

Robin Boyle Transcript

REX:

I'm Rex Lemore I'm glad to welcome you here to our series on Resizing Communities in a Just and Equitable Manner. Today's webinar will be examining Implications for Public Policy. Let me remind you, this is more than just a webinar series, what we're hoping to do is provide participants with information from leading practitioners and scholars from across the world on the methods and strategies for resizing communities in a just and equitable manner and to facilitate thoughtful discourse and innovative collaboration amongst community partners and stakeholders engaged in resizing their communities.

In addition to the series we have a set of materials that are available on our website and we encourage people to access the archived webinars and these materials at times and places convenient to you. These materials have been gathered from around the United States and parts of Europe that really provide insights to participants on this challenge of resizing communities and can be accessed at ced.msu.edu/annualinstitute2011.

Now if you haven't registered for the webinar series it's no big deal, but we would like to ask you to send us your email so that we can keep you informed of this event and others as we add to the webinar series and the additional materials in the collection.

If you have questions during the webinar series, let me point to the left corner of your screen where you are able to see a chatroom and you are able to ask questions in the chatroom for Dr. Boyle or myself. And with that let me introduce today's presenter.

Professor Boyle of Urban Planning is the Chair of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. In addition to his academic and administrative responsibilities at Wayne State University, Dr. Boyle has recently served on two Wayne State University presidential initiatives including a Midtown Detroit Task Force and the review of the Urban Research and Outreach mission for Wayne State University. He also serves on the Wayne State University Standing Committee on the Environment. He is currently co-directing the WSU's Detroit Revitalization Fellows Program that is a critical component of a region-wide talent attraction and retention strategy that focuses on capacity building in Detroit.

His research interests have focused on large cities and their economic condition. He's a Co-Chair for the Investigative U.S. Department of Labor School of Work Grant [unintelligible, audio is echoing 3:00-3:06]. He's also a Co-Investigator for the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration Study on economic development policy across the nation. He's also in charge of external funding for research into the impact of aging society and how to adapt the building environment to assist aging in place. He's active in professional organizations, including co-chair of the Detroit chapter of the Urban Land Institute and currently serves on the board of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance. He is also an elected member of the US Urban Affairs Association and for the past five years has served as Chair of the Planning Board for the City of Birmingham, MI. And with that let me introduce Mr. Boyle.

DR. BOYLE:

Well good afternoon and thank you Rex for introducing that and for inviting me to communicate and talk as part of your webinar series. I've been impressed by the coverage that you've had and by the range of issues that you've introduced to the audience. I'm going to assume that many people on this are familiar with the Detroit and indeed the state of Michigan

but to begin I'd like to just set up a few issues that might be helpful to those who would be watching this program or looking at the power point from outside of the state.

I was asked to consider the whole question of resizing cities in a public policy context. So I'd like to begin by framing what I think are the important issues as they relate to the situation facing cities here in the state of Michigan and in particular in southeast Michigan, and more particularly in the city of Detroit. I think it's important to ask a few questions as we go into this. The first question is, while there might be a great deal of academic interest and indeed a mere change of policy debate around what we're calling a resizing or downsizing or whatever term we want to use, I think we need to ask the question is there a national—and by that I mean national urban policy position one can turn to to look for a response? And as we go through a few remarks this afternoon I will try and connect back to these issues as we go through my presentation. More particularly here in the state of Michigan, has the state government developed or perhaps more importantly redeveloped, a coherent urban policy? An urban policy that we take on board the challenge of the post industrial city such as the Saginaws, the Flints, Benton Harbor, Pontiac or indeed here in the city of Detroit.

And then I think a critical public policy question, a really fundamental question, is there what I would call political capacity to act? And by that I mean not just the elected politicians in a particular municipality but the neighboring cities, the state representatives and others who serve as the governmental context within which cities need to address these questions of change. And here in southeast Michigan obviously what happens with the city of Detroit needs to be set into an important regional, sub regional, and indeed state context. So my question really begins is there a political capacity to act? And as you will see in a few minutes the requirement to act I think is indeed pressing.

Another important question, and I think this is very much part of what Dr. Lemore and others at Michigan State have been trying to do is to ask the question and to indeed answer the question, are there the necessary legal and indeed planning tools that can be used by municipalities and others to consider this whole question of rightsizing or resizing the cities that we live in?

Moving out of the role of organized government I think it is very important, particularly for those who may not be familiar with what's happening in the state of Michigan, to consider the role of foundations and indeed philanthropy as a whole and the role of their agents; that's often the nonprofit organizations as mechanisms for right sizing and changing the place that we have. And as we develop my conversation this afternoon I think you will see just how important these organizations are. And indeed as cities change and perhaps downsize I think we are going to be seeing an increasing role for these other agents of change in our metropolitan areas.

And a really fundamental question: are there the federal, state, county resources that are there to assist in this process of restructuring? It's all very well to talk in generalities about downsizing but it's very different when you have to address questions of ownership, of resources and of the actual cost of changing what we do. And if that includes a change in the nature of the scale of a place then obviously there are cost implications to that as well.

And last but by no means least, because of the nature of the cities that we live in and the operation of the market, how does and how can the private sector participate in this whole question of right sizing?

Now this is obviously a somewhat heroic pallet of questions to ask and I don't expect that we're going to have answers for all of them but I would like everyone who is listening or looking at these consider these questions as we go through this presentation.

So what I thought I'd do is that I'd actually make this specific rather than keeping it at a general level I thought I would actually address these questions by looking quite quickly at what has happened here in Detroit, Michigan. I will take you through a range of different perspectives, some of which are contemporary but some of which are importantly based in the past and I will make reference to what I call memory as being an important component of shaping a public policy response. So bear with me if you've spent a lot of time looking at videos or power points and other presentations about Detroit, I'm afraid you're about to suffer another one but I think you will see why I wanted to do it.

Again for those of you not familiar with where we are, this is the state of Michigan. On the right hand side of my screen is southeast Michigan or the metropolitan context. We're—hold on, little problem again—we're down here on the bottom right hand side of the mitt as we call it for the state of Michigan. And this is the city of Detroit surrounded by the three counties of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb to the north. I also put this map in because I think it's very important that we understand the whole question of right sizing or changing the nature of what our cities are cannot be done in a vacuum. As I indicated earlier state policy and indeed the regional context is a vital element of what we're doing. And we'll continually come back to that context as we go through.

I'd like to begin with the past because I think a conversation about right sizing needs to be set into its historical context. This is a famous map that was drawn, gosh, forty years ago. It was the Detroit plan, a plan that was put together by the private sector, mainly the Edison Company led by its President Walter Cisler who hired an external consultant, Constantinos Doxiadis, from Greece. And with the help of a range of agencies not least Wayne State University where I'm speaking from today, they put together this massive three volume study of what can only be described as a growth pattern. And demonstrated that the metropolitan region of Detroit, which is right in the center of this map, would expand almost seamlessly all the way to Saginaw to the bay up to into the thumb and south into Toledo creating this giant region, a giant region that was expected to grow by the year 2000 might I say to almost 15 million. It didn't quite get there; the population of the area you are looking at is probably around 7 million by the time the plan was supposed to be completed. So therefore they were off the mark by a considerable extent. The point of this however was to clearly show that in the 1960s there was a very clear image of where the city would go and that would be to spread or to use the majority term, sprawl. It would sprawl from a strong central city—and Detroit by the way was considered to be the central city—but it would include this new city that would be built at Port Huron and then it would be connected to a range of corridor growth patterns that you can see on the map in front of you. That was the context that Detroit was facing in the 1960s.

Within the city however memory was also affected or has been affected by several other changes that occurred in the city. And I want to make it clear that these have set the context for Detroit over the past forty years. The first of these, one that was both positive and negative, was a process of federal policy, federal government policy which was the Urban Renewal Program. And included in that was one of the most famous and indeed many would argue successful Urban Renewal Programs at Gratiot/Lafayette Park or the Gratiot Urban Renewal Program that resulted in the clearance of a significant proportion of inner city homes; relatively poor condition but never the less these were homes to many thousands of people who were relocated through this Urban Renewal Program.

Why do I mention that? I mention that because fast forward to today, if on our agenda is this whole question of moving individuals, moving businesses and moving houses as part of a

right sizing or resizing strategy then the memory of what occurred in Lafayette Park and indeed elsewhere is important. And I think it is important to understand that the process of relocation that occurred for the Urban Renewal Program has lasted, the negative memories of that have persisted to this day.

Another memory that is important and indeed one that affected far more people in the city of Detroit was the construction of the freeways because these in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, and up in to the 80s was a major change in the structure of the city of Detroit. Businesses, homes, families—white and black—were relocated as part of an urban freeway construction. So again we see this layering of memory that has played an impact in the way public policy will be impacted for the city of Detroit.

Again for those not familiar with what has occurred in the city of Detroit, in essence Detroit is the quintessential city of the 20th century. From modest beginnings in the 1880s it reached a population of approximately of 1.8 million in 1950, some would say it was close to 2 million. And then we see an enormous equivalent decline quickly through the 60s and 70s reaching today a population as we've just heard from the U.S. Department of Census, the Bureau of Census of about 715,000 give or take the odd thousand here and there. Enormous growth and then fairly rapid decline resulting in a city that is at the center of the resizing debate today.

But just as the city grew and declined—you can see here the yellow bar is the decline of the city from one point here in 1950 through to today's population of under 800,000. As we saw the central city decline it's important to understand, and here's this question of context again, the suburbs grew to a significant rate reaching—this is the tri county area—reaching over 3 million in the 2000 Census and holding their own at this stage. The impact of that however was to create the bucolic suburbs that surround the central city, a place that was very attractive to all manner of households and indeed businesses particularly in the 50s, 60s and 1970s resulting in what you saw before: the loss of population.

Not only did populations move and business move but so did central city function. This is a rather powerful image taken by helicopter of the opening of the Great Lakes Crossing in the late 1990s. This is a suburban mall about 30 miles north of the city of Detroit and is now home to a whole range of malls that have reduced the centrality at least for retailing of the central city. Again context is everything when it comes to it.

Another element of historical context but one that is important was the urban unrest of the 1960s. Detroit was not alone, almost all the major cities in the U.S. were affected in 1966, 67, and 68 but in Detroit it was a particularly serious event that resulted in many people losing their lives and the loss of property was very significant. But it was also a marker, it was not the beginning of suburbanization or white flight but it accelerated it and it left a very important mark on the memory of people living in Detroit and indeed across the suburbs, yet again reinforcing the challenge that we have today because of the memory of place. And much of that is burned up with the question of racial change which occurred in the central city of Detroit from the late 1950s to this day.

This is a very simple map looking at census tracks of racial composition. The yellow color is white, households of white/Caucasian and the green areas are households of African American race. And as you can see much of this was concentrated in the central area and in areas spreading north out of downtown with small pockets scattered in other areas. Again for those of you not familiar Detroit also encapsulates two self standing free standing cities: Highland Park on the west side and Hamtramck on the east side of that area. A somewhat unusual situation

that's not repeated in many other parts of North America. Fast forward to the year 2000 and you can see what has occurred, that Detroit has become an overwhelmingly African American city but by that time also in southwest Detroit a very important Hispanic population have settled on the southwest side. And also on the western fringe you can see the beginning of the Middle Eastern population, the Arab population that was significantly attracted to Dearborn and some of these houses have spread over into the city of Detroit.

And this is what happened in terms of the geography of race and geography of demographics which is important to understand the nature of the central city and the response one can make: effectively a segregated region. So now we have two issues, not only do we have a city that is sprawling out that is suburbanizing rapidly as we showed before with the Detroit plan, but we've also got a city that is divided and divided as shown here on this map by race. Again green is black, yellow is overwhelmingly a suburban condition of white suburbs. Another image this time from the Ohio State University that had a dot map illustrating the sharp contrast between the white suburbs in this case dotted red and the central city. You can see the Hispanic community in southwest Detroit and you can also see the enclaves of African American households in the downriver community, that's that area of blue dots in the southwest side. You can also see Inkster and to the north of Detroit you can see the blending of races in the city of Southfield.

But it wasn't just a separation by race; it is too simple to discuss the context of Detroit on the basis of race. The class division, the wealth division is just as stark and here you can see a measure of that by looking at persons in poverty from the 2000 Census. Poverty is focused particularly in the central city and in the older cities and indeed also in the city of Pontiac; that place to the north of the central city of Detroit. So we now have this layering of separation: separation by race, a separation by income and a separation by opportunity. The response in the city of Detroit has been many and varied over these years. I think it is only fair to say that the first response to this challenge that was posed if you want by the rise of '67 was a fortress mentality. The idea that we can bring the central city around by building the fortress and I use this as a metaphor for the central city and the building of the renaissance center down by the river in downtown Detroit.

A second response that curiously enough has added another memory and that response was by the then Coleman A. Young who was committed to holding onto the auto industry in the city of Detroit. As part of that he worked closely with the General Motors Corporation to build an automobile assembly plant in the city of Detroit. And what is ironic is that he added to the memory of relocation because to do that he moved over 4,000 people, 300 businesses, many churches and schools from an area just to the north of downtown in what is known as poor town to build what has now become the Detroit Hamtramck Assembly Plant which is now ironically building the new range of small cars that General Motors is bringing, not least the Volt is produced in downtown Detroit.

However as I'm indicating here, here we have a layering of memory. That challenge of relocation is one that was deeply felt, this time in the white community and indeed particularly by those of Polish descent who lost their neighborhoods just as the African American community had lost their neighborhoods in Hasting Street and Black Bottom twenty years before.

Now this process resulted in what is now widely known as being the city of decay and decline and indeed it would be false to suggest it is anything else but that. Yes there are very large areas of decaying households and open land as we'll talk about in a few minutes, but it is also true to say that it is still the home of over 700,000 people and it still has a strong set of

institutions in the central city: governmental centers, health, higher education and the like. So the city of Detroit is a city that is now finding a way through this division that has occurred within the central city between areas that are hollowed out and areas that are still quite strong. And I'd like to take you through that before we try and answer these public policy questions that we started with.

Obviously as Dr. Lemore has been doing is he's been drawing upon a variety of perspectives to this process of shrinkage. I think it is important to understand that the term came into common currency following a German study that was begun in 2002 to address what was happening in the old East Germany as Germany struggled to deal with the reunification of its country and what was happening to cities such as Leipzig and Halle and Dresden in the east of Germany. And as part of that the German Federal Cultural Bureau funded a global study of change in cities and indeed Detroit was included in that study that was undertaken by Philip Alsfold and his colleagues from Germany.

So since then—that's what, nine years ago?—we've been at the core if you want, at the epicenter of this whole question of urban change and indeed shrinkage. Since then there's been several moves in California and here in Michigan and elsewhere to build a better understanding from an American perspective of cities and change and indeed downsizing cities. And in an economy where cities have always been seen as engines of growth, as engines of change, it's quite difficult for many here in the U.S. to understand that cities don't always continually grow, they go through phases of change. Something that occurs in Europe more commonly because of time and longer history and also because of land wars that have changed cities significantly over the past three, four hundred years and therefore cities evolve. Whereas here in the United States there is a very different perspective of continuous growth and rarely have places seen the change that we're experiencing here in the city of Detroit.

Just a few numbers, I am trying to avoid the numbers in this particular presentation too much, I think I'd lose my viewers if we did that too much. I think what's important to understand is that the city of Detroit, the big central city, is about 139 square miles and hasn't changed since 1926 when the last annexations were undertaken. So this city has been fixed at 140 odd square miles but as I said before we've seen its population fall from almost 2 million to just over 700,000; the size of the city has remained the same while its population has fallen significantly. It is therefore unsurprising that the result of that has been significant loss of property and the emptying out of households and neighbors resulting in—and it's very hard to demonstrate the exact numbers—but just about 30% of this central city is now experiencing significant amounts of vacancy, something in the order of 40 square miles.

Now I say these and I am not going to elaborate on that in any great detail, I will give you an example in a few minutes, but I think it is important to understand the scale of what we're talking about in terms of change. Just to make sure that we understand that Detroit is not of course able to avoid the challenge of the contemporary economy I put this in to illustrate yet again that even with the level of foreclosure and decline that we have Detroit comes out worst in terms of measurement of the foreclosure crisis. It is a simple ratio of the number of homes in foreclosure to homes not in foreclosure comparing Detroit with southeast Michigan and surrounding counties. Again context is everything; Detroit has suffered worst in terms of the foreclosure crisis than have the surrounding tri counties.

Remaining homes, the condition of the remaining homes has been deteriorating. This is a very simple GIS surface produced by Data Driven Detroit to illustrate darker is poorer, lighter is better. Generally we're creating this egg city, this new egg city a city if you want a donut where

the better quality homes, the homes in better condition the less foreclosure is at the edges, the central and inner area neighborhoods are the ones that are suffering most which is the area which is receiving the most attention for this whole question of downsizing or right sizing which is in the title of this presentation series.

Here is an example of looking at the proportion of city parcels that have remaining structures and this even more clearly illustrates the egg city phenomenon, particularly the stronger communities on the northwest side of the city with the exception of one of two areas like Brightmore then spreading over toward the points the relative strength of the neighborhoods on the far east side. This leaves three main areas of very weak neighborhoods. The inner east side, the two large dark red areas on the immediate east side, the inner west side which you can see adjacent to downtown, and then the old industrial area spreading south towards southwest Detroit along the river. These are the areas that have been experiencing the significant loss of properties.

And then last but by no means least this is a study of vacant lots as a percentage of residential parcels. This was again a piece of work done by Data Driven Detroit with the help of students from the University of Michigan where they studied vacancy in the residential areas. They did not look at apartment buildings or large apartment buildings, nor did they study commercial or industrial land, this is simply looking at vacant lots as a proportion of residential parcels. Again you can see the same characteristics of the inner east side and indeed a lot of the east side, the west side and the area stretching south to southwest Detroit.

To give you a sense of what we're talking about I'd like to highlight just for a few minutes a particular neighborhood on the inner east side, this is just adjacent to I-75 North leaving the downtown going north, just to the east side of that. This is an area that was studied extensively by several organizations from the University of Detroit Mercy and indeed by students from Wayne State University last summer. An area on the near east side, the GIA surface that I am showing you here, all the darker brown lots are vacant. This is a 3 square mile area and it is bounded to the north on I-94 and to the west by I-75, Gratiot and Mt. Elliot on the east. 67% of the city is vacant; it has however a small population remaining of about just over 5,000 although that is an estimate from 2009, probably lower today. Significant proportion of households suffering acute poverty and living in very very poor quality homes. The businesses in this area, which is adjacent to Gratiot a major commercial street, and indeed eastern market, and the Dequindre rail line, despite these location advantages the businesses in the area have been decimated. They estimated 300 businesses in this area in the mid-2000s but when students from various universities did the surveys they found about 80 existing businesses in the entire area, most of whom were living from hand to mouth. My point here is that this is the condition of these emptying out neighborhoods, the remaining population is dislocated, the services are diminishing, the schools are closing as we know, and many of the houses are suffering chronic poverty.

And the response? Well the response in the city of Detroit is varied and I have not the time nor indeed the ability at this stage to go through all of these discussions. Simply to say there is a lot of work being done in the policy community looking at alternative economic strategies, looking at educational strategies, looking at spatial strategy not least focusing around the midtown area where I am sitting this afternoon, transportation investments such as a light rail system in the downtown and perhaps going out all the way to 8 mile and perhaps beyond. The one initiative I will mention: the public policy response has been the Detroit Works Project. And this was originally called and I personally like the title the Detroit Strategic Framework Plan.

And if I can contrast that with the Detroit Plan of 1965, there was a very clear strategy for suburbanization and growth across the metropolitan area. I would suggest that the Detroit Strategic Framework Plan is beginning that discussion about the clear and unambiguous direction for the city of Detroit. We're not there yet but it is making some moves.

Here are some broad images that were taken from the presentation by the Detroit Works team as they started their work at the end last year. This first image suggests that they are not separating the city from the neighborhood or indeed from the region; that they want to set what happens to the city of Detroit into these three contexts. It is a complicated, interconnected set of activities that will involve many different parts of the public sector with leadership and direction coming from a variety of consultants. Again similar to what happened 40 years ago that are being brought in to provide ideas and leadership as they go through their job.

This slide gives you an idea of the focus of what this group are working on. And it is indeed very very ambitious, everything from land use and the land development process all the way through to operations and the fiscal reconstruction of the city in terms of a management organizations. Environmental issues are terribly important as is housing and neighborhood structure. So what the Detroit Works Program is doing is being holistic, it's trying to address the interconnectedness of the problem of the shrinking city, of the resizing of this place that we are trying to get a better handle on.

They themselves are trying as the words here, they want to although it's a complicated set of challenges their process is they want to make as clear and as directed as possible. They want to use evidence, they want to collect the information and it is available I should add if you go to their website today there are over 900 pages of reports that have been uploaded over the past couple of months giving you policy audits about almost anything you can think of in the city of Detroit and indeed driving into far more detail than I have been present to you today. So in terms of evidenced based development of public policy, the question is can they turn it around as number three suggests to come up with bold suggestions and ideas for tomorrow. And then again without that, without being able to then to suggest what to do and how to implement it then like many plans it will gather dust and not actually drive the city in a particular direction. But having said that they do want to begin with a relatively clear approach and they are working their way through, we're at about number three today. They are working as far as I can understand on attempting to identify and select this strategic direction to go back to the original title of the Detroit Works Project, looking for bold ideas that will be presented and indeed discussed with all the different publics that are involved throughout the next six months of this year.

I am conscious of the time but I want to finish however with a particular example of what right sizing might mean in a particular part of the city of Detroit. And this I think will give us some ideas on how we might move forward. Obviously this 40%, sorry 30%, 40 square miles of a city that is no longer in direct economic or household use it is important to consider the whole question of what one would call or has been called the greening of the empty city. And I have listed just some ideas on the right hand side, perhaps a little bit difficult to read. But these are some of the challenges, some of the ideas that are being talked about as we move forward. And public policy has to address these and this is not easy because they are different than the standard approaches of the past: increasing the number of parks, using the parks as a way of moving through the city, to look at alternative transportation routes across and between the different neighborhoods in the city.

What about the question of gardening? These are raised beds close to the midtown area in Detroit. There's much talk of farming or urban forestry, how is that moving forward and how are

the public players addressing something which is really quite unusual? There really are no good models in North America of how to deal with organized urban farming. This is not simply having a few chickens but taking something forward into a recognized land use and again the city of Detroit is struggling with its public policy response to it. Forestry is another idea; Europeans have addressed that more openly. Another idea is to open up the old creeks, the riverbeds, to bring them out of covert and to use them as part of an environmental sustainability challenge or future for the city of Detroit and elsewhere.

Here's an example, an aerial view of one of the very broken up neighborhoods on the east side, ideas of border planting of putting in forestry in such a way that it not only addresses some of the open space but provides an improved environment for those who still live there and who travel through this area on a regular basis to get to school to get to work to get to shopping and the like. The areas we are talking about are decimated, they may be fine on an afternoon in the summer when it's sunny and it's green but in the winter these areas are difficult to live in and therefore perhaps some form of addressing that is part of the strategy that we want to look towards.

Another model is urban reconcentration. This is ideas taken from the work that was done by the Kent State Urban Laboratory who did a lot of this thinking anyway at least for the city of Cleveland but they've also been active in the city of Detroit under the Detroit Works Program working with other organizations, other colleges and other public actors as they address the whole question of change in the central city.

But one particular example was done by a Canadian architect who decided to choose two communities on the far east side of Detroit as an example and I'd like to sort of finish my case study of Detroit with that before we address these public policy questions very quickly. It's an area on the border next to the Gross Points on the far east side. The black dots are the buildings that are still in existence—not all of them are occupied—and the rest are areas that have been cleared already, an area that was to be part of a growth strategy. His argument was that the first stage that we need to do for right sizing and addressing the change is actually to reduce the road network, reducing it to these red roads that you can see here on the slide with a focus around the center. That "F" area in the middle is an elementary school and he comes back to the idea, Bedard comes back to the idea that the heart of this new neighborhood should indeed be an operating and attractive elementary school and begin to focus activity around that and the immediate streets, closing off a number of streets and indeed creating these large blocks that you can see on the screen in front of you.

Here's a more detailed idea of what there is at present. The dark black filled in blocks are the occupied and existing properties, the red are the vacant or the areas that are no longer in use. And you can see the amount of space and the amount of openness and the amount of opportunity there could be for this idea of reconcentration around this particular central area with a reduced street network. Here it is coming to fruition, perhaps, a new street grid in the center of the area with the building of homes and the relocation of households from the areas that are colored grey moving the remaining households into the central area with a similar concentration of activity along the main roads: Mack, Jefferson, Alter and Conner moving in a north/south direction. This is a restructuring, this is a resizing if you want, a public policy response to a situation that is very difficult to manage when so much of these neighborhoods are having to pay for services from a reduced number of businesses and homes that of course cannot be sustained, hence the fiscal problem the city of Detroit faces today. And then the question is what do you do with these voids, these areas that are cleared? That's another question; that brings us back to the alternative

land uses that we were talking about before. And like any good architect he ends with a very interesting presentation of some of the spaces that were left and you can see here there are planting regimes, there's urban forestry, there's a tree nursery, there's a wind farm, there's a new sporting arena, not arena but field for the school that's there and another land lies waiting the district chair of change.

So his vision of this relatively small area on the far east side of the city of Detroit is one of concentrating activity and households around that school, concentrating commercial activity along certain roads and moving households and activities into that central space leaving the other land for some range of uses, some of it laying follow, some of it for parks, some of it for agricultural use. Whether it would be that I don't know, but his image of a new neighborhood is perhaps as dramatic as what we see here.

Before I finish I just want to frame some of the key issues that I think are vital as we go forward into a public policy debate. There's been a lot of talk of re-imagining, I think we should be focusing—and here I'm being quite personal—I think we should be talking about imagining. Re-imagining suggests that we go back, that there's some way that we can resurrect the city of Detroit as a complete whole with 101.8 million households, people living in dense or relatively dense urban neighborhoods. I think we need to be looking at something else which requires imagination. I do believe as I've argued that the relocation of activities and households will need to happen in some form or another and indeed there will be a redirecting and closing of services and infrastructure in a way that we have not really seen in an organized way in any city or any modern city in the United States of America.

But as I've argued over and over we do need to understand and respect memory because it has been powerfully important in shaping the way people think about Detroit, but we do need to get past that, we need to demonstrate, we need to show that there is value in allowing people and encouraging and facilitating and incentivizing people to move into better neighborhoods and into better quality homes and to better quality areas for schools and services that their lives can be better, that their quality of life will improve as well as allowing the city to resize as has been discussed here in the series. But to do that I think it's important that we have, that we need to develop a trust. One of the weaknesses of Detroit from a public policy perspective has been a loss of trust between residents, neighborhoods and authorities that deal with it. There is no better public policy arena than the education arena to demonstrate the failure to maintain levels of trust between those who use the schools and those who administer the schools in the city of Detroit. And lastly it is critical that we find new agencies and resources to deliver these visions, whether is Bedard's vision for the east side or something else.

So let me go back there to end now with answering these questions if I can for what I've just been talking about. The first question: "Is there a national urban policy position for the resizing of our cities?" and I would argue that there is no such urban policy position. There may be White House conversations, there might be domestic policy think tanks, but absent some of the detailed discussions there are in certain cities: Youngstown, parts of Detroit, Flint and elsewhere there really is no national urban policy position to address what we face here in Detroit and indeed in other older post industrial cities.

Second question, "Has state government re-developed or developed a coherent urban policy?" Well perhaps. We recently had a new governor come to office just about five months ago and one of his ten positions was indeed to address the role of cities and indeed as I speak he's making his way to Mackinac where we have an annual public policy conference and I

believe that on the agenda there will be a question of what happens to the cities. We will hold our breath.

Critical question, “Is there a local political capacity to act?” In Detroit it is a merge. There does seem to be from both the counsel and indeed from the administration, from the Mayor’s office, there appears to be a strength of capacity to go forward and to address some of these issues I’ve been raising in the past half an hour or so. We’re not there yet, there’s still a lot of discussion. The Charter Commission is about to report on how is that going to play into this much smaller central city? We don’t know the answers to that yet but there does appear to be traction at least in building a local capacity to enact these changes.

“Do we have the power, do we have the tools?” No we do not. Even something which many would consider straightforward which would be rezoning land to deal with nonurban uses, aka agricultural use, has stalled and there hasn’t yet been closure on this. But there is discussion and I think it will come; it needs to come, if we move forward for rezoning.

“What role for philanthropy in the nonprofits as agents of change?” Very significant, several major foundations, living cities nationally, The Gretzky Foundation particularly here in Detroit they have played a huge role in bringing this debate to the public notice, for paying for the studies we are in the midst of at present. But the challenge of course for philanthropy is they are ephemeral, their boards can make decisions to take their money and their goodwill elsewhere. They may change and decide that addressing education in the third world in South African and in other parts of the world is more important than what they are doing in the city of Detroit. Therein lies one of the challenges, is how to keep the philanthropic community directly and centrally involved as government struggles to remove itself from [inaudible word] and therefore the philanthropic community play a hugely important role of filling the void that has occurred with the loss of effective government. And it goes without saying that many of the nonprofits in the city of Detroit are vital in maintaining the neighborhoods and supporting businesses and supporting education initiatives all across 139 square miles of the city of Detroit and they again are dependent on the largeness of the philanthropic community. Therefore philanthropy and the nonprofits are at the core of where we are and where we will be in the city of Detroit.

“Are there the necessary federal, state, and county resources to assist in the process of restructuring?” I think the answer to that is clearly no. We’ve seen the very opposite, we’ve seen the retrenchment of public policy, the retrenchment of public funds and I think therein lies a fundamental challenge no matter what comes of the Detroit Works program, the public policy response in terms of resources is going to be limited.

And last but by no means least, because I think I am almost out of time, is can the private sector participate in the whole question of resizing? They were there to build and grow and expand the cities, can they be also players in its downsizing? I think the answer is yes, but they need to know what the context is, they need to incentivize to be players in this process, but much more importantly they need to know what is going to happen. And I think that goes for everybody here in the city of Detroit, the knowledge of where we move forward to is a vital component of the public policy response to rightsizing the city.

REX:

Have we lost your volume Robin? Are you with us? Robin, go to the bottom left hand corner of the screen and push the talk button on your screen. And there should be some questions in the question box.

Robin are you hearing us? We’ve lost you?

DR. BOYLE:

Can you hear me now? Hello? Now I've lost you.

REX:

Yes.

DR. BOYLE:

Okay because I am holding this button down that says "talk". And if I hold my mouse over it I think that lets you hear me.

REX:

[Inaudible].

DR. BOYLE:

But then you are fading away, I then can't hear you, I'm sorry.

REX:

Go ahead and answer the questions in the box.

DR. BOYLE:

Okay I will talk and you tell me if anyone is hearing me or if I am just talking to myself. The question is "What approach would be utilized to convince residents from these blighted, vacant areas to move?" I think the first thing is to demonstrate what's possible. I think it's important to give clear signals to businesses and residents who might be encouraged to move, to give them a sense of what the future could be, that's the first thing. Without a clear idea of what more concentrated living opportunities are, without understanding it then people I think are going to be very cautious of making any commitment. Secondly they have to be incentivized to do it. It may be property swap, it may be deeply subsidized by nonprofits or from some federal fund which I don't know about, but I think there has to be some incentivization for those to move in a way that allows them to move into homes that will be better for them, that will provide good living conditions, and will allow them to remake a life in communities that will not be closed down or removed which is likely in the foreseeable future. So those are the two elements I would say, an understanding of what's possible and the incentives to do it.

REX:

Scroll up, if you scroll up you'll see additional questions. Hold your mic button.

DR. BOYLE:

"Would not land banks play a critical role in coordinating land use policy, including programs that compliment redevelopment? Indeed land banks are important players however I would caution that a land bank, hence the word bank, is based upon transaction. There has to be movement of funds just like you and I would do moving money in and moving money out. In such a weak property market as we have in central cities such as many of the neighborhoods—not all—but many of the neighborhoods in Detroit there needs to be a way of increasing this transactional process and simply to rely upon the market is not going to do it. There needs to be

intervention and incentives for the transaction process to occur. And I would argue that transaction should be encouraged to concentrate and to build these nodes of density that so many people are talking about, but it does need the incentives.

There was another question earlier on, it obviously came quite early. Again from Shad: “Is there a role for urban gardening in nonindustrialized food production?” Absolutely. It is estimated that there are more than 1,000 gardens operating across the city of Detroit and these are hugely important for the neighborhoods that run them, the folks who attend these gardens. They are good in a whole variety of ways, they are good for social capital, they are good for improving the food chain, they are good for nutrition in these areas, they are good just for people being connected to one another and operating in terms of the social condition around gardening. They are hugely important in that regard. On the other hand, as most of them are about half an acre in size, let’s exaggerate; let’s say they are an acre in size, that’s 1,000 acres. There are 88,000 acres in the city of Detroit. So while urban gardening in of itself is hugely important, it is not the solution for the rightsizing or resizing of the city of Detroit that is in the title of this conversation. They are an important part of the neighborhood improvement, neighborhood stability and neighborhood change, they are not a strategic answer to the challenges, the public policy challenge that we have in the city of Detroit.

REX:

Do you see any additional questions, Robin?

DR. BOYLE:

I thought questions were in red, but I now realize that a number of people have written comments that include questions built into them so I’m having to scroll through all the material in that box to see what the questions are. Here’s one that’s just come in from Rene, “How can we afford to avoid the need to downsize in the future?” That’s a very important question and one that I think is not being talked about sufficiently at present. This is taking us perhaps somewhat away from the topic that we started with but I think it’s important because it does connect to the broader environment in which we operate our cities within. Challenges of continued development in the Greenfield, continuing development in the suburbs when the economy comes back is an issue that I think needs to be talked about. For example there is considerable discussion just now about widening I-75 north of Detroit. We will use that as a small example but it is a very good example, the argument being that there is a pinch point on I-75 where there are only 3 lanes going north and there is a hold up in the rush hour in the morning and a hold up in the rush hour in the evening. Not in Detroit I have to add but actually in Oakland County, should that be invested in for a fourth lane in order to reduce the wait times and increase speed on that road?

Well that’s a fundamental question regarding the nature of suburbanization and the continuing the growth into the suburbs. Balance that against challenges of improving the transit systems operating in the region and I think you see a classic public policy debate as to whether we continue to invest in an auto centric region that is clearly there because of the holdups on the freeway system, but on the other hand we have a very poorly integrated and very poorly financed public transit system that many other regions are addressing today. So we have to take these two sides and see how they are going to be part and parcel of the future of Detroit and the region in the future.

Another question that was raised and it was embedded in one of the pieces of text was the whole question of equity and sustainable development. Can indeed there be equity in terms of the question of rightsizing or resizing the city of Detroit? I would suggest there has to be and indeed there are lessons from around the world that equity has been considered, that those least able to adapt to the changing environment need to be given support and indeed there should be conscience decisions that those who are encouraged to move are allowed to move into homes that are appropriate for their family size, that they receive the necessary support and the necessary subsidies to make their life better. And that shouldn't be simply driven by the question of the market but by questions of fundamental need for households living in some of the most hollowed out parts of the city of Detroit. And that is difficult because there are people living there who have been there all their lives and they don't want to move, but on the other hand how can their neighborhoods continue to operate when there may be only two households left on a block that maybe had 60 homes 25 or 30 years ago? They need support, they need help but the only way to do it will be to carefully and humanly encourage them to move into more centralized and more densified areas.

Rex, I think I've covered most of the questions I can see in the box on the left hand side.

REX:

Well thank you Robin, I appreciate your time today in sharing with us your insights on the challenges we face as resizing communities and look forward to learning more in times ahead.

Let me do closing remarks here. For those of you, we would like to invite you to our June 7th gathering at the Hannah Center in East Lansing. We will have an opportunity to revisit what we've heard in the webinar series, identify some of the things we want to learn more about and also talk about what some of the short and long term strategies we might pursue in resizing our cities in a just and equitable manner.

And I want to offer thanks to our colleagues who helped us cosponsor this event around the state of Michigan; a number of organizations contributed. And members of our planning committee who helped us identify presenters and topics for this discussion. And with that, that ends our series and I thank you for joining us today.