5-10-2010

Failure Repeated: An Analysis of Urban Design in the Central Ward of Newark

John O'Neill
Fordham University, aaas_6@fordham.edu

Failure Repeated: An Analysis of Urban Design in the Central Ward of Newark

by
John O'Neill

A thesis in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies

Fordham University
New York City, New York

2013
(Submitted May 10, 2013)

This thesis is a study of the rebuilding of Newark Housing Authority structures in an area of the Central Ward bounded by Bergen Street, Springfield Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, and Avon Avenue. This half square mile area of study has a population of 8,584 and a population density of 17,527 per square mile. The area has a long a troubled history, beginning in the 1960s when revolt and then renewal began. This massive infusion of federal dollars failed to address the long-term needs of the residents and the maintenance of housing facilities. The result was the first wave of renewal projects largely being cleared and replaced in a period between 1994 and 2001. With hundreds of millions of dollars worth of redevelopment of this patch of the city complete, the questions arises, is this any better or is it simply newer? This analysis includes extensive research about the history of the neighborhood, the thoughts of current residents, and ideas about building from the world's foremost urban theorists.

II. The Origins of Renewal

The Central Ward of Newark is located in the heart of the city, directly southwest of downtown. Connecticut Puritans initially settled the neighborhood, but with industrialization and the growth of the modern city, the neighborhood became primarily settled by a Jewish population. Beginning in the 1940s, the area began to see much of its white population depart for outlying communities, while African Americans moved in. In 1945, the Central Ward elected Irvine Turner as their councilman, making him the first African American top official in city government (Tuttle 117). Turner's election coincided with the city's switch from a commissioner system to that of a mayor-council system. The transition to the mayor-council system was heralded as a new day for Newark, a new era of more transparent and ethical city government. According to a 1945 report on the state of the city, leaders committed to the attraction of new industry and the realization of full its full economic potential. The theory went that progress

already made in the post-World War II Newark would certainly continue (Tuttle 118). This new era in the history of Newark was to be one defined by exciting efforts to rebuild entire neighborhoods and transform the city through expansive rehabilitation and clearance of slum areas. In January of 1952, the city announced that $40 million would be devoted to clearing forty-six acres of densely populated slum housing and factories with new towers in the park style developments, thanks to the 1949 federal Housing Act. To the delight of many, a disastrous calculation had been formulated. The federal government would pay for nearly all of the clearance and building, while Newark would merely have to pay to maintain what was to be built.

By 1956, several square blocks of the former slums in the Central Ward were replaced by 1,556 new units in the Christopher Columbus Homes. According to the Newark Evening News, redevelopment was, "a desperately needed improvement in the living quarters of a large number of slum dwellers." Although the changes were initially hailed as necessary and a vast improvement over the status quo, the seeds of resentment were being sewn as people watched their beloved old ethnic neighborhoods cleared. Father Gaetano Ruggiero was among the first and loudest voices to oppose the changes coming to the Central Ward. At the christening of the new Columbus Houses, the father took the stage and voiced his strong protest at the deeming of his constituency as being slum-dwellers (Tuttle 122). All the while, Newark's redevelopment efforts were being led by a strong-headed man named Louis Danzig, who many compared to Robert Moses in neighboring New York. Danzig, like Moses, proved himself an effective manager and good friend to real-estate developers and construction companies.

Danzig, like Moses, was a very well educated, dynamic, and driven man. In 1948, Danzig took control of the Newark Housing Authority with the intention of rebuilding Newark in a

radically new vision. On issues of housing, health, and urban planning, Danzig took the theories shared by most housing experts and urban planners, that slums were akin to cancer. His theories were articulated in this speech to the city's premier civic association; "They creep like a paralysis until they engulf the entire city and then they spread to the suburbs. If the situation continues, the time will come when the slum dwellers will rebel against their conditions and then it may be too late to control them" (Tuttle 124). Fears of what was to come in 1967 were already active in the minds of the white-dominated city government. Clearing slums and improving conditions for residents was on the agenda, but without question the elements of riot control were involved. This sort of mindset coupled with vast amounts of federal redevelopment dollars would soon prove to be the ultimate toxic remedy for a fading city. Many acknowledged that it would be politically and financially painful, but that slum clearance was the only way in which Newark and American cities in general could survive.

Under the plan enacted by Danzig, private investors were well aware that little money was to be made clearing economically viable slums and replacing them with new housing. In order to ferment this kind of large-scale urban change, federal dollars would be used to buy designated "blight" areas and replace them low-rent public housing. Land that was cleared and not developed with government housing would be sold to private developers to construct market-rate retail and housing facilities. Adopting the theories of the modernist urbanist LeCorbusier, the city proposed eliminating several streets and developing vast super-blocks of housing (Tuttle 126). City planners argued that with the decrease in the number of streets, the city could save money by cutting back on service and infrastructure costs. LeCorbusier's theory went that with orderly architecture and planning, an orderly, law-abiding, and sophisticated citizenry would result. Bells surely rang in the heads of city officials, perturbed by the growth of African

Americans and congruent flight of white middle class residents.

Leaders in Newark feared that the chaotic rambling slums of the city bred criminals and indigents. New and attractive housing would drive deviants away and breed a sense of pride and wholesomeness in new residents. An early report in the 1950s stated, "good houses make good citizens." Citing this belief, Danzig noted in his advocacy of expanding public housing, that in over a decade of the Newark Housing Authority's existence, there had never been one major fire or outbreak of delinquency (Tuttle 127). With official support soundly behind the expansion of slum clearance and urban renewal, Newark leaders held a series of closed-door meetings where they dictated the course of the city for the coming decades. By 1956, the Newark Housing Authority operated 7,385 apartments, more than double what it controlled just a decade earlier. White residents inhabited Ninety-two percent of the Authority's units and most had been constructed in traditionally white areas on the periphery of the city. The Central Ward was set to be the greatest and most comprehensive experiment, one that would radically remake the thriving black core of the city.

III. Seeds of Decline

By 1960, city leaders were caught surprisingly off guard by census reports that a net one hundred thousand white Newarkers had left the city, roughly one in four residents. Even Danzig, who was close with federal officials and initially supportive of many federal policies, was quick to blame those very same policies for white flight. Low-mortgage rates coupled with dwindling dollars for urban renewal were killing cities like Newark. As the city's tax base began to evaporate, so did conditions in many of the city's public housing facilities. With thousands of federally financed units now the responsibility of the city to maintain, the burden was quite literally overwhelming. By the mid-1960s, half of Newark's population was black, including

virtually everyone living in the Central Ward. City leaders were well aware of tensions, but the status quo remained within the police department, where 90 percent of officers were white.

What needs to be considered among the list of valid issues among black residents was the presence of urban renewal projects that were actively destroying existing communities. Newark was in the throes of physical and economic upheaval throughout most of the 1960s. Mayor Hugh Addonizio's answer to the crises facing the city was to engage in a full-fledged urban renewal campaign of downtown and Central Ward. Former mayor Leo Carlin, who stated, "Newark is a city in trouble, a city that is running out of time", captured the sense of fear. Although Carlin was the man who Addonizio had ousted from office, his claim of impending doom could not be ignored. In 1966, leaflets made there way through Central Ward slums detailing to residents how to make Molotov cocktails for firebombing in the event of violent protest breaking out. It was during this period that housing policy in Newark appeared to adopt a style of design meant to deliberately keep low-income African Americans concentrated in segregated neighborhoods (Noguera and Wells). This pattern of segregation cut off jobs in the northern industrial part of the city, while discrimination against African Americans was present in the retail and service industries downtown.

In the spring of 1967, months before the July riot broke out, Mayor Addonizio acknowledged the desperate state of affairs facing Newark. In his administration's application for urban renewal funding through the Model Cities program, his office wrote, "the most uncommon characteristic of the city may well be the extent and severity of its problems." The application also stated, "there is no other major city in the nation where these common urban problems range so widely and cut so deeply." Among the numerous troubles listed were the size of the city's poor, unstable population, decrepit housing, and high per capita tax rate (Tuttle 7). Between 1950

and 1967, the White population declined from 363,000 to 158,000, while the black population only grew from 70,000 to 220,000 over the same period (Noguera and Wells).

Other local leaders attributed Newark's problems to larger forces at work. As was the case across the country, namely the Northeast and Midwest, older industrial bases were declining and jobs were being lost to the suburbs and automation at a starling rate. The issue in Newark is that it was particularly devastated by the collapse of industry and congruent white flight. At just twenty-four square miles, Newark residents could easily skip out on the city's oppressive taxes by moving to nearby suburban towns. This led the tax burden to fall on those who decided or needed to remain (Tuttle 7). By 1967, roughly 75 percent of whites and 87 percent of black residents were renters; meaning that they felt the exorbitant tax rate increases in the form of rent increases. To the resentment of many, properties were overwhelmingly owned by whites who lived in the suburbs. In the matter of a shockingly brief period, the situation snowballed so that Newark became a lopsided, bottom-heavy city, with poor people stacked in densely populated slums while mere pockets of middle class homeowners and taxpayers remained. Newark was in frantic need of outside assistance and so entered the federal government and more renewal dollars to build the city of the future.

IV. The Central Ward Explodes

With the tinderbox rich with fuel, the Central Ward finally exploded with violent fury. On the night of July 12, 1967, a rather commonplace incident occurred one times too many. Newark officers pulled over and arrested a black cab driver named John Smith and then beat him. The needless use of violence and a visible struggle between the driver and the arresting officers outside the Fourth Precinct sparked rumors and rage. Inside the precinct house, Smith was beaten and tortured by his account, eight officers. Word spread through the neighboring

Hayes Homes of the Central Ward that the police had killed the innocent cab driver. The precinct was infamous for it's violent and racist nature and residents had little issue believing that a murder had occurred within its confines. Hayes Homes tenant leader Esta Williams rushed to the precinct and alerted officers to the brewing trouble (Tuttle 144). There she pled to see Smith and to relay his state to other residents and set straight the story of the arrest and subsequent intake. Police allowed the request, but upon entering, roughly a dozen visitors observed a brutalized Smith. After Smith was escorted to the hospital, tenant leaders addressed a growing crowd and pled with them to observe non-violence, but with the toss of one Molotov cocktail at the station house, the chaos began (Dockray).

Officials, including Mayor Addonizio, were reluctant to admit to any major disturbances after the arrest. Although sporadic violence had broken out over the course of the first night, it was by no means a riot they argued. Regardless of what happened that evening, the mayor could not deny the presence of the crisis and the very real risk of more violence. Unemployment was rampant in the Central Ward as were issues with disease and overcrowding. Additionally, the city and the State of New Jersey were in the process of proposing the new New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry, a campus that was to be built on top of the homes of hundreds of black families. All while, newly built housing facilities in the neighborhood were overwhelmingly segregated and already beginning to see signs of decay. Couple these issues with an abusive police force, segregated schools, and unfair representation in city government and the only surprise is that violence did not occur sooner. July 13, 1967 would serve as the day of destructive reckoning of these issues.

The afternoon after the arrest, Mayor Addonizio met with several African American politicians and community leaders in an attempt to gauge the severity of the situation. The

leaders who he met with ticked off the list of issues and community complaints, but Addonizio was committed to his belief that the arrest and subsequent beating were nothing more than isolated incidents (Tuttle 159). Robert Curvin of the Congress of Racial Equality warned the mayor that, "the people of Newark are fantastically aggrieved." The warnings were ignored in the afternoon, but by sunset considerable violence had begun to erupt throughout the Central Ward. Springfield Avenue became the target of unrest as looting overcame the shopping thoroughfare, followed by intense and overwhelming fires. Justifiably outraged protesters targeted police and firefighters, hindering their ability to quell the spread of the flames (Dockray). City officials terrified by the explosion of violence and disorganization of first responders relented to the state and called in for reinforcements. A comparably disorganized coalition of departments and National Guard troops began to mobilize in Newark, though lacking coherent leadership, the chaos persisted (Tuttle 161). Upon organizing, however, and pushing into riot areas, the almost entirely white and suburban fighting force methodically and brutally regained control.

According to reports, snipers were active in the Scudder Homes and Stella Wright projects. On Friday evening, a white detective was shot and killed at the Stella Wright projects. The body count stood at 14 as Friday became Saturday in Newark. Engine Company 6, located across the street from the Hayes Homes, reported to be so bogged down by sniper fire that they were forced to abandon their posts. Chaos reigned through the weekend but settled to the point that on Monday, July 17, National guardsmen were beginning to leave the city in masse. Newark Police returned to their places on the streets of the city, but the damage had been done. The Central Ward became a place of infamy, a place where six days of some of the most intense urban rioting in U.S. history. By the end, the riots left 26 people dead, 725 injured, and resulted

in 1,500 arrests. The city reported property damage in excess of $10 million. Although not the worst race riot in U.S. history, the event created a sea of bad blood between whites and people of color in the city, and accelerated the rate of disinvestment and suburban exodus.

V. Newark After the Riot

Three years after the riot, the city was a definitively different place. The city was now a black majority city and one with a contentious mayor's race. Addonizio, the corrupt white incumbent mayor, lost his bid for reelection to Ken Gibson, the city's first African American mayor. The scale of Addonizio's incompetence and taste for graft were exposed by his prosecution and the endorsement by New Jersey's largest newspaper, *The Star-Ledger*, of his opponent Ken Gibson. Upon his election, Gibson stated, "Newark may be the most decayed and financially crippled city in the nation." Although conditions in the city were increasingly bleak, the election of Gibson was heralded as a significant day and a potential new beginning for Newark. In the ecstasy of the moment, many black Newarkers compared the moment to the Emancipation Proclamation or the end of World War II (Tuttle 193). The celebrations would be short-lived though, as the Gibson administration took its place and began to see the scale of the financial crisis perpetuated by the previous administration. By 1971, Newark faced a $60 million deficit, one that had profound consequences for the residents of the city's tens of thousands of public housing units.

Along with the disappearance of so many middle class residents and businesses came reduced revenues for city services. With the decline of community centers, schools, and even police protection began a new era of chaotic urban violence. Numerous terrifying incidents of innocent citizens being robbed, raped, assaulted, or murdered were happening with increasing frequency. Newark with the assistance of the federal government was given a grant to hire more

officers, bringing the department to a peak size of 1,640 officers by 1974 (Tuttle 214). Despite the increase in the number of officers, crime continued to increase as well. After a set of federal cutbacks in 1978, the city had to lay off nearly one in eight officers. In spite of the issues, ones really not even the fault of the mayor, Gibson was easily re-elected in 1974 and 1978. That said, by 1978, 80 percent of Newarkers reported that they had seen no improvement in the city. While some semblance of revitalization began to take root in the Ironbound (the city's mostly white East Ward) and in the form of office projects downtown, conditions in the Central Ward continued to worsen considerably. The sinking realization of city officials became clear by 1980; years of extensive urban-renewal projects had ruined most of Newark's old neighborhoods and left the city with virtually nothing worth restoring. Modernism, once the savior of Newark, was now being exposed, as it's greatest opponent.

By 1982, the city was in a state of free fall. Mayor Gibson was up for re-election, but widely believed to be aloof, sullen, and unavailable (Tuttle 216). Voters had little choice about giving the mayor a forth term, and they did, but it would stand to his last. Truth be told, Gibson had valid reasoning behind his noticeable shift in attitude. Despite his best efforts, forces far larger than he continued to strangle the city of its vitality. Attempts to lure businesses downtown upset black constituents who believed he had forgotten them, while suburban whites maintained a fear fueled by hatred of the city and went to efforts to both avoid and hurt Newark. As he stated in an interview in the mid 1980s, "Our job is to pick up the garbage, sweep the streets and provide some measure of police and fire protection, and we can barely do that." Police director Hubert Williams asked, "What can police do about poverty? What can police do about unemployment?" A season of change was ripe in Newark, and a dynamic South Ward Councilman named Sharpe James was about to take control of the city.

James was elected to the office of the mayor in 1986. During his campaign, James noted that 15 percent of Newarkers - 22,500 people - lived in public housing, and 6,500 more were stuck on waiting lists. Despite this considerable demand for housing, issues with funding and mismanagement meant that one in three public housing units in the city were uninhabitable and vacant (Tuttle 220). A dynamic and energetic James was the total opposite of the lethargic and comparatively tame Gibson. As they had in 1970, Newarkers once again hoped that a new era of leadership would usher in a new day of restored stability, economic development, and improved service quality. James came to office promising high-profile developments like a new downtown arena while also acknowledging the very real need for improved services on the streets of outlying neighborhoods. Indeed, the first few months of the James administration proved hopeful to the city and namely to the decimated Central Ward.

VI. Rebuilding the Central Ward 1987-Present

As proved the case with the Gibson administration, improvements in Newark remained fairly confined to a newly fortified Central Business District. Between 1970 and 1990, the Central Ward saw it's poverty rate grow from 30.8 to 34.9 percent while seeing it's population decline by a net twenty thousand residents (Tuttle 225). With the passing of the years, the performance of James along with that of the city continued to precipitously decline. Homicides totaled fairly constant through the 90s and developments downtown served to benefit suburbanites and real-estate developers more than residents of outer neighborhoods. A new push for reform began in the mid 90s as conditions worsened to the point of total collapse in the Central Ward. In 1994, Newark began a campaign to rebuild its public housing system in its entirety. At the demolition of the Columbus Homes, Mayor James declared, "this is the end of an American dream that failed." The event took years to occur because housing advocacy groups

tangled with the Housing Authority in the courts, demanding that for every home razed a new one be constructed (Levy). A final agreement brokered in a Federal District Court in Newark allowed the authority to demolish the towers because the city had begun work on building 1,800 replacement town homes. After the court agreement, the city announced its intention to demolish 40 of 46 project sites.

In 1999, the Central Ward saw its largest demolition project occur, that of the Stella Wright Homes. Then Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Andrew Cuomo, announced a $35 million grant to the city to demolish the project. In a speech at the event, Cuomo relayed the right ideas about reforming public housing. "When public housing makes the statement of exclusion and isolation, President Clinton has said, 'Tear it down and don't repaint it, put in new windows or fences.' It had the wrong intent from the beginning and should be replaced with smaller, low-rise, low-density places where people want to live." Mayor Sharpe James heralded the event as another step forward for Newark and evidence of his administration's sincere care about the Central Ward and rebuilding quality affordable housing for residents (Smothers). The reconstruction plans for the Stella Wright Homes entailed the replacement of 764 units with 755 units in the form of townhouses, with 300 of which to be rented to lower income residents. Although the idea of mixed income communities is superior to dilapidated isolationist public housing, the reduction in the number of affordable units has continued to be an issue for lower income residents and their advocates in the ward.

To the credit of the James administration, they oversaw the intake of $200 million in Federal aid to radically remake the Newark Housing Authority. According to Gordon Cavanaugh, then general counsel at the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities, "people in public housing are trying to basically take down buildings that shouldn't have been built in the

first place. They have been impossible to manage properly. They are going to replace them with something that is more humane and more manageable." Increased manageability was the primary objective as the city embarked on the construction of thousands of repetitive town houses in the Central and North Wards. The replacement venture proved stark, a reality that exists today, between the towers and the orderly town houses. A woman interviewed at the opening of one of the new phases of town homes at Livingston Street and Muhammad Ali Avenue remarked, "these are so much better. They should blow up all those buildings. It's like you were homeless there -- everyone is cramped on top of each other. Here, my nephew can go out and play and we don't have to worry about guarding him" (Levy). Others agreed with the sentiment, but argued that the towers were actually feasible but that the incompetence of officials at the Housing Authority was the real root of the issue, not the design flaws.

The issue of removing towers persisted through the 90s, as housing advocates feared, as they did in other cities engaging in wide scale rebuilding projects, that an insufficient number of units would replace those being destroyed. Even as the housing authority facilities were described as failing and incompatible with human inhabitation, a waiting list for housing still numbered 6,500 (Sullivan). To the distress of residents and those on the waiting list, the Housing Authority relayed the statistics of their rebuilding plan. "Public housing will probably not be as large as it was in the past, but I think services to people will be better," said Milton Buck, the authority's executive director at the beginning of the rebuilding campaign. According to Buck, the Housing and Redevelopment Authority plan entailed tearing down the high-rise housing projects that had proven expensive, crime-ridden failures, and concentrating what resources were left on development and maintenance of new lower-density town homes (Narvarez). The most glaring mark of failure in this rebuilding campaign however, was not the reduced number of

rebuilt units, but the manner by which they were financed.

Under the financing plan enacted in order to reconstruct the Central Ward, Newark rebuilt the area with funds paid by surrounding and nearby communities. In doing so, the communities of the region met a mandate set by the New Jersey Supreme Court that required suburbs to provide low and moderate-income housing. The loophole that many suburbs noticed, was that they could fulfill said mandate by giving money to a nearby municipality willing to have housing built there. Under a series of agreements with Passaic, Roseland, and Denville, Newark received millions of dollars to take on their subsidized housing requirement (Narvarez). The magic in this deal was that suburbs could remain racially and economically exclusive by paying Newark to absorb the duty of housing thousands of lower income residents. While the funds were necessary in rebuilding the Central Ward, the formula by which they were financed maintained the crisis of racial and economic segregation. Although the residents of the Central Ward saw noticeable amounts of aid dollars pouring in, they remained isolated and excluded from more affluent suburban communities and improved access to jobs and quality education. In the plan to replace Scudder Homes, the city proposed the construction of 3,000 market-rate units while only devoting 200 of those units to lower income families (Narvarez). For many at the mercy of the housing authority, the rebuilding process of the 90s detailed the third or fourth time they had been moved.

The shine on the James administration grew duller through the years as scandals rocked the legitimacy of city government. James allies, Council President Gary Harris and Councilman Ralph Grant were both convicted of bribery, while Chief of Police William Celester was convicted of using police funds for trips to his girlfriend's homes. The most substantial blow to the credibility of the James administration came when James's chief of staff and relative by

marriage, Jackie Mattison, was convicted of bribery (Curry). Mayor James, a masterful orator and natural politician managed to remain above the fracas for a period of time, until facing a 2002 challenge from an Ivy-league educated lawyer turned community activist, Cory Booker.

Booker was unlike anything in recent memory in Newark politics. At 29, Booker was a Rhodes Scholar and Yale Law School graduate who took an interest in Newark and fermenting reform. Upon arriving in Newark, Booker established himself in the notoriously violent Brick Towers complex of the Central Ward. Here Booker began an outreach campaign to community residents and lobbied city officials to support new tenant initiatives and other reforms (Tuttle 242). Although he denies arriving in Newark with political intentions, Booker was quick to run for a position on the City Council. Accused of being an outsider and of being "too-white," Booker found stiff opposition to his initial run against the intrenched old-school sitting councilman, George Branch. The battle quickly evolved into one over the future of Newark. The decision was clear between an old school, loyal neighborhood guy, and a brilliant and dynamic young outsider with visions of a new Newark. As the race entered into the summer season and accusations about Booker grew more outlandish and vile, voters went to the polls and voted for Booker by a margin of 656 votes. Yet another era of reform was set to begin in Newark.

Councilman Booker engaged on a citywide anti-corruption campaign as well as a highly publicized effort to improve conditions at a notoriously dilapidated housing complex known as Garden Spires. Mayor James and his allies were resistant to a number of these efforts, but signs of unity were also present. Ultimately by 2002, Booker made the decision to run against James for the office of the mayor. As was documented in the 2005 documentary *Street Fight*, directed by Marshall Curry, Booker lost the race, but exposed James as vulnerable and unappealing to outside constituencies. In 2006, Booker ran again after sitting mayor Sharpe James decided not

to run. The second run proved far more successful for Booker, who won the election with a three to one margin and was sworn in on July 1, 2006 (Cave). Once again Newarkers heard, "This is the beginning of a new chapter in the life of our city." Indeed the fresh-faced well educated and highly endorsed Booker appeared set to ferment a revolution in Newark.

Cory Booker entered the office of the mayor and laid out an ambitious set of reforms he intended to implement in the first 100-days of his term. Booker promised to increase the number of officers on the streets, ease the reintegration process for ex-convicts into civil society, expand summer youth programs, and to commence the rebuilding and refurbishing of many city owned facilities. The two tenants of Booker's first term were reducing overall crime and growing the number of affordable housing units for Newark residents. Booker managed to achieve both of these goals within his first four years, producing statistical evidence of reduced crime and an increased amount of subsidized housing. While Booker has been quick to note these successes, the opinions of his work vary significantly among residents. That said, Booker is a star nationally and is seen as an effective and palatable urban manager that has a bright political future ahead of him. That certainly doesn't have much effect on the lives of Central Ward residents though. In 2010, the mayor glided to re-election despite a slew of vocal critics. The mayor is also noted for his excellent public relations skills and has had a number of high profile events occur, so many that he is often compared to a superhero. Others note that Booker appears to be more a fantastic facade than an actual instigator of change. That said, the city is far different than it was when he took over and the city has dozens of new parks and schools and the number of annual murders has declined by nearly half.

Under Booker, the replacement and development of affordable housing has continued. The most recent demolition and rebuilding project to occur in the Central Ward occurred in July

2010 with the demolition of the Douglass-Harrison Homes. Although not built by the Newark Housing Authority, the 70-year-old complex was plagued by serious issues before its eventual abandonment. The project was built in the early 1930's by Prudential Insurance as segregated minority housing, almost a free-market prototype for the housing designs that would later come to dominate the neighborhood. Conditions deteriorated to the point that neighboring resident Blonnie Watson recalled a time when, "gangs just actually took the building over - the police were afraid to even go in." The entire complex was vacated by 2004 and plans were drafted for its demolition (Giambusso). After several years spent in court debating the details of a demolition contract signed between the city and LVI/Mazzocchi, a New Jersey demolition firm, the contract was carried out. To the frustration of many community residents, the two square blocks that were once the Douglass-Harrison Homes continue to stand as fenced off brick and tree fields. The parks have yet to be completed, despite earlier assurances from the Booker administration.

VII. Opinions on the Streets

Conditions today, we are told are vastly improved in Newark. Booker is quick to note various statistical changes occurring in Newark, but opinions on the street are hardly those shared by the New York Times and other outside commentators. I too fell in love with the story of Booker as told in the film *Street Fight* and the Sundance television series *Brick City*. Booker, so the legend goes, is a brilliant and driven leader who is singlehandedly transforming Newark from a place of despair and concentrated redevelopment, to a city of equitable development and renewed vitality. Murders are down, standardized test scores are improving, charter schools are opening new opportunity to kids so long assigned to failing and underfunded public schools. But for all the neoliberal love directed Booker's way, the story told on the street sounds troublingly

similar to those told Fenty's Washington D.C. and Emanuel's Chicago, two other cities with extensive neoliberal mayoral experiences - one past and one present.

I spent a good deal of time walking around the Central Ward asking residents about their thoughts on the new townhouses, the schools, and Mayor Booker. It took some getting used to, but I figured out a way of approaching people to ask my question. On my first visit I went out with a crew cut, blue slacks and a black jacket. That was evidently the wrong choice of clothing, as many semi-jokingly referred to me as either the police or the FBI. On my following visits, I dressed in a more relaxed way and learned how to begin my interviews in a less police-like way. "Can I ask you a few questions?" and, "Could I speak to you for a minute?" were both remarkably ineffective ways of striking up conversation. Alas, my early visits were largely a waste, but things got easier by my third trip to the Central Ward.

A few points became clear throughout my various conversations with people in the neighborhood. Fuck the police, Booker is more legend than reality, things are worse outside the community, and that the schools are not good. Many people I encountered voiced their profound dislike for the police. Some relayed having negative encounters with officers while others spoke about long wait times or simply unanswered calls. The new developments are not considered projects by the residents, which is indeed an improvement, but a divide still exists between the redeveloped area and the surrounding neighborhoods. Stratford Avenue, a block south of the newly rebuilt Nat Turner Park was cited as the most problematic street in the Central Ward. A woman explained to me that there weren't problems in the neighborhood on account of the people living in the rebuilt housing, but on account of outsiders (namely those who lived in the apartments on Stratford) coming into the neighborhood and robbing or attacking people. She noted that she and many other residents walk a significantly longer distance from the Clinton

Avenue bus in order to avoid problem blocks.

The thing that struck me when walking around the Central Ward was the rebuilt projects striking likeness to the suburbs. The blocks of new urbanist town homes have contributed to a definitively tame sense to the streets. I could walk for minutes on end without encountering a single soul. Because of that problem, I spent most of my time hanging out at Nat Turner Park and Jesse Allen Park, two spots where there were consistently people. In an interview conducted on a bench at Jesse Allen Park, a man named Kareem explained to me the various borders of the neighborhood and conveyed that most people were unwilling and uninterested in crossing those invisible lines. I was explicitly told not to walk from Muhammad Ali Avenue through the field to Avon Avenue. The explanation being that Avon Avenue is a border and were I too cross, that there was a chance that I would get "fucked up." Although I appreciated his advice, I walked across the field to the corner of Avon and Stratford, the street I was explicitly told by numerous people to avoid. They were noticeably right, and while I had no issues while on Stratford, I did feel very uncomfortable. Perhaps the only source of comfort was that the police appeared aware of the issue as well, as I noticed three undercover units and two marked when walking Hillside and Stratford Avenues. Stratford and Hillside, unlike the blocks north, were never rebuilt and are lined with brick walk up tenements and vacant lots.

While in the parks, kids who were there to play seemed to really enjoy themselves. The few that I talked to said that they loved the park and the facilities. It was hard to argue with their fondness for those two spots. The parks were nice, but they were suited almost exclusively for kids. Jesse Allen Park is comprised of eight basketball courts, several tennis courts, two playgrounds, a track, and a large football field, but the space for adults is limited to benches. Kareem, the fellow I met at Jesse Allen Park, was spending his day on a bench drinking vodka

and orange soda out of an unmarked cup. He was happy about the newly opened park and said it was good that someone was finally paying attention to the neighborhood, but that things still just generally sucked. He expressed that it was easy to get downtown but that he had no need to go there. A woman came up to us, namely to see him, and was willing to talk to me as well. She agreed with many of his points, mostly that things were way better today than when it was high rise projects or the empty period of the 90s, but that problems persist. They let me know that the nearest grocery was close by at Irvine Turner and Avon, but that the food wasn't as fresh as they imagined it was in the suburbs. Indeed, the store is visible if you walk one block down Muhammad Ali away from the park. Perhaps in my eagerness to hear about problems, I expected the food situation to be considerably worse. This assumption was proven wrong.

That said, the grocery store was built in a suburban style (as is characteristic of the Central Ward). The Extra Supermarket is built in a way to suit the needs of cars, not pedestrians. It is a drab one-story fortress of a building with a limited entranceway. It is located on a corner where nobody visibly walks, although the walk to the neighborhood is easy. Although I was displeased with the design of the store, most people seemed appreciative that it was even there. Overall, retail in the Central Ward is dead. Minus fortified and likely hugely subsidized suburban style shopping complexes, most of which are located west of the neighborhood along Springfield Avenue, the neighborhood is designated entirely for residential and institutional uses. This separation of uses creates an eerily empty and quiet suburban feeling just half a mile southwest of teeming downtown Newark. A man selling hotdogs out of his van summed it up for me in a way that I felt disappointed me to hear, "it's the suburbs. It's better than it was."

Another consensus was that crime remained a serious issue in Newark. As noted earlier, a lot of it is on account of outsiders, but it is still nonetheless a problem. Three of the women I

spoke to voiced their fear of walking alone at night and of a general unwillingness to walk outside the neighborhood. Most people in the ward who can drive appear to do so rather than take their chances on the street. As an outsider and one susceptible to fears about crime, I have to say that my sense while being there was that things felt generally very safe in the rebuilt blocks. My greatest fear was when I walked outside and into areas that had not had vast sums of aid devoted to reconstruction. Although I never spent time at night in Newark or the neighborhood, I understood what they meant about the potential for fear. Nothing can feel scarier than an empty street late at night when one wonders if anyone would be there to help were something to go wrong.

Having read about the Fourth Precinct extensively when researching the riots and history of the Central Ward, I decided to make a visit. The building is a squat three story orange brick structure at 17th Avenue and Irvine Turner Boulevard. The first floor windows are bricked up and several of the other windows above are covered with metal gates. Nobody in the station was too eager to talk to me, though I did meet a lieutenant who was willing to tell me about how things had changed. Lieutenant Perez has been on the police force for seventeen years, starting in 1996 as things were beginning to considerably change. He thought that while the structures have changed, that the people are still the same. By his account, bad people still live in the projects and get into trouble despite all of the free things they had been handed. There are still a lot of problems and bad things that happen in their district. Things are a long way from being considered safe, especially at night. Some good people live here, but most of the people who could or wanted to, already have. He seemed to be conveyed that he thought a lot of the residents were lazy no-good freeloaders, but he didn't go so far as to say it in such explicit terms. He imagined, as I periodically have, that these new projects are simply going to get messed up and

burn down eventually as the structures before them did.

VII. Design Issues With the First Wave of Central Ward Renewal

The Scudder Homes were comprised of eight, 13-story brick and reinforced concrete buildings, each containing 200 apartments. The Douglass-Harrison Homes were made up of 12 6-story buildings. Brick Towers was a 324-unit pair of 16-story structures. The Stella Wright Homes with seven 13-story towers containing 764 units, while the Hill Manor Apartments stood alone but the tallest at 21-stories. Despite what may have been initially sunny days, ones much like those at the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago or Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis; all of these projects were always architectural monstrosities. The healthy fabric of an organically developed "slum" was erased in the interest of savings and increased human storage capacity. The roots of these ideas are inherently flawed and there is no serious debate as to whether Newark is better for having erased these inhuman towers turned hellholes. Even low-rise housing developments proved to be catastrophic failures. Yes in part on account of failing maintenance and general neglect on the part of the city because of flawed funding policies, but there was a community-destroying element in these designs. By the time of their collective demise, the housing authority contended that the buildings were both physically obsolete and socially defective (DePalma). Even longtime residents who lived in these various projects largely agreed that the conditions in the high-rise projects were never likely to return to being clean, safe or decent. The high-rise projects created isolated streets, dangerous corridors, and left residents at the mercy of underfunded maintenance teams.

The urban theorist Lewis Mumford wrote extensively about what makes a great city. Ideal cities that he reviews in his book *The City in History* are those of the ancient Greeks and Medieval Europeans. These cities possess a thing that high-rise Newark never did, build at a

human scale. Massive government-sponsored projects are a thing more akin to Vladivostok than Florence, but the superior city from a design standpoint is clear. And yet, the modernist planners of the Central Ward would have gotten that answer wrong judging from what they built. A great city makes the individual think and fosters growth. It provides healthy and vibrant public spaces for individuals to come, mix, socialize, and build community. The anonymous sterile corridors of the projects that once dotted this half square mile of study were the anthesis of this idea. Vast monotonous towers sided with dull anonymous windows reduced the value of the humans within. Courtyards, stairwells, and halls filled with trash and became places of sheer terror, where residents once people merely prayed that nobody would bother them (DePalma). The tale goes that the towers were once great places to live, but numerous realties about them, even upon being completed, reveal that their flaws were innumerable. Rather than creating an intimate urban environment, the best way to describe the scale of construction in the Central Ward would be to call it vast.

The monotony of these housing plantations and the general lack of landmarks other than schools or specifically named corners, fails to breed connection to place. It is important for residents of a community to love and take pride in where they live. For a city to make a place and then to willfully neglect it, as became the case in the late 60s, is an insult and devaluation of the humanity of the residents of the Central Ward. The projects developed during this first wave of renewal created a land of lawn, asphalt, and brick faced towers. To the credit of the second wave developers, they built on their earlier successes by creating inspiring communities of lawn, asphalt, and low-density brick faced townhouses. Perhaps the lone achievement of the rebuilding is the addition of multiple entrances to these structures (namely to reduce maintenance costs for things like elevators) and bringing residents closer to their streets and their neighbors.

Jane Jacobs, the author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was an early critic of the high-rise Le Corbusier inspired monstrosities that ravaged vast swaths of old cities. His beliefs, all of which I believe were wrong, centered on the street being chaotic and bad. His advocacy of the superblock in the Central Ward did an excellent job of both sapping the vitality of the community and also making it feel and actually become complete unsafe. Whereas Jacobs is a believer in short blocks and a mixture of tiny, old buildings, the Newark Housing Authority embarked on the creation of massive housing towers set within the bounds of isolating highway-esque avenues. Cities are places filled with strangers and the best way to reduce the effect of a deviant is to drown them with law-abiding persons. On a small street, one can know their neighbors and quickly intervene in the case of trouble. On a small street, a resident can quickly and easily identify who may or may no belong depending on their behavior. Thirteen floors up in the Stella Wright Homes and one has absolutely no idea or any way of knowing what is going on in the courtyard. Couple with that the dependence on an elevator or substantial stair walk down and a potential deviant finds himself in a paradise of anonymity and inaction. A healthy street according to Jacobs entails the presence of retail, namely small locally owned shops. In the Central Ward of the 60s and of today, small retail is not present and the streets are correspondingly both dead and uninviting. These shops, the casual interactions, the accessibility of neighbors, they are all key in constructing a healthy neighborhood. None of these were present in the structures that the City of Newark ordered people to inhabit.

The parks of the Newark Housing Authority were much like those managed by the New York City Housing Authority, both non-existent and horrible. Jacobs formula for healthy parks entails activated sides and healthy use by neighboring residents. Those that developed in the Central Ward were little more than fenced courtyards, some with trees. Even in the earliest days,

with an abundance of benches and freshly laid sod, the parks were doomed to fail. These parks were exposed and largely treeless, they were affordable and felt that way, and were eventually treated that way. These parks, as the parks are today, were centered on the needs of children. While certainly providing for those needs is necessary and worthy venture, one must not forget that adults too need parks and activities devoted to their well being too. Today as they were before, these parks built by the city are insufficient to meet the needs of the community and by the testimony of residents are still unsafe to use - especially at night. Healthy parks are safe spaces, not dens of protected deviance. So long as perceptions that the park is unsafe continue, then these spaces will continue to fail. That said, there is no denying that the second generation of parks are incomprehensibly nicer and superior to those that residents of the neighborhood once had to put up with.

The projects of the past were single-use spaces with the exception of a handful of institutional buildings. This created a dearth of activities and energy to the streets that ran through the Central Ward. To take the energy and eyes off of the streets, Newark planning officials succeeding in the mission of creating spaces that managed to be boring, ugly, and dangerous. Jacobs speaks extensively about her eyes on the street theory. The notion that people will behave well if they imagine that they are under constant informal surveillance by their peers and neighbors. This creates a mindset of security and accountability that no number of police patrols or security cameras can comparably provide. The towers of Newark failed to provide any of those three options and the result was something akin to hell by the 1990s. Thousands of lives were lost in these towers to violence. That is an inexcusable failure on the part of planners and housing authority officials. A tragic perfect storm hit these horribly designed towers, a storm of neglect on the part of officials coupled with concentrated poverty coupled and hopelessness.

Why is there no tree or tower on the inner East Fifth

Jose Camilo Vergara, a prominent urban theorist and photographer had a number of thoughts on the replacement of these towers. Vergara presents a degree of temperance to my well-formed hatred of Le Corbusier's ideas. Thomas Lehman, an architect who participated in the designing of the Scudder Homes explained that were these same towers built in Manhattan or certain areas of Chicago and they would have remained luxury housing. Upon their opening, Mr. Lehman recalled, "There was great joy about the projects; it was a great thing for the City of Newark...Tenants during the first year of occupancy were delighted and would say, 'Gee, thank you so much." Beginning in the wake of the 1967 riots, the area saw a sea of families and businesses leave and the projects become a last resort for almost entirely black and female-led households (Vergara). Attempts by the housing authority to improve security often created more problems because the solutions were little more than cheap fixes that contributed to the prison-like image. As neglect became more prevalent, more boards and more welding appeared. Ultimately the greatest tragedy in the demolition of towers was the reduction in the number of the units that were built to replace those lost.

It must be noted that the reduction in the number of affordable housing units has occurred as the city's homeless population has grown. In an attempt to avoid responsibility for large-scale relocations, the Newark Housing Authority began slowly phasing out high-rise residents as part of it's downsizing strategy. This strategy, partially on account of the decrepit state of structures, was also one fueled by dwindling potential future financial resources. But considering the conditions of the towers and the crisis that was really forced upon Newark because of larger forces, little choice was left but to get rid of the towers. Evicting problem residents was made difficult on account of laws in New Jersey, and most of the residents who were considered the best tenants had long ago left what had become hopeless places (Vergara). By the 1980s, the

conditions in the towers had reached such a state of violent crisis that a family of four had a 75 percent chance of a member becoming the victim of a crime. Such statistics were intolerably high, statistics worsened by the poor physical design of the structures, and left the city and the federal government with no choice but to erase them from the landscape and start from scratch.

The flaw in advocating lower density projects alone is that many modernist-era housing projects were indeed modest, low-rise "garden-apartments." Despite their human scale, the low-rise project suffered as much abandonment as the wretched high-rises (Fishman 16). Perhaps this could be explained away by them also being located on superblocks or really any other combination of design flaws, but the fact remains that lower density projects in Newark also failed. They too fell under the jurisdiction of the housing authority and fell victim to a lack of maintenance. Even buildings without elevators, ones that rose but three stories high, they still burned and were overcome by social issues. Although they had concentrated entrances like their high-rise neighbors, they were ultimately done in by the lack of maintenance. The fear that this leads one to is that Newark has rebuilt an entire swath of its city with the idea of reducing density in order to improve living conditions, but in rebuilding did not follow all of the criteria necessary in order to create strong communities. In fact, they copied many of the same problems as they did in their attempt at building new Newark. However different the row house neighborhood and the high-rise tower might have been in design and ownership, both examples have succumbed to death and decline (Fishman 17). Isolated communities suffering the injustices of poverty, failing schools, abusive police or any other slew of issues, regardless of design are bound to burn. The lesson Newark needed to learn was to avoid the isolation of the poor, to retake control of their schools, to demand more state and federal aid for residents, and to provide humanizing physical structures for residents. They failed in the 60s and slightly over 30 years

later, taxpayers footed the bill for a second wave of rebuilding.

VII. Design Issues With the Central Ward Today

The Central Ward that exists today is considerably better than the one that existed twenty years ago. Not a single person I spoke to or book or article that I read would contest that claim. The infusion of hundreds of millions of dollars to vacate, demolish, and rebuild nearly the entire neighborhood has been a success compared to the disaster before. Even venturing into the surrounding communities, ones lined with triplex housing lined with porches, one can see that the rebuilding effort has made arguably the healthiest neighborhood southwest of downtown. While many blocks that went unbothered by the onslaught of destruction and rebuilding of the 50s and 60s seemed like they would be better off, from my experience they were not. Many blocks across the south and west borders of the Central Ward are defined by multiple vacant homes, a reality that brings down the value of surrounding properties and are safety hazards. The most memorable experience I had in Newark was eating lunch in the abandoned Woodland Cemetery, just two blocks west of the Central Ward. In the vast field of weeds and tipped over gravestones, it seemed clear that without government intervention, far more of Newark would be in a ruinous state. The presence of so many anti-urban policies and low cost mortgages for white families would have reduced everything in this city to ruins. The first projects were indeed terribly designed and incompatible with building community, but it is wrong to criticize the planners of the day for the aspects of their intentions that were well meaning. The slums were shocking, they were a crisis, and something needed to be done, just as was the emotion in the late 80s and early 90s.

That said, a number of issues continue to plague the rebuilt Central Ward. Namely, the neighborhood continues to lack quality public space, it has far too many fences, facades are

repetitive and deadening, many front doors do not directly access the sidewalks, the parks are not properly suited to adults, and a total lack of street-activating retail spaces. Planners have created what they do best, a suburb. People do not walk in the suburb. They do not mix and mingle with their block but often just their direct neighbors if that. The sense of community, and with that, pride and safety, is absent. Planners have created a suburban space, likely because as the myth goes, suburbs are safe. The ominous towers in the forbidding "parks" have been replaced with quaint row houses. Mission accomplished planners must thing. The residents expressed a very different opinion of the situation today, despite their joy at things being superior to the way they were before the rebuild.

Parks in the Central Ward are geared towards children. Adults do not have a sufficient amount of outside space to enjoy and to get to know their neighbors. Tiny playgrounds and mass produced park spaces do not give residents the opportunity to individualize and personalize their public spaces. Community gardens do no exist in this community. The great thing about community gardens are that they serve as outdoor spaces that individuals can make their own. My experience with them in Milwaukee, Chicago, the Lower East Side, and the South Bronx is that they are often the coolest things about the neighborhoods in which they exist. Tiny outdoor gardens are so often the best places to hang out, chat with friends and crack open a few beers. One of the men I interviewed gave me a beer as we sat and hung out at Jesse Allen Park. The only issue is that the two of us had to sit on a hard bench in a windswept space and stare off into the distance where a vast football field lay before us. Community gardens are cozy and inviting. Jesse Allen Park is vast and sucks for a scroll of reasons. The man I talked and drank with was there because of the inherent human desire to be outdoors. There is no good reason that the residents of the Central Ward have not been given sufficient room to create their own parks.

Public space and parkland should not be a thing ordered and developed by officials and planners who will likely never use said space. Given the track record of design failure that accompanies the planners and builders of Newark, it seems a no-brainer to give residents a far greater say in the creation of their outdoor spaces. Given the chance, they almost always create things that are cooler and just inherently more pleasant than what the government so often does. There are no construction deadlines with community gardens. There is no completion date. Unlike the parks, the gardens are alive and healthy. Their lack of presence in the Central Ward is tragic.

There are far too many physically stifling forces in the Central Ward, namely the vast amounts of fence and retaining wall. I think it very important that these life-restricting forces be cut down. The mid lawn black fences render these lawns unusable. Neither side is large enough for residents to properly enjoy. Every park and playground is defined by limits and strict rules. Although not nearly as authoritarian as nearly anything that the New York City Housing Authority has built or maintains, the presence of these various dead walls and fences soil the atmosphere of the community. Deadening retaining walls take eyes farther away from the streets and namely the corners, and reduce both the sense of community and of the safety that comes with bringing eyes back onto the streets. Interior courtyards are places to store cars, not to be enjoyed or stayed in for any period of time beyond that of parking ones automobile. Rid these courtyards of these deathly rectangles of asphalt that serve one purpose, to facilitate the presence of cars. In many cases, residents do not own cars and the parking spaces remain empty and essentially useless. There are an innumerable amount of ways in which these spaces could be made superior, be that with more housing, improved public spaces with seating, or even just lawns and gardens with an abundant amount of tree plantings. Fewer fences! Less retaining wall! Fewer parking lots! More gardens and more trees!

The trouble with the Central Ward today also lies in it's being a suburb when it comes to retail development. Growth has been focused on luring national chain retailers rather than locally grown and developed businesses. Residents buying power is consistently being taken out of the neighborhood and into the pockets of corporations based in Dallas or Atlanta. Rather than being able to support neighborhood owned restaurants and shops, they must go to the likes of Applebee's, Home Depot, or a number of other suburban style retailers to conduct their shopping needs. Instead of corner stores, there is lawn and retaining wall. This kills the neighborhoods corners and makes residents travel to a completely different area in order to do their necessary shopping. This community was built for the car. It has wide roads that are unpleasant to walk along and lead residents to vast shopping complexes that are defined foremost by their abundant parking. A peculiar design for a place where the majority do not own vehicles. These deactivated corners and quiet streets manage to make the new neighborhood both boring and at night dangerous.

Perhaps the ominous lesson for the new townhouses of today lies in the record of the housing authority to maintain its former properties. Pearl Cole, a resident of the former Hayes Homes, became a resident of the new townhouse developments that now define the Central Ward. Upon being interviewed in 1996, Ms. Cole relayed her pride at her new townhouse. She and neighbors happily maintained gardens, paid for alarm systems, and devoted time to cleaning their yards (Nieves). "Tenants, keep their townhouses up and look out for each other" Ms. Cole said upon being interviewed. This heartening tale is uncannily similar to those of the early days of those very houses she and others were forced to abandon some thirty years after their construction. Good design certainly has an effect, but who really is to know whether Lieutenant Perez was right. Perhaps the structures are different and the people the same. I stood in the

rebuilt Central Ward on my last visit there and wondered, how long is it going to take for the housing authority stop spending and for the deviants to return. If anything, a trip to Newark leaves one with the lingering sense that the Central Ward is anything but a strong and settled community. It is evident that the Central Ward is once again a place of mass produced cheap government housing that concentrates the very poor and surrounds them with lots of green space.

VIII. Potential solutions

Of the many issues facing the Central Ward is that it is part of the geography of nowhere. One would have great difficulty picking this community out if shown images of other American neighborhoods. Perhaps that's a sign of mission accomplished for planners who wanted to break down the physical stigmas of housing projects, but in the process they created a bland and anonymous urban suburb. Nothing defines the Central Ward, nothing makes it a place beyond one assigned for human existence. It's better than before, but that should not be the criteria for building a great neighborhood. Architecturally, the Central Ward like so much of Newark, has been cleansed of its value. Nothing that exists in this area of study defines the place. Perhaps the most famous landmark in the neighborhood is a relic of bad times past, and to some degree present, the 4th Precinct police station. This is an unhealthy reality that breeds complacency and a lack of attachment to place. It's important that persons enjoy and love the environments in which they live, the Central Ward manages to provide insufficient reason to ever feel either of those emotions. The lack of quality public spaces and activities for adults has created a neighborhood physically incapable of inspiring or individualizing. Unless residents are able to identify with an aspect of this community, this place will remain cold and unwelcoming to new ideas and personal growth. Quite obviously the issue with this situation is that residents feel unwelcome in the place that is theirs. They are mere tenants, those without a connection to a

place, and ones devoid of responsibility or reason to care for it.

The solution is to define the Central Ward by something and to make it a place where people are truly proud to live. The goal is to create a community that is theirs and that is loved. People so passionately speak of their communities and neighborhoods when given the chance. There is a pride that comes in living in a place that you enjoy and believe to be good. Residents of the Ironbound have the ability to boast about their multicultural and active neighborhood. They live in a place with good shops and restaurants, inviting public spaces, and largely spared old blocks of housing. People own their homes and others rent, but even the renters can describe their building without profound issue. The housing in the Central Ward is deadening and repetitive, nothing defines it from the others, well other than assigned street number addresses. When that's what one must rely on in order to define their space, then an issue is quite clearly present.

Facilitate architectural diversity and the individualization of space. Let people accent their homes the way they wish. Various levels of government have already poured hundreds of millions of dollars into creating this anonymous mass; the cost of giving a stipend to all renters and homeowners to individualize their properties would be comparatively minor. The best decision is to provide residents with an ability to make their space their own in order to develop a sense of pride and individualism. A place that is the product of their own desire and will is guaranteed to be one in which persons take greater pride. Allowed the opportunity, residents so often make small gardens and other aesthetically pleasing improvements. The new row houses with their mid lawn fences prohibit that opportunity, unlike the original townhouses created. Multicolored facades with varying architectural additions and details will give the neighborhood a cluttered and chaotic feel. That is a great thing. Give people the trust and the freedom to make

the right decisions and do not impose architectural authoritarianism upon them. There is no negative effect on anyone's life on account of a family being able to paint their home whatever color they please. Instead of an aesthetically dull community, these facade retrofits based on the desires of the individuals will create perhaps among the most unique and unrefined of neighborhoods in the United States. Inspire the eye and inspire the mind. A place made by and for the residents and not one by corporate builders and cold-hearted outside planners is guaranteed to be superior to the status quo.

Develop great public spaces. Today fenced playgrounds, sidewalks, parking lots, and wide asphalt roads define public space in the Central Ward. It is a generic American suburb, an uninspiring dead place. Were one to be randomly dropped on Broome and Spruce on a summer day it would be hard to tell within ten minutes whether one was in Houston, Cleveland, Atlanta, or Newark. Create a public square where people can mix and mingle and enjoy weekend green markets and outdoor music or theater. Let people come out into the public space and dance and make music or art. Let residents create graffiti and murals, let them make the space their own. Graffiti is not a sign of neglect or decline; it is the ultimate act of creation and life. Do not persecute the artists, let them grow and learn in a way that schools no longer allow them to do. The next step would be to remove the vast majority of the asphalt in the neighborhood. The inexplicably wide streets give off the sense as though the city needs them to be wide enough for the next time they send tanks in. Two lane streets will be sufficient in this community where the majority do not drive. One lane for parking, the other for through traffic. Additionally, the inclusion of speed bumps and traffic circles will reduce traffic speeds. This is palatable to planners on account of their crime reducing effects, but beneficial to the safety of neighbors largely because it allows children to go outside and not fear being mowed down by a speeding

vehicle. Flagrant disregard for the law in the form of speeding or reckless driving reduces the value and quality of life of the neighborhood. Do not make the cars the priority. Give it to the walkers and bikers. Let people enjoy the walk to their friend's homes along a network of lanes and pathways.

Activate the corners. Currently the vast majority are defined by retaining walls and fenced lawn. William Whyte states in his book *City: Rediscovering the Center*, that the greatest urban spaces are corners. Humans like to be by other humans and that is very often on the corners. The old neighborhood used to have the corner store, the bar, the restaurant, anything that made it a place. Today these dead walls ruin what should be the healthiest and most active place in the neighborhood. Instead of being the center of activity, they are the most forbidding and dangerous parts of the community. Step one in remedying this is to cut down all fence and remove all retaining wall. Clear the corners and allow for the development of mixed-use small corner retail buildings. The presence of small stores and restaurants will activate corners, make them safer by providing more eyes, and create a reason for outsiders to visit and to mix with residents. Rather than having to take a deadening walk down a highway to go grocery shopping or taking the bus to go shopping downtown, residents can stay in their own community and spend their money where it has the highest likelihood of improving their quality of life. The joy of the Village or of Park Slope, among innumerable reasons, is that one can walk to whatever shop they need. Everything that is needed or wanted is within blocks of any neighborhood residence. The buying power of the Central Ward, the supply is not.

Define the Central Ward by something great. One should not simply strive to create mediocrity or acceptability. Planners should strive for greatness. The Central Ward, like most development in the United States, is passable. It's an ok place to exist, but by no means unique or

great. Venice is great. Amsterdam is great. Istanbul is great. The Central Ward is not. It is an ugly neighborhood of wide roads and mass produced government housing. This is not a criticism of the residents or the community, but of the fools who imposed its building and design upon those who now live there. My remedy is to follow in the tradition of the world's greatest city and make it a neighborhood of canals. Obviously the costs of shifting utilities, digging canals and then filling them will be immense. But fighter jets cost a whole bundle of dollars and we don't seem too worried about that, so as with this whole rebuilding idea, the cost doesn't really matter. Cost never factors into the making of something great. Cost is factored when making places of sufficient quantity, not quality. The Central Ward would almost immediately become the most unique and intriguing community in the United States by creating such a radical new urban design. Imagine a community of multicolored row houses, tree lined lanes, a network of walkways and quaint public squares with a grid of healthy flowing canals running through. This is my image of the ideal neighborhood and I will propose nothing less for the residents of Newark. My favorite cities are canal cities and so that's what I will propose. All too often we settle for less, we settle for mediocrity, and for authoritarian city planning. Those values and problems have no place in building healthy communities and it is my contention that the presence of those ideas is largely to blame for the urban crisis that exists today.

IX. Conclusion

The Central Ward was rebuilt beginning in the 1940s not so much out of compassion and a desire to create something better, but to create something easier to control and manage. People who had built a cool community that they were forced to live in on account of racism were forced to watch the place they made destroyed by a racist white city government. The rebuilt neighborhood managed to be boring, dangerous, ugly, hateful, monotonous, and poorly built.

People were stuffed in brick hate-stacks and left to suffer as funds began to dry up. As money poured in to build a new performing arts center, arena, and deadening office towers downtown, the people of the Central Ward were forgotten. When given cheap trash that was ignored by its owner, what else can be expected but blind rage. A majority African American community, what is the historical legacy but one of consistent mistreatment and abuse since day one arriving in the United States. Newark was and is no different. Given trash housing in the 60s and given a different form of it thirty years later, what else can be expected but more flames. The urban space fails and denotes a profound lack of care or concern for the residents. Police abuses continue, educational opportunity is still absent, and the new housing is also mass-produced and defined by concern for reducing costs and improving manageability. Minus a radical overhaul of the design of neighborhood and remedies to the above-mentioned issues, it's not too hard to imagine returning in thirty more years to see what new new-urbanist idea is now the latest trend. The first round of public housing in the Central Ward burned down because it was poorly maintained trash and it seems destined that this next round of public housing will burn and be replaced too. When we build a nation of cities on the tenants of cost-efficiency, monotony, disposability, and manageability, nothing else should be expected but the development of more urban failure.

Works Cited

Bacon, Edmund. *Design of Cities.* New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

Cave, Damien. "On 2nd Try, Booker Glides In as Newark Mayor." *The New York Times.* The New York Times, 10 May. 2006. Web.

Curry, Marshall. "Newark: A Brief History." *PBS.* POV, 5 Jul. 2005. Web.

Dockray, Sean. "Containment: The Architecture of the 1967 Newark Riots." Princeton University, 1999. Web.

Giambusso, David. "Newark Central Ward Housing Complex Is Scheduled to be Demolished." *The New Jersey Star-Ledger.* The New Jersey Star-Ledger, 26 Jan. 2010. Web.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

Levy, Clifford J. "4 High-Rises Torn Down By Newark." *The New York Times.* The New York Times, 07 Mar. 1994. Web.

Mumford, Kevin. *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America.* New York: New York University Press, 2007.

Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961.

Narvarez, Alfonso. "Newark Rips Down Its Projects." *The New York Times.* The New York Times, 28 Nov. 1987. Web.

Nieves, Evelyn. "Our Towns; Transforming A New House Into a Home." *The New York Times.* The New York Times, 07 Apr. 1996. Web.

Noguera, Pedro and Lauren Wells. "The Politics of School Reform: A Broader and Bolder Approach for Newark." *New York University.* New York University, 2011. Web.

Smothers, Ronald. "A Step to End Newark's Chapter in High-Rise Public Housing Projects." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 02 Sep. 1999. Web.

Sullivan, Joseph. "Coalition Asks Court to Force Newark Housing Authority to Build." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 19 Aug. 1992. Web.

Tuttle, Brad. *How Newark Became Newark*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009.

Vergara, Camilo Jose. "New Jersey Opinion; Blowing Up Projects Doesn't Solve Problems of Housing." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 14 Jun. 1987. Web.

Whyte, William. *City: Rediscovering the Center*. New York: Doubleday Books, 1988.