 plan (ConneCToledo, 2023). The 2023 updated downtown masterplan is in alignment with numerous other strategic planning efforts. It identifies The Nautical Mile Vision Plan (2017), The Downtown Toledo Transportation Study (2020), Vistula Neighborhood Master Plan (2020), Civic Center Mall Concept Plan (2021), The Toledo Social Innovation District Framework Plan (2022), and The Toledo Warehouse District Master Plan (2022) as having informed the recommendations of the masterplan (ConneCToledo, 2023, p. 10).

In 2020, the City of Toledo began creating a comprehensive land use plan, “Forward Toledo,” aimed to guide city planning for the next 15-20 years. A 314-page exploratory assessment was conducted to guide the development of this comprehensive plan (Toledo Exploratory Assessment, 2021). The report analyzes Toledo’s conditions and identifies five

strategic opportunities for industries and infrastructure to collaborate to “redefine and expand job accessibility, environmental protection, and quality urban living that supports a dynamic and diverse workforce” (p. 142). These strategies include establishing innovation clusters, investing in water technology and stormwater infrastructure, becoming more energy efficient by investing in solar technology in vacant land, bettering mobility with investments in public transportation and paths, and re-evaluating neighborhood markets (Toledo Exploratory Assessment, 2021). The plan was informed by twenty- one existing city and neighborhood reports and plans (Figure 5.2).

REVIEWED EXISTING REPORTS & PLANS	SCALE
City of Toledo 2020 Comprehensive Plan: Toledo by Choice	City
City of Toledo Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, 2020-2025	City
City of Toledo Department of Neighborhoods 2020-2025 Consolidated Plan	City
City of Toledo FY 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan	City
Lucas County Land Bank: Neighborhood Health Index	City
Lucas County Land Bank: Toledo Survey	City
TMACOG Prioritizing Vacant Urban Property for Green Infrastructure	City
Toledo Bike Plan	City
Toledo Waterways Initiative	City
City of Toledo Improving Toledo's Delaware Creek	City
Connecting the Pieces: Garfield Heights, Marina District, etc.	Neighborhood
Downtown Toledo Master Plan	Neighborhood
Junction Neighborhood Master Plan	Neighborhood
LISC Toledo Strategic Plan: 40 Million for 4 Neighborhoods	Neighborhood
Middle Grounds District Plan	Neighborhood
Nautical Mile Vision Plan	Neighborhood
Old South End Master Plan	Neighborhood
The Cherry Street Legacy Plan	Neighborhood
The Toledo Riverfront Trail + Open Space Concept Plan	Neighborhood
UpTown Master Plan	Neighborhood
Visual Neighborhood Master Plan	Neighborhood

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Figure 5.2: List of reports and plans guiding the City's land use planning (Toledo Exploratory Assessment, 2021, p. 21).

5.2 Political Drivers

Top- down, vertical intergovernmental paradigms (Hackworth, 2015; Tighe and Ryberg-Webster, 2019) are driving rightsizing strategies being implemented at the municipal level in

Toledo. Funding from federal and state government have been an important aspect of downtown revitalization and has motivated Toledo's strategic planning. The 2011 Downtown Masterplan that guided downtown development before the establishment of ConneCToledo was written to help acquire funding for revitalization projects that were already in the works. "The new plan was necessitated when several entities were in the process of redeveloping buildings within the downtown and were unable to secure critical funding, such as historic tax credits as the scoring process for this funding source required an updated plan within the last five years" (Toledo Downtown Masterplan, 2011, p. 9).

Top-down financial incentives, particularly state and federal grants, have encouraged the designation of areas for targeted intervention including Historic Districts, Community Entertainment Districts (CED), Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs), and a Social Innovation District (SID). "The recent addition of the Uptown Historic District will expand the availability of grant dollars and State Historic Tax Credits that can be used to renovate and rehabilitate historic structures throughout downtown" (ConneCToledo, 2023, p. 12). Over the past two years, the City of Toledo has received over 48 million dollars from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) to fund two projects (City of Toledo, 2024). The first, funded through the USDOT's "highly competitive" Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program, focuses on the development of infrastructure that will connect Uptown and the Junction neighborhood (City of Toledo, 2023). While applying for this grant, the development of a Social Innovation District that connects Downtown, Uptown, and Junction was also in the works (Social Innovation Framework Plan, 2023). 28 million dollars from USDOT's "Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods" grant program, funded through a one-time investment from the Inflation Reduction Act, was just

granted in March of 2024 to support connections between downtown and East Toledo (City of Toledo, 2024).

Incentives from the federal government has also led to the development of comprehensive planning that identifies neighborhoods targeted for revitalization. “The City of Toledo, an entitlement city, receives annual grant allocations from the HUD through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME)” (City of Toledo, 2022, p.2). These grants are aimed to support affordable housing and expand economic opportunities in disadvantaged areas. To receive these grants, the City must establish a comprehensive plan and identify federally designated Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs) by the HUD. These neighborhoods have a long set of criteria including contiguous boundaries and community input from local stakeholders (residents, business operators, financial institutions, nonprofits, and community groups) that guides the comprehensive plan (City of Toledo, n.d., p.6).

The state of Ohio financially incentivizes investments in entertainment and dining in concentrated areas. In the state of Ohio, liquor licenses are determined by county population (Downtown Toledo, 2022). As populations shrink, available liquor licenses shrink. However, additional liquor licenses can be granted in areas of high economic activity intended to promote revitalizations designated as Community Entertainment Districts (CEDs), and they only cost 2,344 dollars within these districts compared to 25,000 dollars to 30,000 dollars within the open market (Downtown Toledo, 2022). In 2022, Toledo City Council voted to establish seven community entertainment districts (CEDs). ConecToledo worked with the Toledo City Council to determine areas in downtown Toledo in which economic growth was anticipated to establish boundaries for these new CEDs (Downtown Toledo, 2022).

Most of the funding for demolitions in Toledo comes from state and federal grants and are carried out in collaboration with the Lucas County Land Bank (LCLB) (Demolitions, n.d.). Land banks have been around since the 1970s to deal with vacant property; however, in 2010, in response to the 2008 recession worsening issues of land abandonment in cities, the Ohio General Assembly granted counties the ability to establish land banks (Lucas County Land Bank, 2024). This enabled land banks to acquire properties in suburban neighborhoods in which the sale of those properties could produce funds to address land abandonment in the urban center.

In addition to top-down, intergovernmental collaboration, the role of horizontal collaboration in Toledo cannot be understated. Public-private partnerships between local governments, organizations, and institutions support and fund much of the investments happening in Toledo. Regional healthcare provider, Promedica is arguably the most notable anchor institution involved with downtown development and is a stakeholder in most comprehensive plans (ConnecToledo, 2017; City of Toledo, 2022). The Toledo Metroparks has supported the development of the Glass City Metropark and the ongoing developments that are connecting downtown and adjacent areas (Metroparks Toledo, 2024).

“Recent plans have been so successful because of so many different sectors working together. Promedica moving downtown was a great anchor. Voters passed a levy during the pandemic for the Metroparks which has supported the riverfront development. That was a hard time economically, so it really shows the strength of community support.”

-Interviewee 10



Photo 5.1: Promedica’s headquarters downtown along the riverfront (Photo taken by author).

5.3 Political Justifications

Initiatives that target both investment and demolition into concentrated areas are being supported in the name of productivity and efficiency, particularly with the idea of putting vacant land to productive use. The Toledo Exploratory Assessment (2021) argues that the creation of dense “urban villages” will benefit the greater community through the generation of tax revenue. “Population density must be achieved to generate the revenue needed for businesses to thrive, to support fare-box revenue for transit, and increase the tax base for city services and systems. In fact, such environments often compensate for less dense parts of cities and regions where revenues may be insufficient to fully support the cost-to-serve” (Toledo exploratory assessment, 2021, p. 132). Likewise, the idea of productive land use supports rightsizing responses to land abandonment.

“Like many post-industrial cities, Toledo’s housing stock is dated, which poses financial challenges related to home maintenance and real personal health and safety threats. It is important for Toledo to reposition its vacant and underutilized properties to create a diversity of regionally competitive neighborhoods that continue to attract and retain residents and talent that can lead Toledo into a thriving future” (Toledo Exploratory Assessment, 2021, p. 42).

“Many of the City’s neighborhoods have experienced significant decline and disinvestment with older housing stock, slum and blighted conditions, vacant properties, and high-cost burden for both renters and homeowners. Due to high construction costs, availability of land, and incomes not keeping pace with rent and home prices, affordable housing is limited. The federal grants received by the City are not enough to meet the needs of the City neighborhoods. One of the tools available under the CDBG program to focus the scarce federal resources and attract and leverage other public and private sector funding is the designation of a geographic area as a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA)” (City of Toledo, 2022, p.19).

The image of urban greening is also being used to justify rightsizing Toledo. Demolition-heavy initiatives are being justified by productivity with the images of greening and beautification. “The Lucas County Land Bank strengthens neighborhoods and preserves property values by strategically returning vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties to productive use through an open and equitable process” (Toledo Exploratory Assessment, 2021, p. 5). Demolitions, carried out by Toledo’s Urban Beautification division, are argued to improve the quality of life of residents. “Through demolition, vacant land can be repurposed and assembled

for adjacent property owners to purchase, used as greenspace for the community, or considered for a new development project” (Demolition, n.d.). The development of the Social Innovation District downtown is being supported with the Connecting Neighborhoods to Opportunity (CNTO) project titled “From Redlining to Green Streets” (Connecting Toledo to Opportunity, 2022). In this case, targeting investment into this Social Innovation District is being justified with the imagery of both greening and social equity despite the uneven development present in these plans.

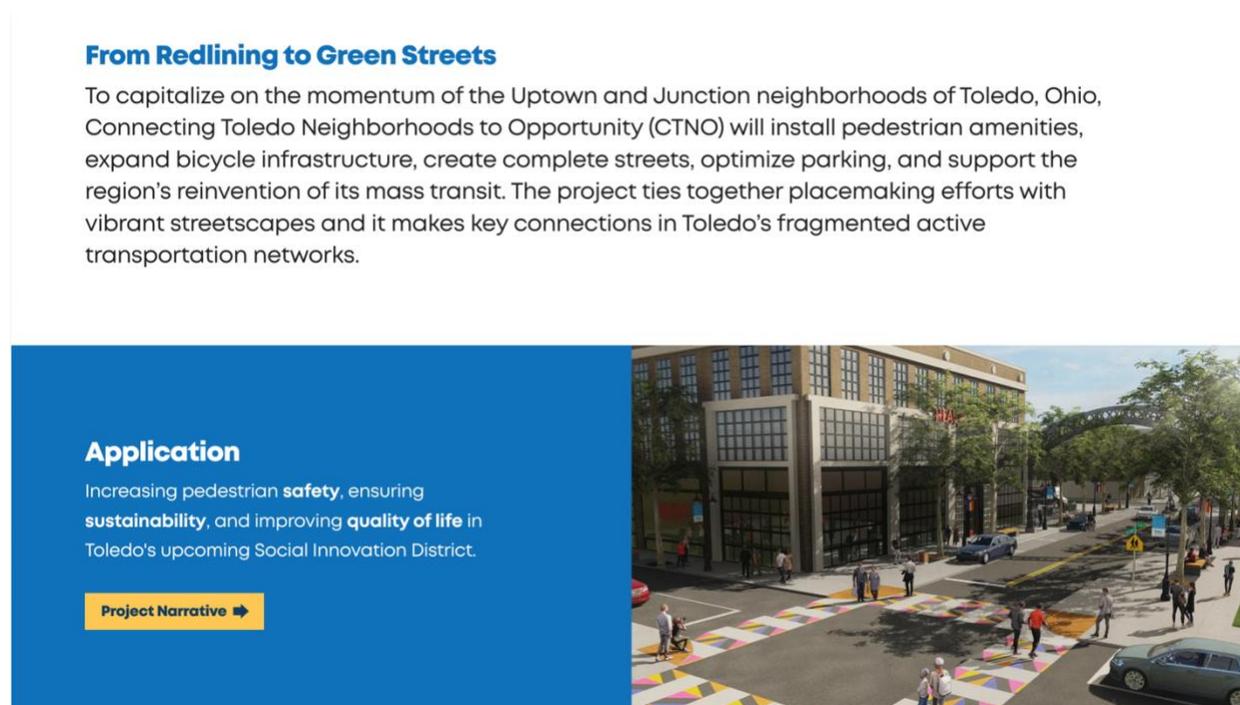


Figure 5.4: Screenshot from the City of Toledo's “From Rightsizing to Green Streets” plans (City of Toledo, Connecting Neighborhoods to Opportunity).

Rightsizing strategies are also being justified with public safety concerns. Public safety is the City's number one priority with almost 80% of the City's 2024 budget dedicated to police

and fire (Harnett, 2024). Mayor Kapszukiewicz declared gun violence a public health emergency in 2020 and has taken initiatives to address gun violence with initiatives, including the community-based program, Cure Violence, that treats violence with community investments. (City of Toledo, 2022).

The City has been launching comprehensive operations in collaboration with the Toledo Police Department that target neighborhoods with high crime rates. “Our police department has taken a multi-faceted approach to address crime in our City. We have implemented proactive crime initiatives such as T.E.A.M. (Toledo Enhancement Area Method) and STOP (STOP the violence) to target areas with high crime rates” (City of Toledo, 2023). The first operation implemented by the T.E.A.M. initiative was operation L.A.S.E.R (Lagrange Area Safety Enforcement Response). After targeting the neighborhood with police sweeps that got 52 guns and 274, 175 dollars’ worth of drugs off the streets, arrested 212 people, issued 463 tickets, the City began demolishing blight in the neighborhood (Kirby, 2022). "We will begin in the L.A.S.E.R. area tearing down and demolishing homes," Toledo's Public Service Director, Paul Rasmusson, said. "Backfilling them and making them an attractive green space and no longer a nuisance" (Kirby, 2022).



Figure 5.3: Mayor's Initiative to Reduce Gun Violence (Mayor's Initiative to Reduce Gun Violence, p.3).

Chapter 6

Geography of Rightsizing Toledo, Ohio

Current comprehensive planning for the City of Toledo includes numerous rightsizing strategies. Though not explicitly stated, goals to become more resource and energy efficient by creating dense “urban villages,” the remediation of vacant land, greening initiatives, redefining and expanding employment opportunities, and goals to attract young professionals with industrial clusters are all strategies to rightsize Toledo. There has been enormous success in areas chosen for targeted investment, particularly in Downtown Toledo. However, some of the most disadvantaged communities surrounding downtown are being targeted for demolition projects without further investment.

6.1 Downtown Revitalization

Since releasing its downtown master plan in 2017, ConneCToledo has followed through with its plans and has helped facilitate many downtown developments. Over 650 million dollars in catalytic development projects have been completed or are underway (ConneCToledo, 2021). Since 2015, 226 million dollars has been invested into 380 acres of new and renovated parks and greenspace downtown, and 143 million dollars has been invested into the culture and hospitality industry (ConneCToledo, 2023, p. 9). 1.3 million square feet of commercial space has been added or renovated along with 911 new housing units and 503 additional units planned (ConneCToledo, 2023, p.9). As outlined in the plan, these developments were centered around the river.

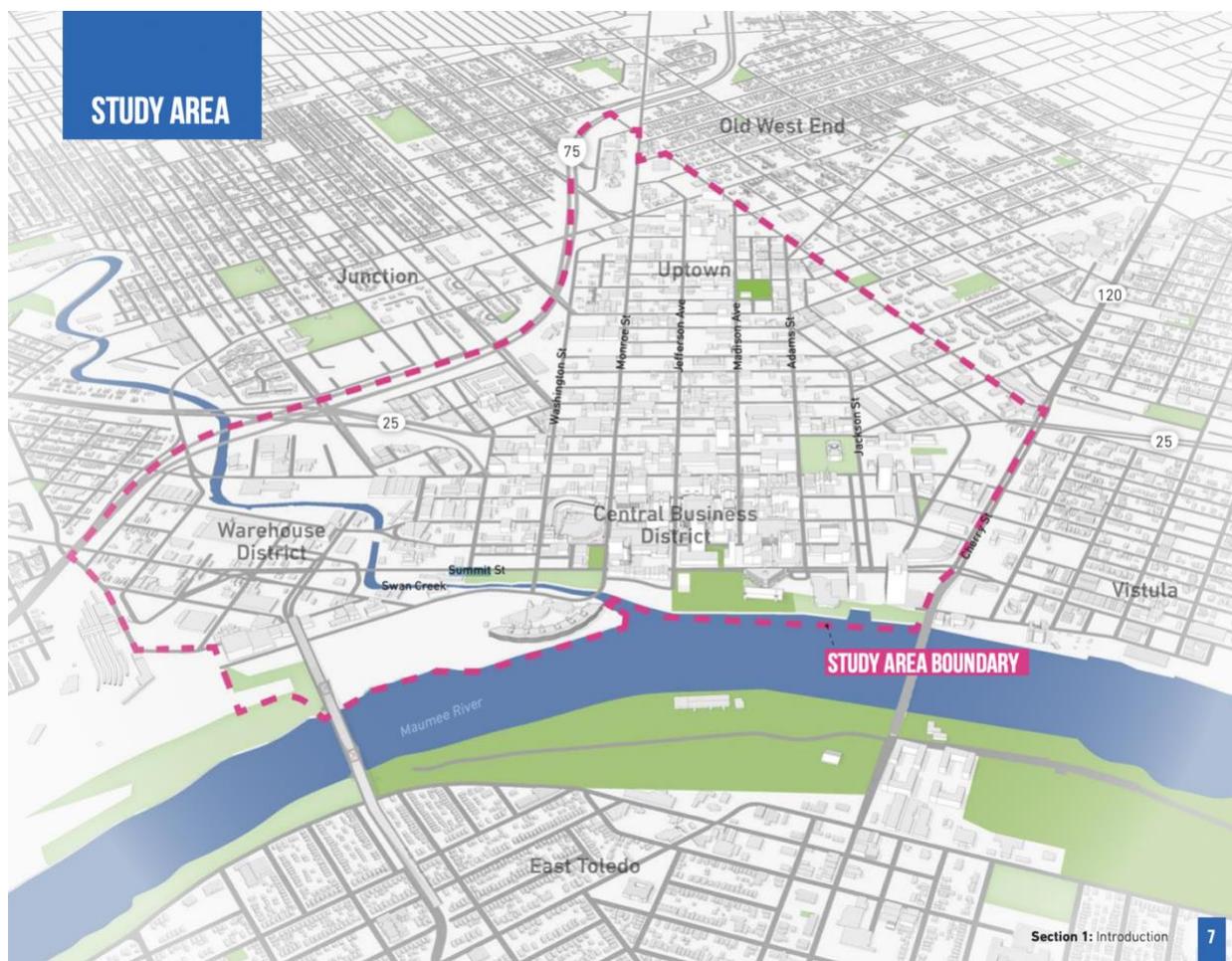


Figure 6.1: ConneCToledo’s 2023 Study Area Boundary (ConneCToledo, 2023, p. 7).

Summit Street, the nearest main street to the Maumee River, received enormous investment. “Since 2017, Summit Street and Jefferson Avenue have been improved. Summit Street is now a signature street with streetscape improvements, median and on-street parking. Jefferson Avenue’s cycle track now connects Uptown to the riverfront (ConneCToledo, 2023, p. 60). A 65.7 million dollar renovation of the former SeaGate Convention Center included the addition of a second floor Grand Ballroom that overlooks Fifth Third Field and the renaming as the “Glass City Center” (WTVG Staff, 2022). The adjoining hotel, now Hiltons at Toledo Downtown, was also renovated and rebranded as a dual-branded property with Hilton Garden

Inn and Homewood Suites. Lucas County commissioners expect these renovations will bring 800 million dollars into the community over the next 20 years (ConneCToledo, 2021). Across from the newly renamed Glass City Center, the historic Fort Industry Square is experiencing ongoing mixed-use development. Sponsored by Karp and Associates IncA, ConneCToledo leveraged 26 million dollars in investment and tax credits towards mixed- use developments, primarily residential and retail space (ConneCToledo, 2020).



Photo 6.1: Nearly completed Fort Industry Square (Photo taken by author).



Photo 6.2: Newly renovated and renamed “Glass City Center” (Photo taken by author).

Greening efforts to transform the city’s waterfront have been overwhelmingly successful. In 2020, “Phase 1” of opening the Glass City Metropark was completed with a 3,500 square foot pavilion with restrooms, a concession window, and a green roof with plaza space, an “adventure boardwalk,” a kayak cove, and event lawn that will accommodate 5,000 people (Metroparks Toledo, 2024). In July of 2022, a bike/pedestrian bridge over main street was completed connecting Glass City Metropark and International Park in East Toledo. In June of 2023, Phase 2 was completed with the opening of “the Ribbon,” a 1,000 ft long ice skating and roller-skating trail, a restaurant, and playgrounds (Metroparks Toledo, 2024). The “Glass City Riverwalk” is under construction which will connect East Toledo, the Vistula neighborhood, and the Warehouse and Central districts with five miles of multi-use trails and 300 acres of greenspace (Metroparks Toledo, 2024).



Photo 6.3: Young person enjoying Glass City Metropark's newly developed "adventure walk"
(Photo taken by author).

While enormous investments are taking place in and around downtown aimed to attract new visitors and residents, residents of the downtown area experience the most concentrated poverty in the City. A Lucas County poverty report published by the University of Toledo in 2019 identified districts 1, 3, and 4 as containing the highest incidences of poverty related factors (Shetty, 2019, p. 56). The study identified the Onyx, Roosevelt, Old West End, Totco, Warren Sherman, Downtown, Warehouse, Uptown and Collingwood Springs neighborhoods as poverty hotspots, and noted adjacent neighborhoods as becoming similarly concentrated (Shetty, 2019, p. 56). The study identified high rates of unemployment in Lagrange, The Village, Birckhead,

Northriver and Vistula neighborhoods (Shetty, 2019, p. 56). Residents of these three districts spent much higher proportions of their household incomes on housing with some district 4 neighborhoods spending over 60% of their household income on housing in 2010. Housing affordability improved between 2010 and 2017; though many neighborhoods in these three districts still spent 45% of their gross income on housing in 2017 (Shetty, 2019, p. 57).

The concentrated poverty identified in districts 1, 4, and much of 3 represent systemic racism within the City at least 50% of the population in these neighborhoods identify as non-white (Shetty et al, 2019, p.16). The strategic report aimed to guide “Forward Toledo,” a comprehensive land use plan that acknowledges that that decades of unequal lending guided by Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) are still visible as people of color remain disproportionately impacted by vacant and deteriorated property, home value erosion, and lack of access to capital. (Toledo Exploratory Assessment, 2023). While concentrated poverty is a serious reality in downtown Toledo, these poverty-related issues like housing affordability is spreading out of the urban core (Shetty et al, 2019). Many of these neighborhoods do not have comprehensive plans or strategies. Among the neighborhoods that are a part of comprehensive plans, there is uneven development.

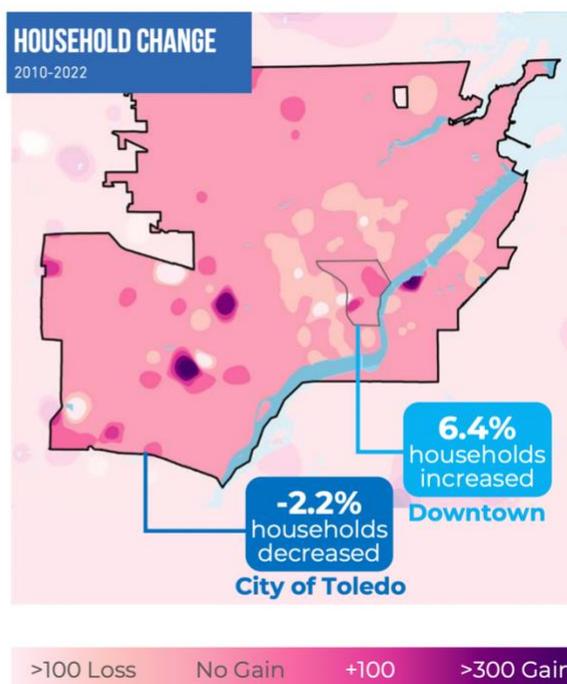
Despite the downtown area being home to systemic poverty resulting from decades of systematic, racially driven disinvestment, ConnecToledo’s downtown planning has prioritized the attraction of young professionals downtown. These efforts have been successful and have reversed trends of young professionals leaving downtown (ConnecToledo, 2017, p. 29). Despite households throughout the city declining by 2.2 percent, households downtown have increased by 6.4 percent. (ConnecToledo, 2017, p. 29). “Rents have also increased by 5 percent.” (ConnecToledo, 2017, p. 30). Nearly 1,000 new market rate housing developments have been

added downtown over the past 7 years (ConnecToledo, 2017, p.16). While the 2023 updated plan acknowledges all of this and calls for more affordable housing downtown, it explicitly states that market-rate housing should be prioritized first. The plan calls for the draft of “practical tools requiring ten percent set asides for affordable units in marketrate development in downtown (but do not enact them until market rate development can occur without subsidy)” (ConnecToledo, 2017, p. 54).

Demographics

Key Findings

- > **Housing has grown while households have gotten smaller**—Downtown has added 900 units since 2015 (including 320 through redevelopment/reuse), increasing downtown population to 3,800 people. The decline of household size is likely explained by the loss of some family housing (which has larger numbers of people per household) and the addition of housing that appeals to singles, couples, and roommates.
- > **The number of downtown households grew** by 6.4 percent since 2010 as compared to citywide decline of -2.2 percent.
- > **The City added young professionals since 2010, reversing a trend from the previous decade.** Between 2000-2010, City of Toledo lost 10 percent of the young professional demographic--those aged 25 to 34 with a college degree.
- > **Downtown households are smaller with fewer children**—13 percent of households downtown have children (under the age of 18), compared to 28 percent citywide.
- > **Downtown has a relatively high concentration of low-income households**—median household income is \$16,300 compared to \$41,300 citywide; 62 percent of households earn less than \$25,000 annually, compared to 30 percent citywide.



Section 2: Market Analysis and Strategy

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Figure 6.2: Downtown Household Demographic Change (ConnecToledo, 2017, p. 29).

6.2 Social Innovation District: Connecting Uptown, Junction, and Downtown

In alignment with ConnecToledo’s downtown masterplan, the City of Toledo and Promedica have developed a vision for the Uptown and Junction neighborhoods to become a

Social Innovation District. Both neighborhoods were once thriving, predominately black, walkable communities; however, urban renewal and the construction of I-75 lead to massive displacement and ongoing disinvestment (Connecting Toledo Neighborhoods to Opportunity, 2021, p. 3). However, both neighborhoods have experienced recent investment. Uptown, as part of ConneCToledo's downtown masterplan, has experienced a surge of investment in entertainment, retail, and real estate. Community activism in the Junction neighborhood, including the grassroots organization, Junction Coalition, has attracted investment. The development of a SID plans to capitalize on this momentum to transform these neighborhoods into an innovation hub for the region (Connecting Toledo Neighborhoods to Opportunity, 2021).

“The Toledo Social Innovation District Framework Plan was created to guide the planning and development of northwest Ohio's innovation district, which focuses on developing new technologies to improve the region's economic competitiveness while also strengthening the region's people, particularly low-income, minority, and people of color living in the most distressed neighborhoods adjacent to downtown Toledo. The plan envisions a comprehensive approach to economic development that includes workforce training, clustering of high-tech businesses, strategic purchasing, workforce housing, and access to recreational amenities, with a focus on minority and women-owned businesses, non-traditional healthcare solutions, technology innovation, and medical devices and clinical innovations” (Connecting Toledo Neighborhoods to Opportunity, 2023, p. 11).

Unfortunately, plans for workforce training has fallen through as it was to be funded by Bitwise, a tech company that filed for bankruptcy this past June. In the 2024 State of the City

Address, Mayor Kapszukiewicz stated “Bitwise would have been such a wonderful attraction to this building. Yeah, it would have- didn't happen- too bad- time to move on- time to do something else” (City of Toledo, 2024). Additionally, while there is expressed acknowledgement of and commitment to the disadvantaged communities who live in these neighborhoods, many community members feel there is not enough being done for these communities. Just this past December of 2023, a group of unhoused people camping near Promedica’s Market on the Green were pushed out by law enforcement (Bates, 2023).

One of the five members of the camp stated, “we need the city council and all them to reach out and help people, you know, people like us, to help us” (Bates, 2023). The members had been camping outside of Saint Paul’s United Methodist Church and had been forced out by the city’s Code Compliance Office and are now moving back (Bates, 2023). “We as a city can continue to shuffle people around in circles downtown, or the city can do something more than just send the police out and tell people to move,” Kwiatkowski, the pastor at St. Paul’s said (Bates, 2023). This was brought up by community members during my field work.

“They don’t care about us. They don’t want us here. All that on the news that they just swept up all those people over there by the Green. They want us gone.” -Interviewee 2

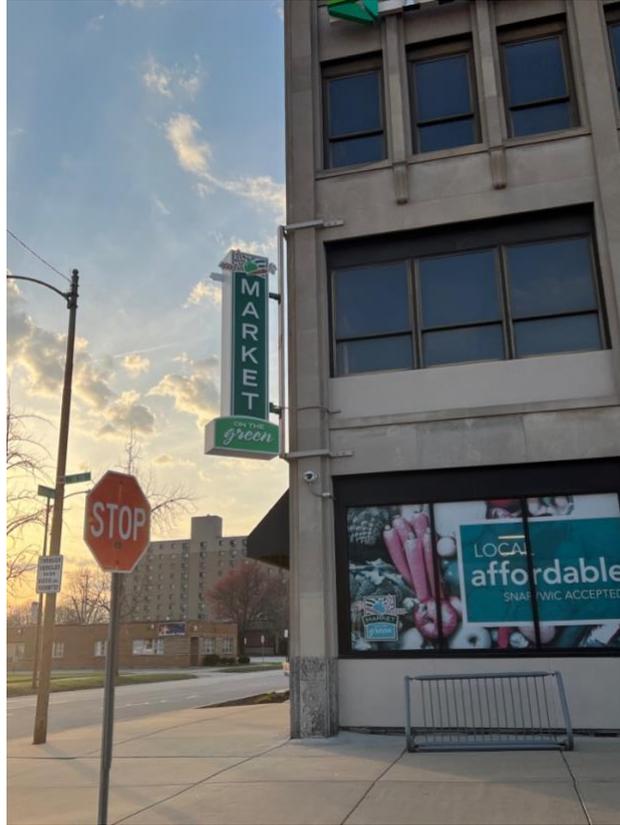


Photo 6.4: Promedica's Uptown Market on the Green (Photo taken by author).

6.3 Targeted Neighborhood Revitalization

The City of Toledo has determined Englewood and the Old South end as Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas. The Old South End is located along the Maumee River, and the Englewood neighborhood is adjacent to Junction, also predominately black and separated from Downtown by I-75 (City of Toledo, 2022).



Figure 6.5: RISE Neighborhood, Scott Park (Lucas County Land Bank, 2024).



Figure 6.6: RISE Neighborhood, Garfield (Lucas County Land Bank, 2024).

Along with its county-wide efforts, the Lucas County Land Bank (LCLB) practices “targeted neighborhood investments” (Lucas County Land Bank, 2024). Most of the land bank’s efforts involve demolitions. Between 2016 and 2020, the LCLB invested 30 million dollars in demolitions, and selected “RISE” (Rebuild Invest Stabilize Engage) neighborhoods see the most investment. Currently, two RISE neighborhoods are identified on the LCLB’s website for targeted invention: Clinton Park and Garfield. Clinton Park is a dense, overwhelmingly African American neighborhood, with proximity to The University of Toledo and Ottawa Park which includes an ice rink and an amphitheater. The Garfield Neighborhood, located along East Toledo’s riverfront, includes Waite High School and the growing Glass City Metropark (Lucas County Land Bank, 2024).

The LCLB recognizes the Four Corners buildings downtown and the St. Anthony’s Church in the Junction neighborhood as their major properties. The historic St. Anthony’s Church was acquired by the LCLB in 2018 after community leaders and residents fought to stop it from being demolished (St. Anthony’s Redevelopment, 2024). The LCLB conducted a re-use feasibility study which collected community regarding what purpose the space should be reused for to guide development along with budgets for different implementations (St. Anthony’s Redevelopment, 2024) In February of 2023, the LCLB received a Letter of Intent from Adventus Climbing, a local recreational climbing gym operation, regarding redeveloping the Church to open a climbing gym. At the same time, the Land Bank received a 4-million-dollar Community Project Funding appropriation from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for investments in the building and adjacent land (St. Anthony’s Redevelopment, 2024). The LCLB halted marketing of the property (Lucas County Land Bank, 2024).

In March 2, 2024, over a year after receiving funds for the property, a section of Junction Avenue closed for at least 30 days due to falling bricks from St. Anthony's. Many historic buildings and churches across the City require significant renovations. Despite this church being a chosen revitalization project, it sat alongside 4 million dollars in the hands of the LCLB for over a year posing a danger to the neighborhood with no emergency repairs made. This indicates the level of abandonment experienced throughout the rest of the City as numerous historical buildings, churches, and homes remain in desperate need of repair without nearly this level of attention and funding.



Photo 6.5: Junction Ave. closed in front of St. Anthony's Church (Photo taken by author).



Photo 6.6: Four Corners Buildings (Photo taken by author).

6.4 Targeted Demolition in Neighborhoods Encircling Downtown

Toledo has experienced uneven development with small areas that experience very little investment. (Hackworth and Nowakowski, 2015, p. 245). The neighborhoods encircling downtown experience the most land abandonment throughout the City (Figure 6.7) and are being targeted for demolition (City of Toledo, n.d.). “While there are some neighborhoods that boast upward trends, particular to areas north of downtown, there is significant instability in the traditional low-density residential neighborhoods, specifically in the areas surrounding Downtown Toledo. These areas also have the highest concentration of residential public property inventory and property delinquency” (Toledo Exploratory Assessment, 2021, p. 48).

“You know that you get into an area just outside of the downtown and what do you have a lot of Section 8 housing, you know, public housing, low income, supported residencials and

you know, you could actually draw a circle around. That then becomes that whole area. Including the east side. Take a step out beyond that and now you're into the traditional historic neighborhoods. Old Orchard, you know. And that's where you start getting into, like, the far South end point place. You know, so, you've got these old, established neighborhoods just outside of that. And then beyond that is the modern. New Ottawa Hills Perrysburg mommy Sylvania. You got that big circle of you know where the where the money is. The upscale.”

-Interviewee 6

The City is aiming to demolish 1,000 homes, and almost all of them are in neighborhoods encircling downtown. The City has been using demolition as a strategy to address crime with targeted neighborhood operations that began in the LaGrange area (Kirby, 2024). That is where there has been the highest concentration of demolitions since 2021 (Figure 6.8).

“LaGrange is a rough area and a lot of burned-out vacant buildings. In fact, the Land Bank concentrated there first when they first were formed going in and just-tearing down the stuff that's been burned out. Hulk that's been sitting there for two years. You know, the fire department puts their, you know, their tags on it saying, you know, not occupiable. You know, they don't even bother boarding up windows because there are no windows to board up. The roofs collapsed.” -Interviewee 6

While these demolitions of over 1,000 homes are framed and perceived as vacant, and many in fact are, there are also hundreds of people whose homes are on the demolition list (WGTV Staff, 2023). 13 Action News published about Toledoans with their homes threatened

on the demolition list. Reporters spoke to a resident whose home is on the demolition list. A homeowner stated they never received a notice that they were on the list until a community member called to tell them. Homes are identified as having nesciences that can “range from overgrown grass to broken windows to caved in roofs.” After demolition, “the City hopes someone will buy them - maybe a neighbor looking to expand their property or someone wanting to build a community garden -- but there are no concrete plans” (WGTV Staff, 2023).

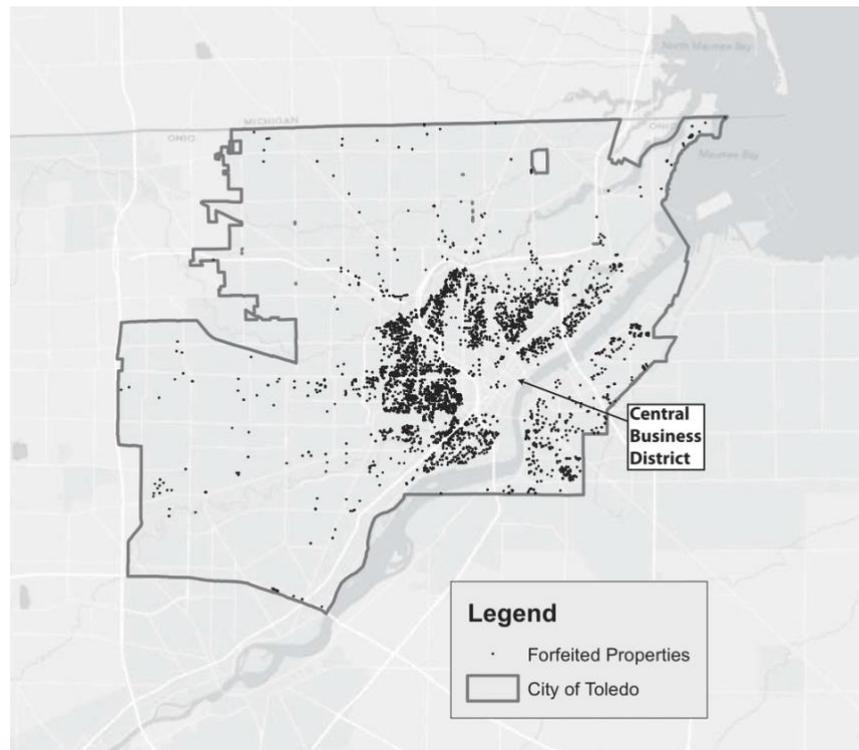


Figure 6.7: Fortified land parcels in Toledo, Ohio from 1993-2011 (Hackowrth and Nowakowski, 2015, p.532).

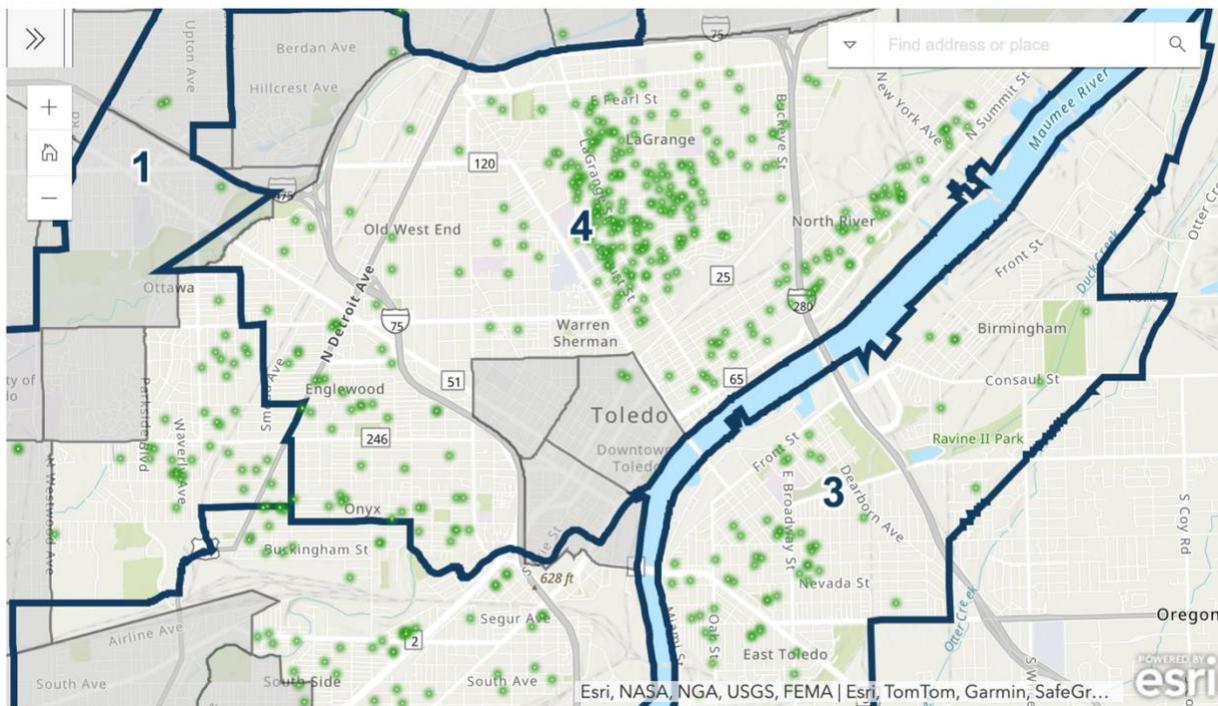


Figure 6.8: Map of completed demolitions in Toledo since 2021 (City of Toledo, n.d.).

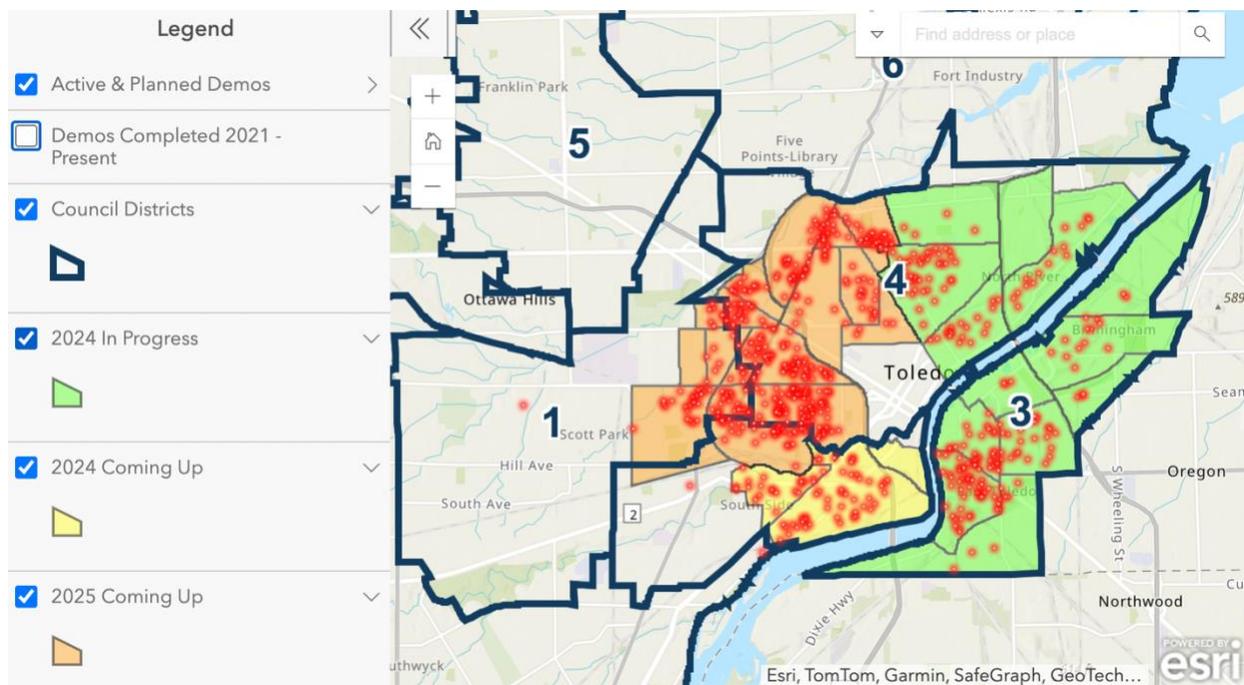


Figure 6.9: Map of active and planned demolitions for 2024-2025 (City of Toledo, n.d.).

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Discussion

Like many cities throughout the U.S., Toledo formed an oppressive, expansionist vision during its industrial boom that was never realized. In Toledo, this vision was supported by *Toledo Blade* publisher, Paul Block. Vibrant communities were demolished to support a vision that was just a dream. The City expanded, the manufacturing industry declined, and the City has continued to shrink ever since. The city now struggles with infrastructure and a housing stock too large for the population and tax base to support along with concentrated poverty and violence in communities targeted by this vision. The City is now attempting to return to the dense, vibrant, walkable City it once was with similar politics.

Though not explicitly stated in planning, Toledo is rightsizing. Investment is being prioritized downtown and in other neighborhoods with existing revitalization momentum. They are being carried out with the same top-down methods of intergovernmental collaboration that funded highway development and urban renewal. Public-private partnerships are at the forefront of revitalization efforts. Downtown revitalization has successfully been attracting young professionals and their tax back into the City center, which is altering the housing market and raising rent downtown (ConnecToledo, 2023). The City is carrying out mass demolitions in historically marginalized neighborhoods without many other forms of investment. These efforts are being justified with ideas of productivity and safety.

It must be emphasized that there are incredibly positive investments being made in Toledo. I would argue that efforts to support connected, walkable communities, neighborhood vibrancy, sustainability, and greenspace are important causes that should be prioritized in local planning. However, as discussed by Akers, Béal, and Rousseau (2019), I argue these efforts

should not be appropriated to justify and reframe the politics of abandonment and demolition. I argue a similar phenomenon is occurring in which the investments being made in historically marginalized communities are being leveraged to justify the uneven development and abandonment taking place. Recent plans for Junction and Uptown capitalize on existing momentum, a luxury other marginalized communities do not have. More can and should be done to expand the capacity of grassroots organizations. Targeted demolition and targeted investment alike are political issues that are greatly dependent on the specific contexts of community and place. There needs to be dramatic restructurings of representation within planning to not simply include community voices but be led by them. The recent successes of the Junction Coalition (2024) founded around “economic justice, environmental justice, social justice, and peace education” is representative of the overwhelming potential for grassroots organizations in Toledo and other Rust Belt cities- even within the limits of current political and economic frameworks.



Photo 7.1 Mural on Junction Avenue reads “Love lives here: A community built on social justice and peace.” (Photo taken by author).

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Appendix

IRB Approval

Project Number	23-E-79
Project Status	APPROVED
Committee:	Office of Research Compliance
Compliance Contact:	Lori Miller (lorimiller@ohio.edu)
Primary Investigator:	Kendra Mckitrick
Project Title:	Oral History Project on the Revitalization of Downtown Toledo, Ohio
Level of Review:	EXEMPT

The Ohio University Office of Research Compliance reviewed and approved by exempt review the above referenced research. The Office of Research Compliance was able to provide exempt approval under 45 CFR 46.104(d) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for exempt review, as indicated below.

IRB Approval:	07/18/2023 1:26:37 PM
Review Category:	2

Waivers: Approval includes approval for a waiver of the signature requirement for the online version of the consent form, "Toledo_ConsentForm_July7.docx."

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. In addition, FERPA, PPRA, and other authorizations / agreements must be obtained, if needed. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Any changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the Office of Research Compliance / IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under the Ohio University OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00000095. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Compliance staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.

The approval will no longer be in effect when the Primary Investigator is no longer under the auspices of Ohio University, e.g., graduation or departure from Ohio University.