

Urban Studies' Senior Capstone Poster Titles and Abstracts

Twenty-First Century Manufacturing and Brownfield Redevelopment: Evidence from Century City in Milwaukee

Avarie Daly

Rust Belt cities like Milwaukee share a familiar story of the once-booming industrial core and its decline when deindustrialization struck in the 1970s and 80s. In the current postindustrial economy, cities are faced with decisions about what to do with these old industry sites, which often require environmental cleanup and are known as “brownfields.” The process of creating Milwaukee’s Century City development in the 30th Street Industrial Corridor has been intensive ever since the city acquired the land in 2009, from brownfield remediation to attracting firms. This raises some important questions about postindustrial cities: how and why do cities put so much work into this kind of revitalization? Who benefits from it? What kinds of strategies are applied to bring back manufacturing? This study examines published plans from The Corridor and Century City, news stories, city documents, and interviews to get an idea of how this development has evolved and how it is faring now. I find that the city’s needs are supplemented by private investment funds associated with Opportunity Zones, which attract firms using tax incentives. Century City has created “flex space” to accommodate all kinds of operations and made sure the sites are equipped for businesses with higher utility needs. Efforts by the greater Industrial Corridor to improve the local neighborhood are also beneficial and include adding park space, increasing accessibility for people who bike to work, and creating community networks to connect employers to a pool of available workers. I conclude that a comprehensive

community approach with greening initiatives creates a mutually beneficial relationship between the surrounding neighborhood and firms in Century City, and is a significant factor in its success.

Imagining a New City Partnership: How Modern Milwaukee Navigates Citizen

Participation, Planning, and Public Safety

Liam Farin

Over the last 15 years, we have seen a steady increase in the number of “road diets” implemented in cities across the United States. These projects are characterized by a reduction in vehicle lanes, the narrowing of existing lanes, and the addition of safer pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

This research seeks to analyze one such project in Milwaukee to understand how the city conceives projects, how and to what extent citizen voices are incorporated, and the process of implementation. By using a qualitative analysis method, we can interpret the dynamics of actors, policies, and contexts of this project. The data used for this analysis consists primarily of project documents, recorded council meetings and public information sessions, budget documents, personal communication with city staff, the city’s Complete Streets Health and Equity Report, and the National League of American Bicyclists’ report card with recommendations for the city.

By viewing the processes of this project through the concepts of Scott Campbell’s “Planner’s Triangle” and Sherry Arnstein’s “Ladder of Participation,” we can begin to interpret how this project approximates sustainable development and the quality of public engagement. The results of this research find that this project happened due to a long-standing push for this infrastructure type in Milwaukee from many levels of government and advocacy. While improved transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure are a positive byproduct, the core purpose of this project is

in line with citywide goals shifting away from downtown economic development and towards combatting reckless driving and reinvesting in Milwaukee's disinvested communities. Finally, while the project has improved public participation from projects of the past, it does not reach the threshold of "partnership" or "citizen control," and instead rests in the realm of "consultation" and "placation."

High Opportunity Housing: Metro Milwaukee's Newest Voucher Experiment

Georg Frisch

Housing choice vouchers are an important part of the housing assistance landscape in metro Milwaukee; however, vouchers are also one form of assistance in which residential segregation and housing discrimination continue to keep Black Milwaukeeans in pockets of lower opportunity. This study examines the Opportunity MKE program, a program that provides enhanced wraparound services to voucher holders in order facilitate housing moves to high opportunity neighborhoods. The success of Opportunity MKE may indicate a brighter future for voucher holders, especially given the long-standing barriers associated with standard housing choice vouchers. Opportunity MKE is a relatively new program, and there are a lot of questions stemming from its relative youth. What are the origins and methods of Opportunity MKE? What precedent is informing the program? The prototype for this new program was in Seattle, and that study can be found on Raj Chetty's website. Both of these sources give a clear insight into the basis of this new Milwaukee program, as well as the specific ways the program is different from standard vouchers. That Seattle study showed major increases in lifetime wages as well as decreases in incarceration and teen birth rates. This study draws on legislative testimony,

program documents and other sources to investigate the nature of the Milwaukee program and its potential impacts on housing choice voucher-holders in Metro Milwaukee. This study and the larger program have the potential for a number of profound policy implications. Seattle was a positive study, and if Milwaukee can replicate it, the Opportunity Program will help a large number of tenants find new homes. Providing housing opportunity for those who don't have it could be the first steps for a city in dire need of racial and economic integration.

Remaking Downtown: An Analysis of the 2040 Downtown Milwaukee Revitalization Plan

A.J. Krambeer

In America's past, many techniques involving urban revitalization have been used predatorily. Furthermore, the product of these techniques effect communities to this day, especially in Milwaukee. Along with other issues, Milwaukee is well known as one of the most segregated cities in the United States, due in part to its past discriminatory redevelopment, redlining, and urban renewal policies. Along with this and other issues, Milwaukee has implemented sincere infrastructural and investment changes in the form of revitalization projects to mitigate many of these problems. Cities often develop overarching Master Plans to highlight and organize a set of policy and development priorities for a city. On August 3rd, 2023, Milwaukee Common Council members and other political leaders passed the Milwaukee 2040 downtown revitalization plan, Connecting MKE. Seemingly beneficial to Milwaukee's downtown, the goals on the 2040 plan are ambitious. In this study I examine the nature of this plan (its core ideas, themes, priorities, values, interests, stakeholders, etc) and how it departs from the earlier 2010 plan. The guiding principles involving the creation of Milwaukee's 2040 plan are generally not well known which

leaves many questions such as: Why was the 2040 plan created after Milwaukee's 2010 plan? Are the plan's goals similar to revitalization projects taking place in other cities? If so, were these goals met? Most importantly, how do these plans contribute to the ongoing discussion of revitalization policy more generally? This study aims to answer these questions by using policy analysis and Common Council recordings as a method to determine the reasoning, values, and interests behind legislation created under the subject of urban revitalization. This study will have some broad policy implications given that urban revitalization projects interact with its city's infrastructure and can have wide-ranging impacts on its residents and visitors.

When the State Won't Play: Making the Case for the Revitalization of the KRM Commuter Rail Without a Regional Rail Authority

Isabella Lemieux

In recent years there has been an increase in interest in the building of the Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail after the sudden halting of the 2011 project with the dissolution of the Regional Rail Authority, SERTA. Much of the current standing literature has studied the development of the KRM line up until that point, but very little had looked at the development afterwards. This study looks to answer the following questions: What are the policies and processes of building the KRM commuter rail without the SEWRPC overseeing the project? How has the planning for the commuter rail in Southeastern Wisconsin changed after the dissolution of a regional rail authority? Using a content analysis of common council meetings and newspapers, supplemented by conducting interviews with leaders in major cities along the proposed rail line, this study found a nuance to what changed, with many of the challenges

surrounding polarization about the commuter rail still lingering. The differences derived in commuter rail development can be seen in the City of Racine leading the charge for change in the commuter rail and the use of public-private partnerships in the development of the rail. The implications of this project are looking at public-private partnership is being used today to build large infrastructure and how smaller satellite cities are looking to gain economic growth.

Making a Case for Safety: An Analysis of the Brady Street Pedestrian Plan

Susan McClung

This case study examines the pedestrian project proposed by the Brady Street business improvement district (BID) which aims to create a safer environment for pedestrians. Despite the significant disapproval businesses held for pedestrian malls in the past attitudes on these projects have shifted in recent years, with several pedestrian projects now fully supported by BIDs in various US cities. However, none of these novel BID-approved pedestrianization plans cite safety concerns as their primary focus. This study aims to identify what public action or community support is necessary to form an effective and practical pedestrian safe street, and how it compares to similar pedestrian zones in Milwaukee and the greater United States. This case study uses various data sources including public documents and reports relating to pedestrianization projects found in Milwaukee, traffic patterns and public safety, relevant newspaper articles and interviews with relevant actors. This study finds the success of pedestrian projects relies on mutual agreement among the public, private businesses, and government in addition to recognizing its rank in priority, impact, and necessity. Additionally, the BID sponsored Brady Street proposal creates a unique opportunity to merge concepts between private

and public actors through the most recent increased activity for pedestrian safety enacted by the City of Milwaukee.

Transit-Oriented Development in 3 Milwaukee Projects: Moving Milwaukee Forward?

Aidan Sodemann

This study aims to shed light on some recently completed or proposed projects that can be considered as a form of transit-oriented development (TOD). Projects such as the recent development of the Milwaukee streetcar line, The Hop, as well as proposed HOP extension projects on King Drive and Walker's Point are TOD projects that will be examined in this study.

In addition, this study will review the creation and sustained efforts to support the Anti-Displacement Plan, which was first created in February of 2018. Many of the United States' middle to large-sized cities are reimplementing their own streetcar systems and other TOD projects to give more efficient and affordable means to travel from various locations and as an economic development tool for a particular area. In Milwaukee the goal of The Hop is more than just a tourist attraction and is often misunderstood by many people who might think of it as a waste of resources. The goal of this study is to better understand the role of TOD projects in Milwaukee and also how these projects relate to ongoing anti-displacement efforts in the city.

Are these two types of developments compatible? How does TOD look to improve displacement issues in the future? This study's findings, drawn from legislative testimony, relevant documents, and project plans, will demonstrate how the streetcar (and other TOD projects) can be an engine of gentrification, or a resource for the city to successfully develop different areas of the city. For this study I will also use data from other cities to compare those cities to Milwaukee and how Milwaukee's approach differs, if at all, in TOD project development.

Shades of Green: A Spatial Analysis of Tree Canopy Disparities in Milwaukee's Urban Landscape

Bella Wineke

This study investigates disparities in tree canopy and green space distribution within Milwaukee's urban neighborhoods and their implications. Previous research suggests that areas with higher minority or low-income populations tend to have less tree canopy cover and limited access to green spaces. The research questions focus on understanding the social, environmental, and health ramifications of unequal green space access. A mixed-methods approach combining quantitative spatial analysis with qualitative literature review and policy analysis is employed to address these questions. The findings reveal significant disparities in tree canopy and green space distribution across Milwaukee, particularly in underserved communities. Policy implications include the need for targeted interventions to address environmental injustices and promote equitable access to green spaces. By integrating environmental justice principles into policy and planning decisions, cities can work towards creating healthier and more resilient communities for all residents.