

Critical Review 3

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1 Urban Revival?

What are some of the key factors for many cities to think “urban renewal”? Will the current trends last, and at what cost?

Many of the key factors with urban renewal have to do with the impressions given off as to how well the city is actually doing. Many of these impressions are the numbers from falling unemployment rates, falling crime rates &c. Looking at Philadelphia alone it seems like Rendell has done a bang up job with the city. Well, yes and no! Centre City looks great, but what about the rest of the city? Or even a few blocks North of Market Street in the delapidating ex-industrial centre?

Many cities fail to be able to bootstrap themselves from a downward spiral. The selections from the text denote that some cities actually attempt to mimic the things that worked for other cities. This can stem from cultural and arts centres to museums, attractions, &c. This type of mentality must stop. The city planners ought take into account that what’s good for the goose...

Suburban areas also ought take an interest in the goings on of the cities if they are too to prosper from their proximity. Although these economically separate and unequal enclaves exist and thrive because of the existance of the city, what good would a burning Harlem do, for Nassau or Suffolk County (on Long Island.) Although it maybe foolish to think that these suburbs could or

even should solely support the inner-cities, it would be in their self-interest to seek ways to give back a little to the cities that provide their professions.

Earlier I hinted at the subtle superficiality of urban revival. Ironically, this superficiality is necessary in order to stimulate actual urban revival. Consider it as the potential turning into kinetic. In this way, people will be drawn into the city, and hence a self-fulfilling prophecy. Take, for example New York City's SoHo, or Philadelphia's University City. The key is to focus on the young adults, and conversely to provide facilities (entertainment, educational, &c.) to keep those drawn into the city due to higher educational schooling.

Unfortunately, what most cities are in dire need for, quick fixes, is not the solution. There are certain pitfalls that must be considered and compensated for. Some of these inadequacies are issues of race and ethnic relations, as well as economic inequalities. As far as quick fix arts centres are concerned, they are no good to us if there isn't an attraction. The age old adage, "build it and they will come" holds no water where urban renewal is concerned. These cultural centres must be part of a grander plan if they are to survive (and not be white elephants.) They must be carefully weaved into the city's quality-of-life issues! Consider the text's reference to the Vancouver issues regarding a focus on the family to increase a city's central urban population. As well as a concentration on parks and an ability for people to get around cheaply and quickly throughout a city (mass transit.)