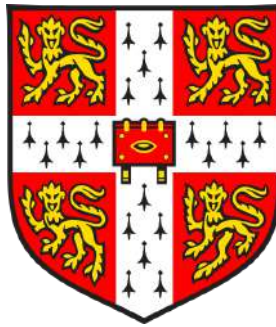# Detroit in Decline:
An investigation into the dynamics of two urban neighbourhoods

Eve Marie Avdoulos

Fitzwilliam College

Department of Architecture

University of Cambridge

September 2018

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee. For more information on the word limits for the respective Degree Committee.

Eve Avdoulos
September 2018

Detroit in Decline: An investigation into the dynamics of two urban neighbourhoods

Eve Avdoulos

Abstract

Urban decline is often understood as the opposite of urban growth, yet this conceptualization is oversimplified, obscuring a genuine understanding of the social and spatial realities of the city today. Through the study of Detroit and, in particular, through a close reading of two residential neighbourhoods, this dissertation investigates the complexities of decline. It examines the development of decline over time, as well as how it has differentially affected social and spatial patterns and practices within the city. This dissertation approaches the topic by engaging with theoretical work on decline, as well as combining historical analysis with empirical evidence through extensive on-site research.

This work traces the historical development of Detroit from the beginning of the twentieth century through to the present day, focusing on the role of public policies, land-use patterns and infrastructural development in laying the foundations for urban decline. It challenges the accepted narrative of the cycle of 'boom-bust-boom', which views the city in terms of 'growth-decline-recovery', by illustrating how Detroit's decline today is a resumption of various structural changes that were made during the city's critical period of physical, economic and demographic growth.

This dissertation then investigates two contrasting neighbourhoods to illustrate the dynamic ways in which different areas of the city have been affected by, and responded to, decline: Brightmoor, the epitome of widespread decay and abandonment, and Grandmont Rosedale, a community of five neighbourhoods that has maintained relative stability. This analysis demonstrates how urban decline transforms the city—dismantling and disassembling existing spatial and social networks and infrastructures—while simultaneously creating new ones. It deviates from much of the current research that romanticises Detroit's ruination by focusing instead on everyday urban life. This dissertation argues that decline is not simply the opposite of growth, and therefore current scenarios speculating full recovery appear problematic.

Acknowledgements

While I had some inclination of how the process of the PhD would take place, I could never anticipate how long, tedious and arduous it really is. As much as it is an individual project – it simply cannot happen without the emotional, mental and academic support of mentors, family and friends. I have been lucky enough to have an incredible group of people be my foundation throughout the last four years and to them, I am forever grateful.

I first and foremost wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Wendy Pullan who has been a constant source of knowledge, inspiration and support. It has been an absolute privilege to be your student and learn from your example. Thank you for constantly pushing me further, for your patience when I didn't get it right the first time, for the hours you spent reading my work and engaging in stimulating discussion and for the confidence you have helped me build as an academic.

I would also like to thank Britt Baillie who encouraged me to pursue this PhD at the Centre for Urban Conflicts Research and provided both academic and emotional support during the first years of this journey. This research would also not have been possible without the help of numerous individuals from the City of Detroit who welcomed me with open arms and donated their time to speak with me. Special thanks go to Bob Piatek, Ernie Zachary and Diane Van Buren. I am also appreciative of the financial support from Fitzwilliam College, the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art, the Paleologos Graduate Scholarship as well as the CrossFire Group Scholarship.

Throughout the PhD journey, I had the incredible opportunity of serving as editor of *Scroope* and as a convener of City Seminar, of organising workshops and symposia, participating in reading groups, and supervising and providing a lecture to the most talented students, all opportunities which introduced me to incredible individuals both in the architecture department and beyond who taught me more than I could have ever imagined. For reading and commenting on early versions of this project, many thanks go to Max Sternberg and Ben Campkin who examined my first year report.

I am deeply grateful for the wonderful group of friends and colleagues that I have met at the Centre for Urban Conflicts Research, in particular Hanna Baumann, Gruia Badescu, Andrew Hoolachan and Theodora Bowering. Their support and friendship throughout the last four

years have truly defined my time at Cambridge. Many thanks also go to Ed Barsley and Jessie Fyfe whose inspiring conversations and constant support were always appreciated. My gratitude also extends to Dena Qaddumi who not only has become a close colleague and the sounding board for many of the ideas discussed in this dissertation, but a dear friend. Our conversations, your company and the many meals cooked throughout the final stages of writing up this dissertation made a world of difference.

I am extraordinarily lucky to have found a group of friends in Cambridge who helped me learn to embrace every bit of who I am. To Carmen Palacios Berraquero, Chess Boughey, Ana Elizarova, and Tom Tyldesley, thank you for everything. I am also thankful for all of the support, encouragement and friendship provided by many individuals throughout the years; special thanks go to Meagan Tsagaris, Richard Bateman, Matthew Neal, Kitty Vomvolakis and Sabrina Papazian. To my ice hockey family - my final year in Cambridge would not have been the same without you. Love goes to Spencer Brennan who reminded me of the beauty that is Cambridge, Kum Nathan whose company and constant words of encouragement helped me get through the final months of writing up, and Ali Sutherland who provided friendship and a listening ear at times when I needed it the most.

To my grandparents, Antoni, Evanthia, Alekos and Afroditi. I will never be able to comprehend the journeys and sacrifices that you made to seek a better life for you and your family, but for them, I am forever grateful. Even though you did not have the opportunity to obtain an education of your own, you instilled in me the value of one. Thank you for pushing me to stay strong and be humble.

The last four years have been full of emotional and psychological ups and downs. There were instances in which I did not see myself completing the PhD, in which I doubted myself, and instances in which events in my personal life became overwhelmingly difficult to deal with. Despite the distance of 3815 miles, two people were always there to support me. To Mallory and Luke Miller. Without you, I don't know if this PhD would have been possible. Thank you for being my family and my support. I never knew that such a friendship could exist.

To my baby sister, Hannah. I'm not sure what I would do without you. I am so lucky to have a best friend in you. Your words of encouragement and your infinite and unconditional love and support mean the world to me.

Finally, to Mom and Dad. This PhD is for you. It simply could not have been completed without your emotional and financial support. Thank you for letting me embark on this journey, for having the confidence in me, for encouraging me to follow my own path, for seeing me through the ups and the downs, for always being there. I realise that my mere expression of thanks will never suffice. You are my friends, my role models, my foundations. I am eternally grateful.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

1. Introduction

In 2009, Time Magazine ran a cover story with the title, 'The Tragedy of Detroit: How a great city fell – and how it can rise again.'[1] (Figure 1) Accompanying the text is an image of one of the city's most widely recognised ruins, the abandoned Packard Automotive plant, a 3.35 million square foot factory (310,000 square meter), originally opened in 1903 and once considered the most advanced automotive factory in the world.[2] The story recounts Detroit's historical transformation from twentieth century boomtown to the poster child of industrial decline complemented by photos of the 'crumbling urban ruins of the Motor City'.[3] Author Daniel Okrent takes the reader through a narrative about the city's industrial collapse, discussing issues including deindustrialisation, racial tension, and government corruption, which among other factors, have been interpreted as amongst the primary causes of the city's decline.[4] Okrent recounts of the city's transformation,

> *The neighborhood where I lived as a child, where for decades orderly rows of sturdy brick homes lined each block, is now the urban equivalent of a boxer's mouth, more gaps than teeth. Some of the surviving houses look as if the wrecker's ball is the only thing that could relieve their pain. On the adjacent business streets, commercial activity is so palpably absent you'd think a neutron bomb had been detonated — except the burned-out*

---

[1] Daniel Okrent, 'The Tragedy of Detroit', *Time*, 5 October 2009.
[2] 'Packard Plant — Historic Detroit' <http://historicdetroit.org/building/packard-plant/>.
[3] Sean Hemmerle, 'The Remains of Detroit - Photo Essays', *TIME.Com* <http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1864272,00.html>.
[4] The narrative of Detroit's decline has been explored by the media and many scholars. Notable commentators include: Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit: With a New Preface by the Author*, Princeton Studies in American Politics, 1st Princeton Classic ed (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Joe T. Darden, *Detroit, Race and Uneven Development*, Comparative American Cities (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); June Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013); Scott Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 1st ed (Chicago, Ill: Chicago Review Press, 2012).

storefronts and bricked-over windows suggest that something physically destructive happened as well.[5]

Detroit's landscape almost invites sensationalist recollections of its history[6] but in many ways, these narratives of decay, abandonment and emptiness hold true. Since 1950, the city of Detroit, Michigan has lost over sixty-three percent of its population. Today, just under forty percent of its population lives below the poverty line[7] and Detroit remains amongst the most racially segregated metropolises in the nation.[8] It has been estimated that the city has an inventory of more than 100,000 vacant lots and around 80,000 vacant housing units[9] – as such the city has suffered a dramatic loss in both property value and property tax revenue generation.

Brightmoor is a neighbourhood in Detroit that is the epitome of this decline. Struggling with issues of depopulation, poverty, crime, access to public services and amenities and a deteriorated physical fabric, this neighbourhood exemplifies many patterns found throughout the city. Today, the amount of empty lots outnumber the structures still standing[10] and in many areas of the neighbourhood the levels of decay and abandonment have become so severe that particular spaces are witnessing an unintentional return to nature. (Figure 2) Yet, amidst this extended decline, there has been a recent transformation in both the physical character and the perception of what Detroit represents. In the last decade, city boosters, the media and some residents have recast the experience of Detroit's decline in terms of opportunity and growth.[11]

The city motto for Detroit for example, 'We hope for better things, it shall rise from the ashes', initially a reference to a nineteenth century fire that destroyed the city, 'has been resurrected as an axiom that fits comfortably with the city's narrative of overcoming

---

[5] Okrent.
[6] See George Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Mark Binelli, *Detroit City Is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis* (Picador USA, 2013); Charlie LeDuff, *Detroit: An American Autopsy* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013); Martelle.
[7] 'United States Census Bureau QuickFacts: Detroit City, Michigan', 2017 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/detroitcitymichigan/IPE120216>.
[8] John R. Logan and Brian J. Stults, *The Persistence of Segregation in the Metropolis: New Findings from the 2010 Census* (Project US2010, 24 March 2011) <https://s4.ad.brown.edu/Projects/Diversity/Data/Report/report2.pdf>.
[9] Center for Community Progress, *Open Space in Detroit* (Center for Community Progress, October 2015) <https://detroitfuturecity.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/151022_CommunityProgress_TASP_DFC_Report.pdf>. p. 8
[10] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, 2012.
[11] Daniel Howes, 'Howes: Detroit's Narrative Arc Bending Upward, Finally', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, Michigan, 22 December 2017) <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/columnists/daniel-howes/2017/12/21/howes-detroits-narrative-arc-bending-upward-finally/108835820/>.

hardship'.[12] Certain areas of the city are showing signs of population increase and are experiencing disproportionate levels of financial investment and media attention. A report published by the Hudson-Webber Foundation, in partnership with other Detroit institutions, highlights a 7.2 square mile area identified as the Greater Downtown that has been the focus of a sizeable fraction of this investment.[13] The report showcases the recent growth taking place in this area using data that represents the physical and economic transformations occurring in this part of the city. The Greater Downtown, (Figure 3) which runs north along Woodward Avenue, includes many of the city's corporate and government offices, as well as the Detroit Medical Center, Wayne State University, sports and entertainment venues, and the city's major cultural institutions. This is also the location of many new developments; large entertainment districts are being constructed, new infrastructure is being built, public spaces are being transformed and specialty restaurants and retail outlets are filling up the main thoroughfares. The increased investment and subsequent media attention, has given rise to a narrative of revitalisation, which has most recently come to characterise the city. The transformation of Detroit throughout the twentieth century and into the present day has led to the narrative, now popularized globally, about the rise and fall – *and rise again* – of the city.

These interpretations of the Detroit's growth, decline and regeneration, however, only paint one portrait of the city. Twelve miles from the Downtown and adjacent to Brightmoor, is the Grandmont Rosedale community. (Figures 4-5) This area, comprised of five small neighbourhoods, very much exists in contrast to the widely proliferated narratives of Detroit's decline. The area is comprised of a sound housing stock and well-maintained physical fabric, and has a lower poverty rate and a smaller proportion of low-income households when compared to the city overall.[14] Throughout the city's decline, this area has remained relatively stable. What is especially significant about this community is that just over ninety percent of its residents are black.[15] In a city that is often painted as being comprised of two disparate Detroits, 'one white the other black, one privileged the other deprived',[16] or a city where 'struggling and frustrated black residents [are] trapped in neighbourhoods that are crumbling around them'[17], Grandmont Rosedale challenges these narratives. Grandmont

[12] Meagan Elliott, 'Imagined Boundaries: Discordant Narratives of Place and Displacement in Contemporary Detroit' (University of Michigan, 2018), p. 9.

[13] Hudson Weber Foundation, *7.2 Square Miles: A Report on Greater Downtown Detroit* (Detroit, Michigan: Hudson Weber).

[14] Data Driven Detroit, *2012 Data Profile Grandmont Rosedale* (Detroit, Michigan, 2012), p. 2.

[15] Data Driven Detroit, *2012 Data Profile Grandmont Rosedale*, p. 10.

[16] Laura A. Reese and others, '"It's Safe to Come, We've Got Lattes": Development Disparities in Detroit', *Cities*, 60 (2017), 367–77 (p. 367).

[17] Nolan Finley, 'Finley: Where Are the Black People?', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, 14 December 2014) <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/opinion/columnists/nolan-finley/2014/12/14/black-people/20322377/>.

Rosedale is not an isolated example – other neighbourhoods, similar in physical character, racial makeup and income and education levels exist throughout the city. Therefore, the existence of the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhood and those similar, not only challenge existing perceptions of decline in Detroit, but force us to reconsider the various ways in which processes of urban decline affect the city, inviting one to consider the individual situations and circumstances found throughout Detroit more carefully.

This dissertation examines this complexity presented by our conceptualisations of urban decline by exploring two interrelated questions. The first considers traditional interpretations of urban decline that understand the phenomenon as part of a wider cycle of boom to bust. Stemming from ideas of progress and positivism that framed urban theory for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[18] urban decline has traditionally been viewed through a lens of 'boom to bust to boom' in which the city experiences an alternation of periods of prosperity and depression, progressing from one stage to another in a single, sequential, series of steps. Often interpreting urban decline as the opposite of urban growth, these conceptualisations are oversimplified and obscure a genuine understanding of the social and spatial realities that make up the city. Therefore, this dissertation asks, does an understanding of the city in terms of 'boom-bust-boom' or 'growth-decline-recovery' capture the reality of Detroit's transformation? The second question seeks to understand more closely how decline is manifest in the city today. Existing accounts of Detroit's decline largely limit their basis for interpretation to economic and demographic interactions[19] or focus on the romanticisation of the city's deteriorated urban fabric. All too frequently, the study of urban decline becomes separated from the lived experience of the city, and as such, an understanding of how these changes affect the immense diversity of human activity remains elusive. This encourages us to ask – how have different areas of the city have been affected by and responded to decline? In addressing these questions, this dissertation illustrates the complexity of decline and the dynamic ways in which it influences the city, prompting alternative ways of understanding urban transformations.

---

[18] Most of this commentary stems from the Chicago School of Urban Sociology

[19] Jürgen Friedrichs, 'A Theory of Urban Decline: Economy, Demography and Political Elites', *Urban Studies*, 30.6 (1993), 907–17; Edward Glaeser and Joseph Gyourko, *Urban Decline and Durable Housing* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, November 2001) <https://doi.org/10.3386/w8598>; Katharine L. Bradbury, Anthony Downs, and Kenneth A. Small, *Urban Decline and the Future of American Cities* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1982).

1.1 Urban decline as a feature of the twenty-first century

> *Since the late 1800s, and regardless of whether commerce was expanding or impoverishment deepening, the cities have been the sites of decay, moral turpitude, and social disorganization. For over one hundred years, cities have served as the focal points of the nation's collective anxieties, the object around which to debate injustice and inequalities, and the scapegoat for ills not of their own making.*[20]

Urban decline has been a central concept towards understanding cities throughout the latter part of the twentieth and twenty first centuries, yet as conventional and widely used as this term may be, urban decline is by no means a straightforward concept. Academic literature dedicated to studying urban decline offers varying descriptions of the phenomenon with scholars discussing the ambiguity and instability of the concept[21] as well as cautioning against 'transposing theories of decline from one geographical context to another.'[22] Despite the ambiguities in defining the concept, urban scholars have traditionally interpreted decline as a fluctuation of measures of growth and prosperity, demarcated by quantifiable shifts in population and economic health. Indicators of decline are most often interpreted through demographic (e.g. loss of population), economic (e.g. loss of jobs) or social (e.g. rising poverty and crime) measures.[23] The discourse tends to employ a systematic empirical definition of decline that relies on these quantifiable factors to signify and measure urban change.

The term 'urban decline' is often used interchangeably with the term 'urban shrinkage',[24] yet it is important here to distinguish between the two. Pallagst et al. define the shrinking city phenomenon as 'a multidimensional process, comprising cities, parts of cities, or entire

---

[20] Robert A. Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of US Cities*, 1st Ed. (Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1993). p. xi.

[21] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of US Cities*.

[22] Ben Campkin, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*, International Library of Human Geography, 19 (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 8.; While the occurrence of urban decline is fairly widespread, its determinants and outcomes vary between different contexts. (Haase 2 -
https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/portal/files/22610771/a46269_proof_FINAL_2.pdf
) Haase et al. illustrate this by referring to population loss experienced by three different cities. They explain, 'Whereas shrinkage in Detroit is largely a story of 'white flight', in Donetsk it is an outcome of demographic change, whilst in Halle it is a consequence of massive job-related out-migration.' (ibid). What separates the American experience of urban decline from that of other countries, is also the obsession with race. The question of the ghetto and ethnic and spatial segregation of the black population becomes essential in understanding how the phenomenon has affected American cities.
(http://blogs.sciences-po.fr/recherche-villes/files/2010/01/cahierville0606.pdf

[23] Sylvie Fol and Emmanuèle Cunningham-Sabot, 'Urban Decline and Shrinking Cities: A Critical Assessment of Approaches to Urban Shrinkage', *Annales de géographie*, 674.4 (2010), 359–83 (p. 361).; This research often refers to 'processes of decline' which make reference towards these fluctuations.

[24] There is a large body of scholarly literature focusing on the growing prominence of shrinking cities in both academic and public debates. As Pallagst et al note, '"Shrinkage" has not only gained acceptance, but has, in fact, become a new master framework for a broad range of empirical studies, ranging from contributions related to the causes of urban population losses, through discussion of trajectory typologies, to the study of planning responses.' (et al 2)

metropolitan areas that have experienced dramatic decline in their economic and social bases.'[25] In many studies, a decrease in population becomes the key factor in identifying shrinking cities. The use of the term 'urban decline' on the other hand, suggests a city which has experienced a loss in population, as well as related problems of social exclusion, deprivation and physical decay.[26] Acknowledging Bradbury et al.'s separation between what they term 'descriptive decline' – the objective measurement of any change in population and employment – and 'functional decline' – the ability of a city to perform its functions and contribute to the wellbeing of the urban residents and society in general[27] – helps clarify this division. Theoretically, functional decline can occur in cities that are not descriptively declining, and vice versa. In other words, 'Just because a city has fewer residents and fewer jobs does not mean that it is experiencing decline; the issue is the composition of those changes, their pace, and the resultant distribution of costs and benefits.'[28] Because the situation in Detroit today embodies a multitude of issues extending far beyond population loss alone, this research will employ the use of the term 'urban decline' to describe the transformation experienced by the city over the course of the twentieth century.

Academics have engaged extensively with the phenomenon of urban decline from both empirical and theoretical perspectives. As cities around the world began experiencing unprecedented changes in their populations and economies, scholarly literature has sought to understand the causes and impacts of these changes as well as reflect on policy and planning strategies aimed to mitigate them. While much debate exists in defining urban decline, the most common point of departure for making sense of this phenomenon is looking at how decline exists as a wider examination of the evolution and destiny of cities. In many studies, and as we will see especially those on Detroit, analyses of urban decline are associated with wider theories of urban change that adopt a cyclical view of cities; in these scenarios the city is considered to be in a constant state of flux, cycling through different developmental stages.[29] Heavily inspired by organic conceptions of biology, this approach was first developed by The Chicago School of Urban Sociology who began to interpret the trajectory of the city through evolutionary analogies of urban change. Through this understanding of the

---

[25] Karina Pallagst and others, *The Future of Shrinking Cities: Problems, Patterns and Strategies of Urban Transformation in a Global Context* (University of California Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, May 2009), p. 1 <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7zz6s7bm#main>.
[26] P.C. Cheshire and D.G. Hay, *Urban Problems in Western Europe: An Economic Analysis*, Routledge Library Editions: Urban Studies (Taylor & Francis, 2017).
[27] Bradbury, Downs, and Small, p. 18.
[28] Robert A. Beauregard, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of U.S. Cities*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 37.
[29] Robert Ezra Park and others, *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967).

city, neighbourhood change is viewed as part of a natural, deterministic process based on rational, economic choice, where urban decline is part of the inevitable transformation of cities. Framing urban decline in this way has provided the foundation for inquiry into the processes driving these transformations.

Many authors have concerned themselves with investigating the specific trends that have led to processes of urban decline.[30] In the American context, studies focus primarily on post-industrial cities in the period following World War II. As historian Robert Beauregard points out in his text, *Voices of Decline: the postwar fate of US cities*,

> *The history of the postwar United States is thus incomplete without reference to the fate of its once-mighty cities. Urban decline lurks behind every postwar story, appears in analyses of national and local economies, figures prominently in the evolution of federal, state, and municipal governments, and even surfaces as a major event in the history of the American family. Of the many traits that distinguish postwar America from the nearly two hundred years of history that preceded it, urban decline is one of the most salient.[31]*

In the postwar era, we began to witness once robust cities such as Detroit, Buffalo, Pittsburgh and Cleveland, experiencing the decentralisation of their manufacturing industries, rapid population loss, increased racial strife and economic troubles. Equated to their earlier fortunes, they were now suffering in comparison.[32] Emphasis is often placed on trends of suburbanisation[33] and deindustrialisation[34] where, as a result of the movement of population and wealth, cities were left with fewer tax resources, greater economic and social dependency and rising public spending, thereby accelerating processes of urban decline.[35] Scholars have also highlighted, for example how these processes have led to patterns of segregation and inequality characterised by the concentration of poor households and minority populations in certain areas of the city.[36] A discussion regarding ways to address the challenges of urban

---

[30] Bradbury, Downs, and Small; Manuel García Docampo, 'Theories of Urban Dynamics', *International Journal of Population Research*, 2014 (2014), 1–11 <https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/494871>; Sylvie Fol, 'Urban Shrinkage and Socio-Spatial Disparities: Are the Remedies Worse than the Disease?', *Built Environment*, 38.2 (2012), 259–75 <https://doi.org/10.2148/benv.38.2.259>.

[31] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 5.

[32] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 5.

[33] Kenneth T Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1985); Robert Fishman, 'The American Metropolis at Century's End: Past and Future Influences', *Housing Policy Debate*, 11.1 (2000), 199–213 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521367>; Ronald E Wilson, 'Why Neighborhoods Matter: The Importance of Geographic Composition', *Geography & Public Safety*, 2.2 (2009), 20.

[34] Bradbury, Downs, and Small.

[35] Fol and Cunningham-Sabot.

[36] Darden; Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*.

decline re-emerged in the twenty-first century following the global financial and economic crisis triggered by the bursting of the US housing bubble in 2007, which drew much attention to this issue.[37] This encouraged a growing body of research concerned with policy and planning responses to urban decline that have recently widened the scope of the literature. Scholars have analysed particular strategies that have been employed by local actors to address decline which are usually based on restoring attractiveness and competitiveness of cities[38] by retaining and developing creativity and human capital,[39] as well as to attracting investment and developers.[40] The attention given to the phenomenon of urban decline highlights its prominence as a dominant developmental trend and an emerging focus for research, planning, and policy.

Although accounts vary according to geographic and historic context, the discourse has dominant tendencies in the way in which it engages with the study of decline. Many approaches have adopted a very macrotheoretical conceptualisation of decline as well as relied heavily on quantitative and measurable data to identify decline. As such, the literature describes processes of urban decline as rooted in changing demographic and economic conditions and reinforced by shifting spatial configurations.[41] This perpetuates a positivist conceptualisation of urban decline that views the city as, Davoudi explains, 'objective, bounded, self-contained and measurable.'[42] She continues, 'Quantitative indicators and physical attributes of the built and natural environment are often the dominant narratives that are drawn upon to signify a sense of place and a distinct place identity.'[43] While these approaches to studying decline help inform our understanding of how the city has changed over time, they have incorporated limited conceptualisations of the social and spatial relationships that make up the urban fabric. As such, the multidimensionality of the phenomenon and 'its appearance in extremely diverse places' is lost.[44] Moreover, by understanding decline through the lens of one particular indicator, such as population loss, we

[37] Manuel Wolff and Thorsten Wiechmann, 'Urban Growth and Decline: Europe's Shrinking Cities in a Comparative Perspective 1990–2010', *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 25.2 (2018), 122–39.

[38] Fol.

[39] Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (Routledge, 2005); Marco Bontje, 'Facing the Challenge of Shrinking Cities in East Germany: The Case of Leipzig', *GeoJournal*, 61.1 (2004), 13–21.

[40] David Wilson and Jared Wouters, 'Spatiality and Growth Discourse: The Restructuring of America's Rust Belt Cities', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 25.2 (2003), 123–38; Christopher Leo and Kathryn Anderson, 'Being Realistic about Urban Growth', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 28.2 (2006), 169–89.

[41] Bradbury, Downs, and Small; D. Clark, *Urban Decline (Routledge Revivals)*, Routledge Revivals (Taylor & Francis, 2013).

[42] Simin Davoudi, 'The Legacy of Positivism and the Emergence of Interpretive Tradition in Spatial Planning', *Regional Studies*, 46.4 (2012), 429–41 (p. 5).

[43] Davoudi, p. 7.

[44] Fol and Cunningham-Sabot.

are not always made aware of the existence or emergence of other problems.[45] Chesire notes that this illustrates the general tendency of looking at the city from a 'bird's eye view' view which as Pinto points out, gives the false impression of a 'total vision'[46]; this approach, reflects Beauregard, 'removes the observer from the messy reality on the ground and suggests an omnipotent and controlling figure who is doing the seeing.'[47] Fol echoes many of these critiques, citing the ways in which the reliance on these particular ways of measuring decline, 'imply a conceptualization of decline that is, to our mind, oversimplified in its focus on morphological and demographic aspects, even if these factors do account for a large portion of research on this topic.'[48] In this way, we can begin to recognise how our understanding of urban decline is largely limited in scope. Existing conceptualisations account for fluctuations of demographic and economic factors, highlighting urban change, but they do little to ground these measures in the everyday social, cultural and material realities of the city.

Arguably, this is because of the methodological approach that scholars have traditionally employed to examine the phenomenon. By focusing on quantitative data and larger theoretical trends *alone*, we lose sight of what Pullan terms, 'the middle ground, where everyday life takes place'.[49] We are able to understand how cities change socially and spatially, but we do not understand how these social and spatial transformations influence urban praxis. This is emphasised by Beauregard, who explains,

> *few urban historians have embraced urban decline as an object of study…Historians whose work has direct relevance for urban decline generally have a narrower agenda: the ghetto, economic collapse, public housing or redevelopment. Scholars have generally neglected the place of decline in the popular imagination and thus its role in shaping the decisions made by countless households and institutions.[50]*

In order to further investigate the phenomenon of urban decline and its influence on the city, Beauregard proposes that one should move away from reducing our conceptualisation of

---

[45] Here, 'problems' are interpreted as, 'high levels of unemployment and poverty, housing deterioration and decay of the urban infrastructure.' Paul Cheshire, Gianni Carbonaro, and Dennis Hay, 'Problems of Urban Decline and Growth in EEC Countries: Or Measuring Degrees of Elephantness', *Urban Studies*, 23.2 (1986), 131–49 (p. 133).
[46] John A. Pinto, 'Origins and Development of the Iconographic City Plan', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 35.1, p. 35.
[47] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 7.
[48] Fol and Cunningham-Sabot.
[49] Wendy Pullan, 'Spatial Discontinuities: Conflict Infrastructures in Contested Cities', in *Locating Urban Conflicts: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday*, by Wendy Pullan and Britt Baillie (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1–13 (p. 19).
[50] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 37.

decline to a set of quantitative measures, and instead consider decline as a social problem. He explains,

> *A declining city is one that has become less desirable as a place for residence and less attractive as a location for capital investment in commercial and industrial activities. Such losses of people and economic activity have additional negative consequences: a weakened tax base, fewer consumers for private and public goods and services, often a diminution in resident income, and a deterioration of the physical environment.[51]*

As such, 'Urban decline involves personal and collective loss and a symbolic alienation from the city. Something valuable has been misplaced and it is not simply a matter of fewer people, diminished job opportunities, or a shrinking housing stock. [52]'

Beauregard's interpretation raises two important points that help ground this research. First, he recognises that in order to understand urban decline, we must seek to understand the terms in which the city itself, is understood. Beauregard argues that it is only through acknowledging the city as a crystallisation of modernity – defined 'by the vastness and intricacy of the built environment, the vibrancy and diversity of social life, the concentration of wealth, and the emergence of a mass culture'[53] - that we can understand urban decline. As such, the following chapter of this dissertation will build upon Beauregard to further investigate the ideas of progress and growth in twentieth century urbanism as a way to ground our conceptualisation of decline. The second important point gathered from Beauregard's study is that by recognising decline as a social problem involving 'personal and collective loss and a symbolic alienation from the city'[54], he acknowledges that decline *does* something – that it is not simply a measure but an active force on the urban environment. In *Voices of Decline*, Beauregard concerns himself with investigating how the discourse functions ideologically to frame our understanding of, and responses to decline, but in this research, we will look more towards how decline influences everyday patterns and practices in the city's neighbourhoods. Beauregard's analysis of the discourse provides a good starting point for this research; not only does it draw attention to the conflicted narratives around urban decline, but it asks us to consider more closely the relationship between urban decline and the very condition of urbanism itself.

---

[51] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 36.
[52] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 37.
[53] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 10.
[54] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 37.

Beauregard's interpretation of urban decline presents an alternative way of engaging with the topic, and while he raises it as an important aspect to understanding decline, his involvement with the discourse does not contemplate the actual materiality of the city. Such an interpretation ignores the dynamic between the way space is inhabited and the spatial and topographic aspects of space itself. As we will see in the case of Detroit, however, the physical transformation of the city is fundamental in understanding how the city has declined. Therefore this research will adopt a perspective that considers both the social and spatial aspects of the city – one that concerns itself with what Soja refers to as the 'socio-spatial dialect'[55] in which space is shaped in accordance with human needs, but also shapes the social relations that take place within it - is integral to understanding urban decline. Developing a conceptualisation of decline without considering this relationship does not reflect the reality or complexity of the city. This suggests that we might gain a better understanding of urban decline through an approach that considers this specific relationship more closely.

1.2 Researching Detroit today

While many cities around the world have experienced urban decline, few have embodied the phenomenon as much as Detroit. In the first half of the twentieth century, Detroit was the American city that 'revolutionized our way of living.'[56] It was place that gave birth to the automotive industry and the Motown sound, and once hailed as the 'Paris of the Midwest' and America's 'Arsenal of Democracy' due to its contributions in architecture and manufacturing. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Detroit grew into an industrial powerhouse, ultimately transformed by the growth of the automobile. Prospective workers from around the United States, and the world, migrated to Detroit to find employment in the manufacturing factories. As a result, the city's population doubled in a single decade, so that by 1920, it was the fourth largest city in the nation. Detroit was, in the words of historian Oliver Zunz, a 'total industrial landscape'.[57] At the time, 'Factories, shops, and neighborhoods blurred together indistinguishably, enmeshed in a relentless grid of streets and a complex web of train lines.'[58] Everything in Detroit, from the streets, to the houses, to the

---

[55] Edward W. Soja, 'The Socio-Spatial Dialectic', *Association of American Geographers*, 70.2 (1980), 207–25.

[56] Anthony Bourdain, 'Detroit', *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* (CNN, 2013).

[57] Oliver Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 292.

[58] Thomas J Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 18.

railway lines, was reflective of the industry that was growing in the city. In the 1920s, some of the world's largest manufacturing plants were located here,[59] and its industrial output surpassed that of Cleveland, Buffalo and Toledo combined, trailing only New York and Chicago.[60] By 1939, 49 percent of America's auto industry was located in metro Detroit,[61] and the city's population was 1.5 million and growing.[62] In the 1920s, Detroit was described as America's 'showcase city'[63] whose new buildings, infrastructure, wealth and 'modern approaches to city life left the national news media spellbound.'[64] The *New York Times* exuberantly reported in 1927, 'Detroit is growth…Detroiters are the most prosperous slice of average humanity that now exists or has ever existed.' This image and representation of Detroit as a symbol of American progress and growth continued throughout the mid-twentieth century and as Sugrue notes, the city became 'a global symbol of modernity and the power of American capitalism and the labor that built it.'[65] As the birthplace of Fordism,[66] Detroit led the nation in an industrial and societal revolution that would change the city, physically, economically and socially. The transport infrastructure was developing to cater to the automobile and the physical footprint of the city was expanding as land was being annexed to provide additional space to accommodate the increasing population and industry. 'The city was not built to be home to people', reflects Dennis, 'it was constructed to house and serve the growing industrial-capitalist economy.'[67]

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, as a result of these changes, Detroit occupied a place in the popular imagination as a representation and symbol of American growth, prosperity, wealth and opportunity. Anthony Bourdain describes, 'It's where nearly everything American and great came from. The things the whole world wanted made here. The heart, the soul, the beat of an industrial, cultural superpower. A magnet for everyone with a dream of a better future, from Eastern Europe to the Deep South. American dream, you

---

[59] As Gavrilovich and McGraw explain, ' In the 1920s, Detroit had the world's largest motor plant, auto body plant, axle factory, windshield plant, wheel plant, auto light plant, tractor plant, adding machine factory, stove factory, drug and chemical plant, vacuum cleaner plant, paint works, electric iron factory, seed house, cigar factory, sports shoe factory, coin machine factory and insulated wire factory.' Peter Gavrilovich and Bill McGraw, *The Detroit Almanac: 300 Years of Life in the Motor City* (Detroit: Detroit Free Press, 2006), p. 59.
[60] Gavrilovich and McGraw, p. 59.
[61] Gavrilovich and McGraw, p. 162.
[62] Gavrilovich and McGraw, p. 289.
[63] Gavrilovich and McGraw, p. 45.
[64] Gavrilovich and McGraw, p. 45.
[65] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Becoming the Motor City: Immigrants, Migrants, and the Auto Industry*, 2004 <http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview1.htm>.
[66] Fordism is understood the system of mass production that was pioneered in the early twentieth century by Henry Ford and the Ford Motor Company which later became the typical postwar mode of economic growth. See Bob Jessop, 'Fordism', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, inc., 2016) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fordism>.
[67] Eric Paul Dennis, 'Reconsideration of the Rise and Fall of Detroit Through the Lens of NonPlace', *Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design*, 2011, 41–48 (p. 42).

came here.'[68] This is precisely why the city's collapse has garnered so much attention. Detroit's decline was not only the decline of an industrial city, but it was also the decline of a symbol of the American dream.

Between 1950 and 2008, Detroit lost over one million people – 58 percent of its population. In 2009, the city's unemployment rate reached 25 percent – 2.5 times the national average.[69] In 2008, Detroit had one of the highest murder rates in America, more than ten times higher than New York City.[70] As of 2016, the city's poverty rate remains at 39.4 percent,[71] while the median household income is $26,249,[72] which is less than half of the national average.[73] Recent reports have also shown that the metropolitan Detroit region is amongst the most segregated metropolitan regions in the United States,[74] illustrating the long lasting legacy of exclusionary zoning and restrictive covenants that were used widely until well into the second half of the twentieth century. As scholars have shown, these policies have resulted in higher concentrations of poverty in minority neighbourhoods, reinforcing patterns of residential segregation and discrimination of these communities.[75]

In 2013, Detroit's decades long decline resulted in the largest municipal bankruptcy filing in United States history as the city declared itself $18 billion in debt.[76] As Bomey highlights,

> *The city government had morphed from a municipal services provider into a retiree benefits supplier, distributing about four out of every ten dollars from its budget to fund pensions, pay for retiree health care insurance, and service debt…Without drastic action, that figure would balloon to more than seven out of every ten dollars by 2020 and continue rising.[77]*

To resolve the financial crisis, state officials temporarily suspended democracy by putting in place an emergency manager who was tasked with restructuring the city's finances and administrative organisation. This moment in the city's history reflects how deep the decline

---

[68] Anthony Bourdain.
[69] E.L. Glaeser, *Triumph of the City* (Macmillan, 2011), p. 41.
[70] Glaeser, p. 41.
[71] 'United States Census Bureau QuickFacts: Detroit City, Michigan'.
[72] 'United States Census Bureau QuickFacts: Detroit City, Michigan'.
[73] Gloria G Guzman, *Household Income: 2016* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2017).
[74] Logan and Stults.
[75] Reynolds Farley and others, 'Stereotypes and Segregation: Neighborhoods in the Detroit Area', *American Journal of Sociology*, 100.3 (1994), 750–80; Devah Pager and Hana Shepherd, 'The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34 (2008), 181–209; Joe T. Darden and Sameh M. Kamel, 'Black Residential Segregation in the City and Suburbs of Detroit: Does Socioeconomic Status Matter?', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 22.1 (2000), 1–13 <https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2166.00036>.
[76] N. Bomey, *Detroit Resurrected: To Bankruptcy and Back* (W. W. Norton, 2016).
[77] Bomey, p. 1.

had become – what was once the fourth largest city in the United States by population and one of the nation's largest manufacturing cities, epitomizing economic growth, had declared financial collapse. At the time of the bankruptcy filing, 40 percent of the city's streetlights did not work,[78] around half of the city's residents were not paying property taxes,[79] the average police response time to emergency calls was half an hour, and crime was at an all-time high.[80] The city transitioned from a symbol of American might, to arguably the most famous and prominent example of urban decline in the United States.

The story of Detroit's decline and its severe population loss, physical decay and financial bankruptcy, has become increasingly more visible as magazines, photography anthologies, books, art exhibits and online news sources have produced and proliferated images of the city's decaying architecture. The materiality of Detroit's decline ' –the abandoned factories and skyscrapers; derelict hotels, libraries, schools, churches, and businesses; the acres of vacant residential lots dotted here and there with lone houses; and the derelict homes that run into the tens of thousands[81]' – have, as art historian Dora Apel reflects, cast Detroit as 'the preeminent example of urban decay, the global metaphor for the current state of neoliberal capitalist culture and the epicenter of the photographic genre of de-industrial ruin imagery.[82]'

Photographs such as those produced by French photographers Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre[83] (Figure 6) are exemplary of how many have sought to capture the physical ruins that have come to define much of Detroit. These images, along with those produced by other photographers including Camilo Jose Vergara, Lowell Boileau and George Steinmetz,[84] as well as film-makers[85] and journalists, have become a prominent part of representations made of the city over the past two decades, which have been widely disseminated in the national media, increasing Detroit's visibility as an enormous and once successful city, now defined by decline. Though the images vary stylistically, they all employ a certain aesthetic that

---

[78] 'Public Lighting Authority Completes Relighting of Detroit', *City of Detroit* <http://www.publiclightingauthority.org/public-lighting-authority-completes-relighting-of-detroit/> [accessed 6 September 2018].
[79] Bomey explains, 'many because they couldn't' afford it or refused to pay in protest of the abysmal services they were provided.' Bomey, p. 3.
[80] Bomey, p. 3.
[81] Dora Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), p. 3.
[82] Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline*, p. 3.
[83] 'The Ruins of Detroit (2005-2010)', *Yves Marchand & Romain Meffre Photography* <http://www.marchandmeffre.com/detroit>.
[84] See also the works of Camilo Jose Vergara, Lowell Boileau and George Steinmetz.
[85] George Steinmetz, 'Detroit: A Tale of Two Crises', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27.5 (2009), 761–70; Warren Crichlow, 'Stan Douglas and the Aesthetic Critique of Urban Decline', *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 3.1 (2003), 8–21.

focuses on the city's emptiness, decay and abandonment. Referred to as 'ruin porn', 'a derisive label that demonstrates the extent to which these photographs are thought to be exploitative by Detroit residents and others who critically engage with them',[86] these images have come to define the city.

These pervasive images of the city's modern picturesque ruins, widely circulated in national media, and subject of scholarly literature,[87] have helped to construct an imaginative geography[88] of the city that engages with particular empirical features and material conditions to construct a narrative of urban decline. All too often, these imaginaries of Detroit however, form the basis of understanding the city as a singular entity, which has undergone total, uniform collapse. These images are often used by the media to create a narrative structure of the 'rise-and-fall' of Detroit, in which the vibrancy of the city as a centre for manufacturing, commerce and opportunity is proceeded by a collective nostalgia and sense of loss for what once was. The focus on Detroit's deteriorated landscape is part of a broader fascination with the picturesque decay that literary critic Andreas Huyssen labels as a 'cult of ruins' which 'has accompanied Western modernity in waves since the eighteenth century.'[89] He describes, 'the architectural ruin is an example of the indissoluble combination of spatial and temporal desires that trigger nostalgia. In the body of the ruin the past is both present in its residues and yet no longer accessible'.[90] 'These images', as Millington reflects, 'help to construct a particular mythology of the city that is focused on emptiness, ruin, and picturesque decay.'[91] They premise an understanding of urban decline as a material condition.

Many scholars have engaged with this aspect of Detroit's decline producing a large body of literature that critically interrogates the meanings behind these images.[92] It is generally agreed upon that while representations of Detroit's decline allow us to explore the materiality of the city, we must be wary of the ways in which these images displace a more concerted attentiveness to the city's tangible problems. An understanding of urban decline, which is

---

[86] Nate Millington, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37.1 (2013), 279–96 (p. 289)
[87] Jerry Herron, *AfterCulture: Detroit and the Humiliation of History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993); Steinmetz; Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline*; Caitlin DeSilvey and Tim Edensor, 'Reckoning with Ruins', *Progress in Human Geography*, 37.4 (2013), 465–85.
[88] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[89] Andreas Huyssen, 'Nostalgia for Ruins', *Grey Room*, 23 (2006), 6–21 (p. 7).
[90] Huyssen, p. 7.
[91] Nate Millington, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation, and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan' (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2010), p. 2.
[92] Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline*; Millington, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries'; J.P. Leary, 'Detroitism', *Guernica: A Magazine of Art & Politics* <http:// www.guernicamag.com/features/ leary_1_15_11/>; Andrew Emil Gansky, '"Ruin Porn" and the Ambivalence of Decline: Andrew Moore's Photographs of Detroit', *Photography and Culture*, 7.2 (2014), 119–39; Steinmetz.

solely grounded in the picturesque qualities of urban decay, obscures a genuine understanding of the city. As Millington has commented, the focus on Detroit's physical decay works 'to naturalize the city's decline and erase its residents through a focus on the city's aesthetic appeal. By resigning the city to a ruin, Detroit's cataloguers help to create a break with the city's present in favor of overwrought pronouncements about inevitability and material decay.'[93] John Patrick Leary echoes this sentiment: 'So much ruin photography and ruin film aestheticizes poverty without inquiring of its origins, dramatizes spaces but never seeks out the people that inhabit and transform them, and romanticizes isolated acts of resistance without acknowledging the massive political and social forces aligned against the real transformation'.[94] The criticisms and resistance to these images by Leary and others,[95] speaks to many of the ways in which the focus on the materiality of the city fails to account for broader questions about the deeper political, economic and social processes which have helped facilitate the city's decline.

For this we must turn to historians who have engaged more closely with the causes and consequences of deindustrialization, population loss and ineffective municipal government. By undergoing a structural analysis of the political, economic and social geography of the city, region and state, Thomas Sugrue perhaps provides the most in depth study that aims to better understand how the city and the region have suffered such severe decline. Sugrue's seminal text, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit,* is considered one of the first in depth studies to complicate the narratives of Detroit's rise and fall. In this historical study of the city, which begins in the years just after World War II, Sugrue pays special attention to the complex intersections of the city's economic and political systems, laying out the framework for understanding how the intersection of deindustrialisation, suburbanization and governmental polities restructured the job market an housing, creating a racially and socially segregated city. Sugrue's analysis was one of the first accounts to delve into the city's history, opening up the door for others to more specifically investigate particular aspects of the city's decline including historic issues of racial tensions,[96] the housing market,[97] and the city's political economy.[98] Each of these studies work to

[93] Millington, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation, and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan', p. 2.
[94] John Patrick Leary, 'Detroitism', *Guernica*, January 2011, p. 2 <https://www.guernicamag.com/leary_1_15_11/>.
[95] Thomas Morton, 'Something, Something, Something Detroit', 2009 <http://www.vice.com/read/something-something-something-detroit-994-v16n8>; John Patrick Leary; Gansky; Millington, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries'.
[96] Darden; Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*.
[97] Lan Deng and others, 'Saving Strong Neighborhoods From the Destruction of Mortgage Foreclosures: The Impact of Community-Based Efforts in Detroit, Michigan', *Housing Policy Debate*, 28.2 (2018), 153–79; Margaret Dewar and others, 'Doing a Lot with Little: Community-Based Stabilization Efforts' (presented at the Reclaiming Vacant Properties, Baltimore, Maryland, 2016).
[98] Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City*.

illuminate the complexities of urban decline by exposing the entanglements of economic decline, deindustrialization, depopulation and racial politics.

Despite the attention that Detroit has attracted from scholars, there remain gaps in our understanding of decline, its origins and how it affects the city today. First, within the extensive body of literature that examines the historical causes and consequences of Detroit's decline, significant attention has been placed on the period following World War II, when racial injustice, deindustrialisation and depopulation began to overwhelm the city; there has been relatively little attention paid, on the other hand, to the beginning of the twentieth century when Detroit was undergoing rapid urban transformation defined by economic, demographic and physical growth. While a concerted focus on the post-war era makes sense for examining challenges related to Detroit's decline, for this is when we begin to see the first signs of significant demographic and economic loss, it assumes a simplistic narrative of rise and fall. This is problematic, for as this thesis will demonstrate, the structural and social problems associated with Detroit's eventual decline were, in fact, firmly rooted in the urban fabric during the period of growth experienced by the city during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Diverging from the existing literature by and placing greater attention on Detroit's early development and how it influenced decline, this dissertation allows us to question traditional narratives of decline that position growth and decline as binary opposites.

Furthermore, while significant scholarly research has focused on urban decline in Detroit, there is a general tendency to speak of the city as if it were a complete, homogeneous entity – as if the entire city of Detroit has endured a uniform experience of urban decline. Though many areas in Detroit exemplify characteristics of decline, we must bear in mind that the contemporary city is, as Amin and Graham remind us, 'a variegated and multiplex entity – a juxtaposition of contradictions and diversities…The city is not a unitary or homogenous entity and perhaps it never has been.'[99] By characterising Detroit as a paradigmatic example of urban decline, 'the very essence of the city – the concentration of diverse relational intersections between and within such activities and elements – tends to be lost.'[100] The dominance of partial interpretations of Detroit often camouflages the quotidian patterns and practices of citizens in Detroit making it increasingly difficult to understand the complexity of the city today. This dissertation will therefore explore the different ways in which decline has influenced the city. By focusing on two neighbourhoods in particular, which have each

[99] Ash Amin, 'The Good City', *Urban Studies*, 43.5–6 (2006), 1009–23 (p. 418).
[100] Amin, 'The Good City', pp. 411–12.

experienced decline in different ways, we can begin to challenge the narrative that presents Detroit's decline as being a uniformed experience.

Finally, this thesis will consider the spatiality of the city, but will deviate from sensationalising the city's ruins. Despite those scholars who call for a more critical understanding and engagement with Detroit's decaying physical fabric, the romanticsation of the city's 'ruins' have dominated both the narrative portrayed by the media as well as academic research on Detroit, especially in the last decade. Whether it is a focus on the nostalgia evoked by the 'majestic ruins',[101] the lessons to be learned from these abandoned places,[102] or the interpretation of the ruins as a blank slate where new ideas of the what the city can become are explored,[103] Detroit's material decay has become the dominant metaphor used to construct an imaginative geography of the city. As such, the physical landscape has become the primary vehicle in which to explore questions surrounding Detroit's decline. While the city's extensive ruins do raise critical questions – for example, how did Detroit end up this way? What does this mean for the future of the city? – the dialogue often neglects to consider how this landscape affects the everyday life of residents in the present. Sensationalising these ruins promotes an image of an empty city, devoid of human activity.

In a 2013 episode of Parts Unknown, Anthony Bourdain tours the city of Detroit. Reflecting on the widespread and wide scale abandonment, Bourdain says, 'It's hard to look away from the ruin. To not find beauty in the decay. Comparisons to Angkor Wat, Machu Picchu, ancient Rome are inevitable. Magnificent structures representing the boundless greens of the dead left to rot. Yet Angkor, that left his magna, people still live here. We forget that.'[104] These narratives of decay and deterioration often obscure the fact that around 672,000 people continue to call the city home. As Arnold argues, the focus on the ruins produces, 'an identity of the place that becomes more widely believed or experienced than the social reality of Detroit itself.'[105] The focus on the decaying landscape leads to the erasure of the people who live in it.

---

[101] Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City's Majestic Ruins* (The History Press, 2013).
[102] C. Woodward, '"Learning from Detroit" or "The Wrong Kind of Ruins"', in *Urban Wildscapes* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 17–32.
[103] John Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining an American City* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 2010).
[104] Anthony Bourdain.
[105] Sarah Arnold, 'Urban Decay Photography and Film: Fetishism and the Apocalyptic Imagination', *Journal of Urban History*, 41.2 (2015), 326–39 (p. 328).

This dissertation therefore seeks to understand the problems of the city today by offering a close reading on two geographically adjacent, yet very different neighbourhoods in Detroit, Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale. What the domain of the neighbourhood offers us is a space that is central to the everyday life of Detroit where we can examine the different patterns and practices that have emerged as a result of urban decline. The two neighbourhoods at the nexus of this research are located in close proximity to one another in northwest Detroit, yet are characteristically opposite. Differences include their historical development, present spatial composition, socio-economic makeup and neighbourhood organisational structure among others. Brightmoor's physical fabric is characteristic of how urban decline is typically presented, defined by abandoned housing stock and vacant land. Grandmont Rosedale, on the other hand, is distinguished by its sturdy brick houses and well maintained landscapes. Brightmoor is comprised of some of the poorest census tracts in the city, whereas Grandmont Rosedale's population has some of the highest median per capita incomes in Detroit. Spatially and socially, these two areas represent two opposing categories of neighbourhoods in Detroit. It is important to emphasise that the sites were not chosen for this research randomly or as mere test cases used to prove the argument. Rather these particular neighbourhoods were selected because of their geographic location, their struggle with municipal disinvestment and the rapid changes occurring in each. What also makes the two neighbourhoods particularly unique in the context of this research is that they border one another making their contrasts that much more visible. The inherent differences between these two neighbourhoods, in relation to their different populations, spatial character and organisation, highlight the complexity of decline but also provide new insights into how this phenomenon functions and manifests in different urban environments.

What the domain of the neighbourhood offers us is a space that is central to the everyday life of Detroit where we can examine the different patterns and practices that have emerged as a result of urban decline. The two neighbourhoods at the nexus of this research are located in close proximity to one another in northwest Detroit, yet are characteristically opposite. Differences include their historical development, present spatial composition, socio-economic makeup and neighbourhood organisational structure among others. Brightmoor's physical fabric is characteristic of how urban decline is typically presented, defined by abandoned housing stock and vacant land. Grandmont Rosedale, on the other hand, is distinguished by its sturdy brick houses and well maintained landscapes. Brightmoor is comprised of some of the poorest census tracts in the city, whereas Grandmont Rosedale's population has some of the highest median per capita incomes in Detroit. Spatially and socially, these two areas represent

two opposing categories of neighbourhoods in Detroit. It is important to emphasise that the sites were not chosen for this research randomly or as mere test cases used to prove the argument. Rather these particular neighbourhoods were selected because of their geographic location, their struggle with municipal disinvestment and the rapid changes occurring in each. What also makes the two neighbourhoods particularly unique in the context of this research is that they border one another making their contrasts that much more visible. The inherent differences between these two neighbourhoods, in relation to their different populations, spatial character and organisation, highlight the complexity of decline but also provide new insights into how this phenomenon functions and manifests in different urban environments.

1.3 Research approach

1.3.1 Themes and approaches

This work seeks to understand the phenomenon of urban decline, examine its complexities and conceptualize its influences on socio-spatial patterns and urban praxis by focusing on spatiality of the city as well as the everyday lived experience of the residents. This approach will not only reveal its inherent complexities but it allows for a reading of its various multiplicities as well, opening up new ways of understanding decline that includes its multiple forms and functions. This research combines a theoretical study of urban decline together with historical and empirical investigations of two neighbourhoods in Detroit. This research is conducted through three complementary modes of investigation.

First, in order to understand the concept of decline, it is necessary to establish a theoretical underpinning of the phenomenon and evaluate how the discourse has engaged with the topic. This relies not only on considering existing literature on decline, but also that of progress, for our understanding of one concept is rooted in the meaning of the other. By reviewing existing literature on decline, it becomes evident that our current conceptualisation of decline is largely informed by the use of qualitative evidence,[106] narratives and representation.[107] While these understandings help inform our understanding of how the phenomenon is understood in the city, they neglect the importance of decline as a lived experience and how it influences socio-spatial patterns and practices.

---

[106] Bradbury, Downs, and Small; Clark.
[107] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*; Campkin.

Second, there is also a need to understand this history of the city, including the way in which it developed socially and spatially over time. This research explores the history of Detroit, primarily throughout the period of the twentieth century when the city experienced rapid, and intense periods of growth and decline. By tracing various trends over time, evidence of decline is clarified and underlined. Furthermore, these historical investigations often provide the contextual grounds for understanding the city as it functions today.

Third, an empirical study of Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale, two very different neighbourhoods in Detroit, which have both experienced decline albeit in different ways, allow the study of decline to be grounded in physical space. A study of these sites allows us to understand how decline affects the spatiality of the city, but also in the way in which it influences the everyday life of its residents.

The notion of temporality and impermanence must also be mentioned in relation to this work. This research takes place at a very transitional moment in Detroit's history, where the focus has been on regeneration and many efforts have been made to transform the city, there have been, over the course of investigation, significant changes to the urban landscape. For example, large areas of land in the Greater Downtown, which were formerly abandoned and unoccupied, have become the sites of new commercial and residential developments. Other areas, including a large portion of the Brightmoor neighbourhood in which part of this research takes place, have been the targets of the nation's largest blight demolition program.[108] As a result, the neighbourhood has undergone extensive physical transformation as many of its abandoned buildings have been aggressively cleared since 2014. Additionally, since beginning this research, the city has experienced a number of infrastructural improvements including the repair of the city's broken street light system,[109] the introduction of new bus routes and bus timetables, and the development of various new public spaces. Therefore, it is important to recognise that some topics and sites discussed in this dissertation have undergone transformation throughout the period of this research.

---

[108] Joel Kurth, "Can Detroit Find Salvation through Demolition?," *Crain's Detroit Business*, July 6, 2017, https://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20170706/news/633246/can-detroit-find-salvation-through-demolition)
[109] Michael Kimmelman, "The Lights Are On In Detroit," *The New York Times*, January 10, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/10/arts/the-lights-are-on-in-detroit.html)

1.3.2 Methodology

This dissertation uses mixed methods, [110] including historical work undertaken at the Detroit Public Library Burton Historical Collection, observational work, documentation of particular places through photography, videography and mapping, and interviews. Of particular importance to this research has been the comparative work undertaken in two Detroit neighbourhoods, Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale. The chosen methodology that focused on the close, on-the-ground, examination of these places has revealed that the social and spatial realities of a city in decline cannot be captured by quantitative data alone. Drawing from field research conducted at various intervals between March 2015 and January 2018, this research was designed according to the need to study both historical and contemporary socio-spatial patterns and practices. Through the combination of spatial and architectural analysis, archival research, semi-structured interviews, and the continuous immersion in city spaces and everyday life through participant observation, I was able to examine the complexity of urban decline, understanding the way in which it informed changes in urban praxis as well as the effect it had on the physical landscape of the city.

To understand the transformation of Detroit and how particular historical decisions influenced the decline of the city today, it was imperative to look at archival material in order to access evidence from the past and put together an understanding of the city and the two neighbourhoods as they developed over time. Old maps, photographs, newspapers articles and planning documents were gathered primarily from the Detroit Public Library and the Redford Township Local History Archives. This 'determinative' and 'contextual'[111] evidence was crucial in comprehending the creation and development of each neighbourhood as well their historical transformations.

In order to understand the contemporary phenomenon of decline, this research engaged with multiple sources of evidence, incorporating visual and spatial analytical methods, such as extensive on-site visits and observation, photographing, filming, and mapping the neighbourhoods and other forms of qualitative research methods such as interviews. This mixed-method approach allowed me to study the built fabric in order to understand the conditions of the neighbourhoods today as well as gain insight into the everyday lived experience of the city from the residents themselves. Returning repeatedly to sites allowed me

---

[110] L.N. Groat and D. Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, Architectural Research Methods (Wiley, 2013), p. 446.
[111] Groat and Wang, pp. 195–98.

to trace changes over time, as well as establish a connection with individuals and residents building gain trust.

On-site visits and observation were of particular importance for this research. If we are to understand urban decline, Beauregard reminds us, 'we must be sensitive to both its rhetorical qualities and its grounding in the material workings of society.'[112] As Pullan notes, 'Cities are moulded by human agency and perception, and yet reciprocally, human beings receive and are impacted by spatial conditions…Architecture and the urban fabric are part of that relationship, particularly in providing settings for urban praxis.'[113] Therefore, in a city where so much of the physical fabric has been affected by processes of urban decline, the importance of observing the materiality of the city is critical to understanding the situation of decline today. Focusing primarily on the neighbourhoods of Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale, as well as Downtown Detroit, this research employed the use of extensive field notes[114] of my observations, as well as taking photo and video recordings of the physical fabric of these particular areas, including the buildings, the ruins, the empty spaces, green spaces, streets, transportation infrastructure, borders and boundaries, the public spaces, commercial corridors, and the community centers. Observations focused on the physical state of the urban fabric as well as the mobilities, flows, and social practices around these sites.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews combined with participant observation at community meetings and local events were also a crucial aspect of this research. A total of thirty-nine individuals, including architectural and planning professionals, residents and community leaders, were interviewed.[115] Interviews ranged between fifteen minutes to one and a half hours. Discussions took place with some key informants on multiple occasions to help gather information throughout the research and to discuss various findings and emerging themes as the work progressed. Interviews allowed me to focus on the ways in which residents lived in the city and helped to identify particular challenges they face in their everyday lives as a result of the extensive decline in Detroit. Participant observation was also an important method in this research. Attending various events including planning meetings, neighbourhood meetings, cultural events and community service events allowed me to engage

---

[112] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 5.
[113] Wendy Pullan, 'Agon in Urban Conflict: Some Possibilities', in *Phenomenologies of the City: Studies in History and Philosophy of Architecture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 213–24 (p. 214).
[114] R.M. Emerson, R.I. Fretz, and L.L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing (University of Chicago Press, 1995).
[115] See appendix.

with Detroit's everyday life and space with local perceptions and narratives. This helped frame the study in the contemporary, lived experience of place.

Following the concerns of research ethics, I planned and carried out all aspects of my research under the guidelines of the 'Conflict in Cities 'Research Ethics Frameworks. I informed all of my interlocutors about the nature and purpose of my research and asked for verbal consent before continuing with any interview or discussion. I did not use formalised methods of obtaining permission in order to avoid any anxiety about the disclosure of information. While I identify public officials by their full names, I use pseudonyms when referring to residents. To obtain informed consent, I made my respondents aware of the general purpose and topic of my research. Participation was voluntary, free from any coercion and my position as an independent academic researcher, unaffiliated with any particular Detroit-based organisation, was made clear.

1.3.3 Positionality

Detroit's history of racial segregation and racial tension that has often been exacerbated by the boundaries between the historically white suburbs and the predominately black city, created a particular challenge for me as a researcher. Despite growing up in the metropolitan Detroit region and identifying very closely with the city of Detroit, I was often viewed as an outsider to many black residents by virtue of my race and where I was raised. Historically, the isolation of the white suburb from the city to which it is a satellite affects the perceptions of its residents[116] because it connotes a more privileged and powerful status in the larger society[117] so that not only was there a possibility that I was being viewed simply as an outsider, but as a privileged one.[118] As such, throughout this research I followed a framework set forth by Milner [119] that discusses a process of racial and cultural awareness and consciousness in conducting research, which allowed for constant reflection regarding positionality as a researcher and the social context in which I was operating.

[116] Carol A.B. Warren, 'Qualitative Interviewing', in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, ed. by Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2002), pp. 83–102 (p. 324).
[117] Nina Wallerstein and Bonnie Duran, 'Community-Based Participatory Research Contributions to Intervention Research: The Intersection of Science and Practice to Improve Health Equity', *American Journal of Public Health*, 100.S1 (2010), S40–46 <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2009.184036>.
[118] Katie Kerstetter, 'Insider, Outsider, or Somewhere In Between: The Impact of Researchers' Identities on the Community-Based Research Process', *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 27.2 (2012), 99–117 (p. 99).
[119] H. Richard Milner, 'Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen', *Educational Researcher*, 36.7 (2007), 388–400 <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07309471>.

While I was hyper aware of my race and the fact that I was from the suburbs of Detroit rather than the city, I was met with general enthusiasm by many Detroit residents as they often cast me as a 'young 'and 'friendly 'researcher interested in their communities. Having a familial connection to the city of Detroit, as my mother grew up within the city boundaries and very close to the Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods, also helped me establish a sense of trust among the residents.

It is also important to mention the deliberate choice to not capitalise 'white 'and 'black ' throughout this dissertation. While the capitalisation of these terms varies depending on context and opinion, and although I respect the textual practice of those who have decided otherwise, this dissertation uses the lowercase presentation of the words because it recognises race as a social construct. The choice to employ this particular way of writing 'black 'and 'white 'however, should not, as Rothstein reminds us, distract us from recognising that there has been a historic system in the United States where black populations have been 'kept exploited and geographically separate by racially explicit government policies. [120]'

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

Following the introduction, chapter two begins with a discussion on the idea of progress and its relevance in framing our current understanding of urban decline. While the two concepts of progress and decline are typically viewed as mutually exclusive, they are in fact, inextricable from one another, each providing meaning for the other. The chapter then moves on to consider decline more closely by examining existing academic and planning literature and the ways in which urban decline is traditionally interpreted and used. Here, I suggest that the way in which existing scholarship engages with decline presents a very one-dimensional perspective of the phenomenon that ignores its inherent complexities. Therefore, this research proposes that decline must be studied from complementary perspectives which consider alternative factors in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of the phenomenon.

In order to open a complementary avenue of analysis that will allow for a more integrated understanding of urban decline, chapter three traces the historical development of the city from the beginning of the twentieth century through to the present day, focusing on public policies, land-use patterns and infrastructural development to analyse the city's decline. This

---

[120] R. Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (Liveright, 2017). p. xvii.

perspective will begin to shift our fundamental understanding of decline and challenge the rise and fall narrative that has been so widely employed to describe the city's history. In this way we can begin to illuminate the complexities of decline by considering decline and growth more closely.

The fourth and fifth chapters shift the scale of study from the entire city to two neighbourhoods in particular, Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale respectively. Focusing attention on the neighbourhood scale allows for a more acute understanding of how decline affects praxis, influencing socio-spatial patterns and practices today. Furthermore, because the two areas represent opposing characterisations of neighbourhoods in Detroit, they provide a picture of how decline manifests differently according to various contexts. Chapter four will explore the neighbourhood of Brightmoor, an area of the city that exemplifies many of the characteristics typically associated with decline. It seeks to understand the ways in which decline has affected this neighbourhood, spatially and socially, yet also reveal the complexities and dynamics of the phenomenon by considering more closely how these transformations have influenced urban praxis and what that means for the residents of the city. Chapter five focuses on the five neighbourhoods that collectively make up Grandmont Rosedale and explores how this community presents an alternative way of understanding how decline influences the urban condition. Here, we witness the situation of decline actually opening up the possibilities for new forms of social integration and collective organisation, offering a different perspective with which to consider the phenomenon. Chapter six relates the main findings of the research that were thread throughout the dissertation by first highlighting the particular methodology which allowed these conclusions to be made, and then suggesting an alternative reading of decline that premises the phenomenon as one of change rather than loss, and as such, challenging the accepted narrative of 'boom to bust'.

Figure 1 Time Magazine Cover (Source: Time Magazine, 2009)

Figure 2 Example of urban wilding in Brightmoor, August 2016

Figure 3 Map of Downtown Detroit (Source: 7.2 SQ MI Hudson-Webber Foundation)
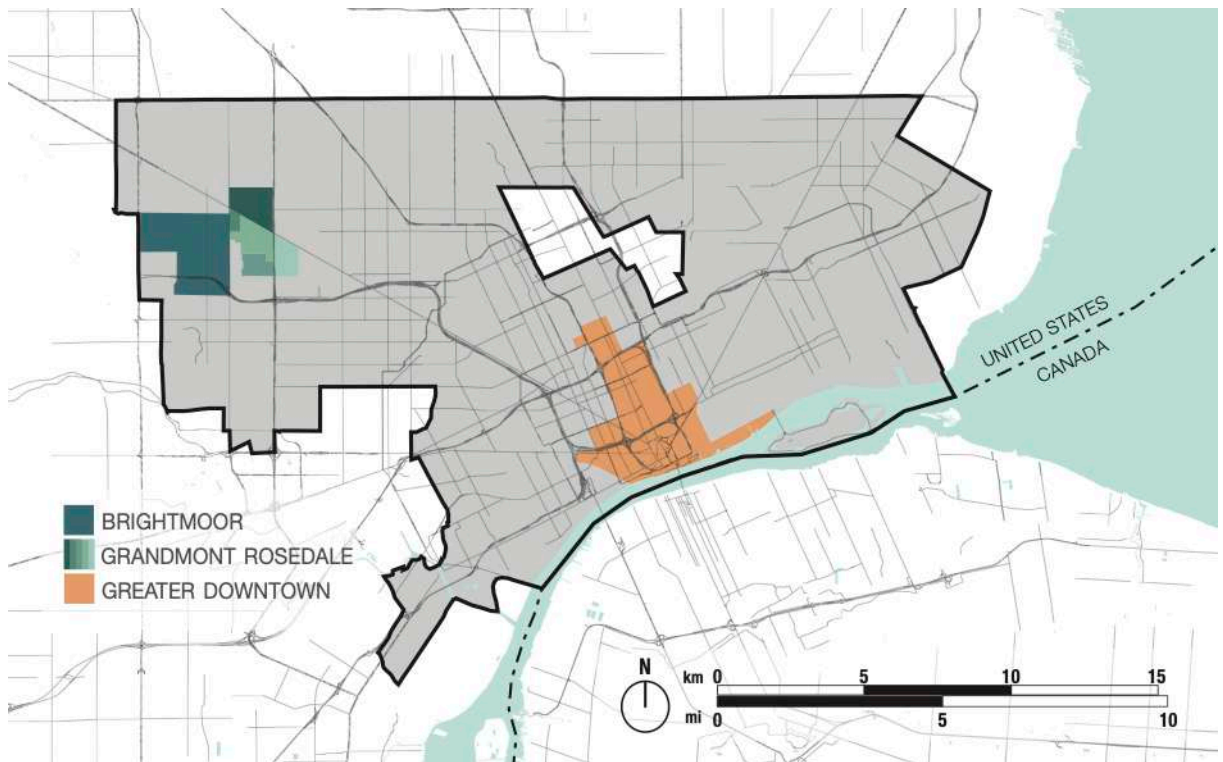
Figure 4 Map of Detroit illustrating location of Brightmoor, Grandmont Rosedale and Greater Downtown Detroit

Figure 5 Rosedale Park, a neighbourhood of Grandmont Rosedale, April 2017

Figure 6 Michigan Central Station (Source: Marchand and Meffre)

2. The Nature of Urban Decline and Neighbourhood Change

Urban decline is not a recent phenomenon, scholars have studied the notion of decline for centuries, contemplating its meaning as well as its causes and its effects, particularly in the United States. Arguably inseparable from understanding cities, urban decline has been the object of various explanatory processes, from describing the connections between decline and suburbanisation,[121] to understanding the impact of deindustrialisation for example.[122] Though 'decline' is routinely discussed with reference to situations that exemplify characteristics opposing growth, it is by no means a straightforward concept. In its simplest form, decline describes a 'gradual and continuous loss of strength, numbers, [or] quality of value'.[123] This vague definition has been so widely deployed in a vast number of fields to describe certain phenomena that some authors have claimed that the use of the word is a mere rhetorical device 'deployed to give weight to a huge array of critical positions'.[124] In many ways, the word acts as a simple descriptor, riddled with ambiguities and open to varying interpretations. Within the context of urban development, the term 'decline' is often used to describe any number of undesirable changes including population loss, economic depreciation, physical decay, and social concerns such as increased crime and poverty for example.[125] Yet, 'Despite the notoriety of urban decline and despite the pervasiveness of talk about it', Beauregard

---

[121] Fishman, Robert L. "American Suburbs/English Suburbs: A Transatlantic Comparison." Journal of Urban History 13, no. 3 (May 1987): 237–51; Kenneth T Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1985); Downs, Anthony. 'Some Realities about Sprawl and Urban Decline'. *Housing Policy Debate*, 10(4) (1999): 955–74.

[122] Bradbury, Downs, and Small; Friedrichs

[123] Decline', *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[124] Oliver Bennett, *Cultural Pessimism: Narratives of Decline in the Postmodern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001). P.15

[125] Medhurst and Lewis, p. 2

explains, 'the discussion itself has not been closely scrutinized. It is as if the topic is so familiar that it neither deserves nor requires special attention.'[126]

This chapter gives focused attention to the phenomenon of decline by considering its meaning, uses and the context in which it is understood in the city of Detroit more specifically. Making sense of the city's transformation both theoretically and practically, requires an interpretive perspective which can situate the particular local experience into a broader context. Therefore, this chapter begins with an examination of the ways in which the discourse has engaged with the phenomenon of decline, understanding how decline is typically contextualised in cities and how decline has been interpreted as part of a wider conceptualisation of urban change. Here, I will highlight different strands of thinking about decline more broadly, and then outline the three major schools of thought that have heavily shaped the way in which intra-urban change or neighbourhood change is understood in the context of American cities. The chapter will then focus more specifically on the case of Detroit, looking at how scholars have understood and made sense of the city's decline. Considering the various approaches to understanding Detroit's transformation over the course of the twentieth century, this section will highlight common narratives and ways in which the city's changes have been imagined and understood. Finally, this chapter concludes by introducing how this dissertation will shift the scale of inquiry, and use the neighbourhood as a unit of analysis to understand the lived experience of decline more widely.

2.1 Contextualising Urban Decline

At the turn of the twentieth century, advancements in science and technology began to alter the materiality of the American city, attracting large populations to these rapidly developing urban areas. Novel engineering projects including paved and lighted streets, the creation of urban parks, and the development and expansion of infrastructures including bridges, railroads, subways, and sewage systems transformed the ways cities functioned, and the founding of civic institutions including museums, concert halls, hospitals, universities and libraries brought new life to these urban areas.[127] These new spaces that emerged in America and beyond, stimulated new forms of representation, shaping new identities and imaginaries around notions of modernisation, industrialisation of economies, and the idea of progress.

---

[126] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 5.
[127] Rutherford H. Platt, *Reclaiming American Cities: The Struggle for People, Place, and Nature since 1900* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014). P. 30

Cities and processes of urbanisation became the material manifestation that was directly linked to ideas of progress and modernity.[128] These new spaces not only became the 'containers' by which modern life was played out, but they themselves became representations of the political, economic and cultural processes of the time.[129] America in particular favoured an absolute belief and acceptance of progress as the rule of life. As Clarke Chambers, explains 'The whole history of the American nation seemed to suggest an unbroken continuity of betterment'.[130] Assuming the city as a site of unequivocal progress fostered an ideology that celebrated the city as place of innovation and growth. For decades the urban areas of the United States were rapidly growing in population, employment opportunities,

In 1920, the census marked for the first time that the United States had become an 'urban society', with over fifty percent of the nation's population living in urban areas.[131] Although this statement reflected statistical categories rather than social and cultural arrangements, it set forth one of the primary lenses through which the city has been viewed. As George Soule highlighted in 1926, progress was 'measured by the growth of a city's population, the number of its skyscrapers and the length of its transit lines.'[132] Geographer Peter Goheen explains, 'The classic nineteenth-century urban success stories occurred in those cases where transport systems developed in step with specialization of production and the utilization of improved technology. These are standard elements of the biographies of all the great industrial metropoli of America'.[133] New technologies as a result of the industrial revolution were able to enhance the urban infrastructure by providing water, street lights, paved roads, and sewage systems among other improvements. The image of the modern city was one not only of growth and progress but one that functioned to a high extent and provided services to its inhabitants.

Yet, as cities were growing, new and unprecedented challenges were emerging. Housing congestion was becoming an issue, slums were emerging, and particular areas of the city were

---

[128] As Ash Amin notes, 'There is a long and illustrious history of work, from that of Benjamin and Freud to that of Baudrillard and Jacobs that has sought to summarize modernity from the symbols of urban public space, telling of progress, emancipation, decadence, hedonism, alienation, and wonderment" Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, 'Cultural-Economy and Cities', *Progress in Human Geography*, 31.2 (2007), 143–61.

[129] Richard Dennis. *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840-1930*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography, 40 (Cambridge ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008) p. 1

[130] A Clarke, 'The Belief in Progress in Twentieth-Century America', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19.2 (1958), 197–224. P. 199

[131] Census History Staff US Census Bureau, 'Urban and Rural Areas - History - U.S. Census Bureau' <https://www.census.gov/history/www/programs/geography/urban_and_rural_areas.html>.

[132] George Sole, 'Will the Cities Ever Stop?', *The New Republic*, 16 June 1926, 105–7.

[133] Goheen, p. 53.

losing their social and economic values. In the American context, institutionalised racial segregation was becoming widespread and infrastructures were not able to support the growing population. Urban problems were being generated by the nature of the growth of the city.[134] Beauregard explains,

> *Population loss; the physical deterioration of housing, factories, and shops; the collapse of urban land values; rising city property taxes and soaring crime rates; deepening poverty and unemployment; and the growing concentration of minorities have all, at one time or another, been common themes. Conditions were shocking, not just because they brought hardship to households, investors, and local governments but also because they seemed to presage the demise of the cities that had made the United States one of the world's most prosperous countries.[135]*

These challenges broke with historical trends of perceived perpetual growth, and this suddenly recognised phenomenon of urban decline began to characterise many American cities.

The way in which decline has been conceptualised requires an understanding of the dynamics and tension between ideas of 'decline' and 'progress'. Though these two concepts are often viewed as binary opposites, we must acknowledge that notions of progress and decline are inextricably linked, with both depending on each other for mutual definition. Very closely linked to ideas of temporality and notions of modernity, understandings of decline and progress rely upon a conception of the nature and meaning of time. Both of these concepts are grounded in a dynamic conception of society moving forwards in successive phases through time, 'in which any "advance" is simultaneously open to being represented as a sacrificial "loss" of what previously existed'.[136] In this way, 'growth and decline feed off each other'.[137] That is, 'growth and decline should not be designated as a dichotomy, but…seen as two aspects [that are] mutually dependent' and relational.[138] A understanding of decline cannot exist without a constant reference to and understanding of progress, and equally an

---

[134] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 36.
[135] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 3.
[136] D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*, Joan Palevsky Imprint in Classical Literature (University of California Press, 2008), p. 114; Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (New York: Free Press, 1997), p. 13.
[137] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 21.
[138] Laursen, L H, "Urban transformations—the dynamic relation of urban growth and decline", in Parallel Patterns of Shrinking Cities and Urban Growth Eds Ganser, R, Piro, R, (Ashgate, Burlington, VT, 2012) p. 78.

understanding of progress cannot exist without a notion of imminent decline. These two phenomena exist as directionally opposed trajectories along the same conceptual arc.

For centuries scholars have explored this relationship and tension between progress and its absence, and between growth and decay. [139] As outlined in the introduction, definitions of urban decline vary immensely and its indicators range from decreases in population and employment opportunities, the erosion of governmental and financial powers, the upsurge in crime and racial tension, the proliferation of urban decay and the falling standards of service provision.[140] Most studies of urban change, decay and decline concentrate on the *consequences* of urban transformation rather than their underlying causes. Moreover, due to the unique underlying social, economic and physical characteristics of different areas, the ways in which towns, cities and regions are affected by processes of urban decline fluctuate greatly.

2.1.1 Competing Theories of Neighbourhood Change

Featuring prominently in discourses of urban decline are explorations into the dynamics of neighbourhood change. As Temkin and Rohe explain, 'Over a given period of time, neighbourhoods within a single city can follow one of three trajectories: stability, decline, or upgrading.'[141] Yet, we must ask, why do neighbourhoods decline, improve, or remain stable over time? Over the course of the twentieth century, three primary theoretical models - ecological, subcultural and political economy - developed in response to understanding how and why neighbourhoods change. Each of these schools of thought have had varying levels of influence on planning and policy, but all contribute to an understanding of how and why decline happens in urban neighbourhoods.

2.1.1.1 Ecological

Among the earliest attempts at theorising intra-urban change are the Chicago School of Sociology's 'ecological models' of neighbourhood change.[142] These models interpret the trajectory of the city through evolutionary analogies, whereby urban transformations are viewed as part of a natural, deterministic process based on rational and economic choice.

---

[139] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 4.
[140] Clark, p. 1.
[141] Kenneth Temkin, and William Rohe. "Neighborhood Change and Urban Policy." Journal of Planning Education and Research 15, no. 3 (April 1996), p. 159.
[142] Park, Robert Ezra, Ernest Watson Burgess, Roderick D. McKenzie, and Morris Janowitz, *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967)

Ecological models of urban change establish a framework for viewing the city as an organic phenomenon, imbued with Darwinian understandings of progress. A key feature of this perspective its use of evolutionary analogies, specifically the invasion-succession-dominance paradigm where the city is viewed as existing in a constant state of flux, cycling through different developmental stages from growth, to decline, to growth again. Notable works that are linked to the ecological school include Burgess' Concentric Ring model,[143] Hoyt's Sector model,[144] and a class of Neighbourhood Stages/Life Cycle models.[145]

In the seminal Chicago School text, *The City*, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess argue 'The human community tends to develop in a cyclic fashion.'[146] The Chicago School's model of urban change suggests that urban transformations are dictated by fluctuations in population and resources. Park and Burgess suggest that the community tends to remain in a state of balance until a new element is introduced which disturbs the status quo.[147] They continue, 'Whatever the innovation may be that disturbs the equilibrium of the community, there is a tendency toward a new cycle of adjustment. This may act in either a positive of negative manner.'[148]

The influential Chicago School set the foundation for viewing urban change, especially in the American context, as a cyclical pattern of growth and decline, a way of understanding cities that greatly influenced the way in which cities throughout the twentieth century have been viewed. For example, Jane Jacobs wrote of the death and life of the American city while William Baer contemplated what it meant for a city to grow and die. [149] R.D. Norton. and geographer Susan Roberts independently traced how the idea of a city life cycle infused debate on urban policy, drawing upon how the concept relates to and has influenced the politics of welfare, economics and urban renewal.[150] These 'Ecological metaphors' as Wahl-Jorgensen explains, 'were useful for their project precisely because they enabled a grounded description of such processes, taking into account the complex relationships shaping social change and stability in urban communities.'[151] By theorising about the city in this, scholars

---

[143] Park and others
[144] Hoyt, H. One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago (Chicago, Illinois University of Chicago Press, 1933)
[145] Metzger, J. T. "Planned Abandonment: The Neighborhood Life-Cycle Theory and National Urban Policy." *Housing Policy Debate* 11 (1) (2000), 7-40.
[146] Park and others, p. 68.
[147] Park and others, p. 68.
[148] Park and others, p. 68.
[149] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961); William Baer, 'On the Death of Cities', *The Public Interest*, 1976, 3–19.
[150] Susan Roberts, 'A Critical Evaluation of the City Life Cycle Idea', *Urban Geography*, 12.5 (1991), 431–49; R.D. Norton, *City Life-Cycles and American Urban Policy* (New York: Academic Press, 1979).
[151] Wahl-Jorgensen, p. 10.

could explain trends associated with urban decline, such as increased crime, homelessness, and declining property values for example, as natural parts of the urban cycle of change. Not only could they be considered inevitable outcomes of the growth of cities, but they became the necessary precursors to subsequent periods of growth, serving 'as a release to the community, making for another cycle of growth and differentiation'.[152]

The basic assumptions underpinning the ecological perspective of neighbourhood change have heavily influenced the way both scholars and policy makers interpret the trajectory of cities over time, both in terms of perceptions of the city, as well as actual policies themselves. These ecological metaphors as Wahl-Jorgensen explains, 'were useful for their project precisely because they enabled a grounded description of such processes, taking into account the complex relationships shaping social change and stability in urban communities.'[153] Making reference to the historic processes of redlining, lending practices and tipping points, Garcia for example, describes how the Chicago School's views of homogeneity in cities helped to 'rationalize the long-standing apartheid system of residential segregation that plagues American cities today.'[154] Moreover, we see the determinism of the ecological approach setting the foundation for the dominant stage theories of growth promoted by the US department of Housing and Development (HUD) in the 1970s.[155]

Despite its contributions to urban theory, the hegemony of the Chicago School has been challenged and criticised for various reasons.[156] For example, some critics argue that the ecological model of neighbourhood change leaves little room for human agency.[157] Understanding how neighbourhoods improved, remained stable, or declined was based on structural forces including, for example, land values, zoning ordinances, political landscapes and economic trends, rather than underlying social connections. s many scholars have pointed out, human ecologists failed to acknowledge cultural forces and were less concerned with the city as a reflection and manifestation of the wider society.[158] For Ahlbrandt and Cunningham,

---

[152] Park and others, p. 68.
[153] Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, 'The Chicago School and Ecology: A Reappraisal for the Digital Era', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60.1 (2016), 8–23.
[154] García, I. Human Ecology and Its Influence in Urban Theory and Housing Policy in the United States. *Urban Sci. (3)* (2019) p.3
[155] Metzger
[156] Michael Dear, 'Los Angeles and the Chicago School: Invitation to a Debate', *City and Community*, 1.1 (2002), 5–32; Saskia Sassen, 'Re-Assembling the Urban', *Urban Geography*, 29.2 (2008), 113–26
[157] Yuen, T.C. Neighbourhood Analysis for Residential Urban Renewal: A Conceptual Framework.
(Calgary: Faculty of Environmental Design. 1979)

[158] Yuen; Bassett, Keith, and John Rennie. Short. *Housing and Residential Structure: Alternative Approaches*. London: Routledge & Kegan, 1980.

'neighborhoods are comprised of people, and…it is the willingness of residents to remain in their neighbourhood and to work to improve it that will determine the stability of the area'.[159] Moreover, as it pertains to understanding decline specifically, the ecological model assumes that the phenomenon of decline is part of the natural process of the city, where neighbourhood change inevitably results in decay.[160] Though ecological theories of urban change emphasise decline as a normal phase of urban transformation, they lack specificity regarding the main causes of decline.

2.1.1.2 Subcultural

In response to perceived shortcomings of the ecological model of neighbourhood change, scholars in the subcultural school developed a theory that places focus on noneconomic factors including social networks, socially determined neighbourhood reputations and the degree to which neighbours feel a sense of attachment to their community.[161] Fundamentally, researchers following this school of thought place greater emphasis on social and cultural factors and their influence on neighbourhood change. As Ahlbrandt and Cunningham explain, 'The ecological approach does not provide insights into the social fabric and social support networks of neighbourhoods, and it does not relate differences in the internal dynamics of neighbourhoods to their ability to retard or to assist the changes being observed.'[162] Therefore, subcultural approaches to neighbourhood change 'begin with a relatively simple premise: all neighbourhoods within a city do not follow the same trajectory over time. If neighbourhood change is a function of extra-local changes in a city's social and economic makeup, why do some neighborhoods remain stable while others show signs of decline?'[163]

Rather than adopting the view that neighbourhoods within a city are eventually destined to decline, as the ecological theorists emphasise, 'subculturalists place an emphasis on the study of the nature of social networks within a neighbourhood, the level of commitment and attachment to a community, and the image or symbolism'.[164] By placing emphasis on other social factors, '[n]eighborhoods do not have to decline', explain Ahlbrandt and Cunningham, 'There is nothing inherent in the ageing process that requires older neighborhoods to wear out as does a tire after 30,000 miles.'[165] Moreover, the subcultural school of thought critiqued the

---

[159] Ahlbrandt, Roger S., and James V. Cunningham. *A New Public Policy for Neighborhood Preservation: Foreword by Geno C. Baroni*. (New York, NY: Praeger, 1979), p. 29
[160] Temkin and Rohe
[161] Temkin and Rohe, p. 162
[162] Ahlbrandt and Cunningham, p. 17
[163] Temkin and Rohe, p. 162
[164] Temkin and Rohe, p. 162
[165] Ahlbrandt and Cunningham, p. 25

idea that that processes of neighbourhood change were inevitable. Subcultural theorists rather, believed that neighbourhoods can remain stable or even improve if the social structure of the area is strong. Finally, through in-depth ethnographic studies, like those conducted by Gans[166] and Suttles,[167] the subculturalist approach views urban neighbourhoods as heterogeneous, emphasising the importance of the unique social, economic and structural forces in each geographic location.

While the subcultural school enables the perspective of the social and cultural factors that contribute to neighbourhood dynamics, critics argue that the subcultural school concerns itself too much with micro-level behaviours while overlooking higher level structural forces. Moreover, while the subcultural school suggests that the social environments of neighbourhoods determine whether or not they will experience growth or decline, as Weaver and Bagchi-Sen explain, they do not explain why those environments may be able to resist decline.[168] As Kitchen and Williams also point out, the school's tenants imply that the strengthening of social ties along will be able to address decline[169] yet in practice, this is most likely not the case as the capacity for collective action depends on higher level factors and effective institutions.[170]

2.1.1.3 Political economy

One of the more recent schools of thought to develop with regard to understanding neighbourhood change encompasses a range of disciplines including sociology, geography and political science, and exists under the heading of political economy. Heavily influenced by Marxist analysis, political economists have developed a view of urban change drive on the social relations of production and accumulation. Unlike the ecological school, this approach views decline not as something driven by economic relations and forces outside of the neighbourhoods, but rather something that is brought about by failure of the free market to produce equitable outcomes.[171]

---

[166] Gans, H. The Urban Villagers Group and Class Life of Italian Americans (New York: The Free Press 1962)
[167] Suttles, Gerald D. *The Social Construction of Communities*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972.
[168] Russell C. Weaver & Sharmistha Bagchi-Sen. Evolutionary Analysis of Neighborhood Decline Using Multilevel Selection Theory, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 104:4, (2014) 765-783
[169] Peter Kitchen & Allison Williams. Measuring Neighborhood Social Change in Saskatoon, Canada: A Geographic Analysis, Urban Geography, 30:3, (2009) 261-288
[170] Temkin and Rohe
[171] Bagchi-Sen, Sharmistha, Jason Knight, and Amy E. Frazier. *Shrinking Cities. Understanding Urban Decline in the United States*. (Basingstoke: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2016) p. 61

The political economy school of thought takes an institutional approach to understanding urban change, where the role of the state is used to explain patterns of urban development. As Tempkin and Rohe highlight, 'A major premise of the political economy perspective is that urban areas are used by powerful elites to facilitate capital accumulation.'[172] According to political economists, urban development, which in turn influences neighbourhood change or stability, is driven by the action of urban elites, rather than a natural economic cycle of growth and decline or the actives of residents themselves as we have seen in the other two models. It is stated for example, by Logan and Molotch who introduce the idea of the city as a 'growth machine' whereby municipal decisions on the distribution of what'll is done for the benefit of land owners, developers and others who stand to gain from unrestrained economic development.[173] Therefore, institutions involve in real estate are often considered as the responsible actors 'for steering certain people to certain neighbourhoods - especially along racial lines - in order to meet the interests of the growth machine.'[174]

These three schools of thought - ecological, subcultural and political economy - have had varying degrees of influence on urban theory and policy over time and have set the foundations for how neighbourhoods are understood and how policy is made. These theories have given rise to a series of models that have been used to explain neighbourhood change and decay, and have also been key components of understanding urban patterns such as gentrification and political concern over an increasing divide between areas of differing socio-economic status for example. In many ways, these models and theories which explain neighbourhood change, and decline and decay in particular, have had a substantial impact on the way in which Detroit's transformation has been understood. As we will see in the following section, the ways in which scholars engage with understanding Detroit's decline, follows many of the tenants outlined in these three schools of thought.

2.2 Narratives of Decline in Detroit

Detroit has been widely recognised as a paradigmatic case study of urban decline. Driven by the widespread narratives of deindustrialisation and depopulation, to the visual representations of the city's desolate landscape, Detroit has become both a literal and

---

172 Tempkin and Rohe, p.163
173 Logan, John and Harvey Molotch. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987)
174 Peter Marcuse and Ronald van Kempen (Eds.) Of States and Cities: The Partitioning of Urban Space(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).p. 9

symbolic ruin of a place of crisis, decay and tragedy. The transformation of Detroit from that of an industrial powerhouse in the early 1900s to the symbol of urban decline and the manifestation of economic, racial and social anxieties has, for decades, fascinated scholars and the media alike. The narrative arc of the city's rise and fall has been deconstructed in various ways by those seeking to understand the individual factors causing its collapse and the lasting impacts these changes have had on the city.

2.2.1 From boom to bust

Historian Kevin Boyle[175] describes the emergence of two narratives that have largely fashioned our understanding of decline in Detroit. Proliferated by (primarily white) journalists, photographers, and the media, the first tells a very linear story of the city's rise and fall and is often intertwined with a complex racial history. Beginning with a focus on Detroit's 'golden age' of the first half of the twentieth century, this dominant narrative highlights the emergence and success of the automobile and manufacturing industries. A positive focus is placed on this period where jobs were plentiful and the city was symbolic of, and synonymous with, opportunity and growth. 'Detroit is growth' writes the New York Times in 1927, 'Detroiters are the most prosperous slice of average humanity that now exists or has ever existed'.[176] Detroit at this moment in time became, at least for some, the embodiment of the American dream. As author Rebecca Kinney describes however, 'This narration of rise of the city serves as the setup for a precipitous fall.'[177]

Where the Detroit of the early and mid-twentieth century marked the rise of industrialisation, economic growth and cultural modernity, the latter half was characterised by urban crisis and corruption. Like many other American cities, Detroit experienced many changes during the post war period. As companies and people began migrating to the newly developed suburban areas, adjacent to the city, Detroit's population began to steadily decline, its economy began to falter, and its infrastructure began to crumble, and alongside it so too did its reputation. Intensified by the 1967 racial uprising, this narrative maintains that, white people began leaving the city as they became 'Terrified by the violence, [and] featureful of the future'.[178]

---

[175] Kevin Boyle, 'The Ruins of Detroit: Exploring the Urban Crisis in the Motor City', *Michigan Historical Review*, 27.1 (2001), 109–127.
[176] Cited in George Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) p. 81
[177] Rebecca J. Kinney, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016) p. xviii
[178] Boyle, p. 110

As a result, the city's problems of a widening racial divide as well as continued depopulation and subsequent loss of its tax base, were further exacerbated by the economic effects brought on by the oil crisis of the 1970s and the continued decentralisation of the automobile industry. This implied narrative of rise and fall, as the city moved from a symbol of American greatness to a symbol of American urban crisis, is, as Kinney notes, 'nowhere clearer than in the numerous nicknames and quips about the city in the 1980s: for example, "murder city," "most dangerous city in America," "Detroit: where the weak are killed and eaten."'[179] Popular culture and news media were also responsible for 'establishing the cultural resonance of fear of postindustrial urban space'[180] which has had immense racial undertones. For example, journalist Ze'ev Chafets writes, 'In the aftermath of the riot, Detroit became the national capital of disingenuous surprise. People suddenly discovered what should have been obvious – that beyond the glittering downtown, the leafy neighbourhoods, the whirring computers, there was another city: poor, black and angry.'[181] This narrative of Detroit's decline is intricately linked to notions of racial segregation and white flight that continue to be culturally reproduced today. Chafets' account is just one example of how this narration of Detroit's decline exposes a toxic dichotomy that positions a once prosperous white city against current poor black city. As Boyle observes, 'The popular story serves an obvious political purpose: black rioters and bad luck caused the city's decline; whites bear no responsibility for its problems.'[182]

Aside from the blatant and problematic racial prejudice, there is a very obvious issue with the way that this narrative of Detroit's decline is presented: Detroit's history is packaged into a simple, one-dimensional, linear narrative that constructs a trajectory of boom to bust. Mark Binelli in *Detroit City Is the Place to Be*, for example, describes, 'If, once, Detroit had stood for the purest fulfilment of U.S. industry, it now represented America's most epic urban failure, the apotheosis of the new inner-city mayhem sweeping the nation like LSD and unflattering muttonchop sideburns.'[183] Humour aside, Binelli's light-hearted interpretation is revealing of the ways in which Detroit has become the poster child of urban decline and how these romanticised and sensationalised tales have become the master narrative of the city's history. It is easy to understand why this particular history has been so easily grasped and propagated. Binelli describes,

---

[179] Kinney, p. xix
[180] Kinney, p. xix.
[181] Chafets, *Devil's Night: And Other True Tales of Detroit*, p. 22.
[182] Boyle. 'The Ruins of Detroit: Exploring the Urban Crisis in the Motor City'
[183] Binelli, *Detroit City Is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis*, p. 3.

The story of the city, of its meteoric rise and stunning fall, possesses the sort of narrative arc to which people seem hardwired to respond. It's an almost classically structured tale of humble origins transcended by entrepreneurial moxie and much diligent toil, all eventually brought low by tragic flaws (hubris, greed, long-simmering prejudices come home to roost).[184]

Though this narrative of boom to bust has become the primary way by which Detroit's story has been constructed in the popular imagination, it denies an understanding of the complexities, contradictions and nuances of history.[185]

In attempting to develop a more robust portrait of the city's decline, Boyle describes the ways in which scholars, artists, and activists have produced an increasingly rich literature tracing both the causes and effects of Detroit's transformation on the city's spaces, people and politics. Historian Thomas Sugrue perhaps put forth one of the earliest comprehensive insights into Detroit's contemporary urban crisis by focusing on issues of race and post-industrial decline. In *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Post War Detroit*, Sugrue challenges existing assumptions about the origins of the urban crisis by persuasively arguing that phenomena typically associated with Detroit's decline, including in particular de-industrialisation and white flight, were not responses to the turmoil of the 1960s which up until that point, many attributed to the city's decline. Rather, he examines how these structural phenomena began during the 1940s and by the 1950s they had already affected the city's geography and reshaped residents' understandings of race and urban politics, therefore igniting the anger and social discord of the late 1960s.

Sugrue uses Detroit as a lens with which to examine the contested terrain of the postwar city demonstrating how many of the problems facing Detroit today, including issues of race and class division, have much earlier origins and are far more complex than previous interpretations have argued. By illuminating the 'unresolved dilemmas of housing, segregation, industrial relations, racial discrimination, and deindustrialisation',[186] he paints an intricate narrative of Detroit's decline. He explains that 'It is only through the complex and interwoven histories of race, residence, and work in the postwar era that the state of today's cities and their impoverished residents can be fully understood and confronted.'[187]

---

[184] Binelli, *Detroit City Is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis*, p. 4.
[185] Kinney, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier*.
[186] Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, p. 5.
[187] Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, p. 5.

Sugrue's work cannot be divorced from understanding the ways in which planning and planning policies have also influenced the city's decline. In *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit,* June Manning Thomas examines the ways in which professional city planners in Detroit made a concerted effort to halt the city's physical and economic decline. Here, she highlights that in confronting issues including housing shortages, blight in older areas, and changing economic conditions, Detroit's city planners did not consider the lower income and African American residents. This resulted in their plans failing to stabilise racially mixed neighbourhoods, which became more segregated following the consistent decentralisation of the industry and white flight to the suburbs.

Racial conflict and segregation in Detroit influenced patterns of city residence, public housing and renewal policies not only within the city itself, but between the city and its metropolitan region. In *Detroit Divided*, Reynolds Farley, Sheldon Danziger and Harry Holzer document the depth of Detroit's difficulties and the effects of the city's decline demonstrating the continued economic, racial and spatial polarisation present in the area. Drawing on a wealth of economic and survey data, the authors demonstrate why Detroit has become so racially, economically and geographically polarised from its wider metropolitan region. They explain how the city has been able to maintain many highly skilled jobs, but poorer residents, who are predominately black, do not have the training that those positions require. Good-paying unskilled jobs that were once provided by the automotive industry, are still available in the suburbs, but hiring and housing discrimination prevent the poor from securing them. Emphasis is placed on the notion that the suburbs forming the Metropolitan Detroit region, are not impoverished places, but in fact among the nation's most economically prosperous. 'Metropolitan Detroit', they explain, 'continues to be a high-wage, high-income location, even though the city's poverty rate remains elevated' creating an unusual situation of stark inequality between poor blacks living in the central city and the more affluent whites in the suburbs - a phenomenon that makes the Detroit metropolitan region one of the poorest, most segregated cities in the United States. *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development* is another fundamental piece of research on the city that emphasises the devastating effects of racism on the region, documenting how racism has both contributed to the social inequalities plaguing the metropolis as well as how it has been used to create barriers to solving regional problems. In this book, author Joe Darden traces the trends that have emerged in the post-World War II era, such as spatial inequality of industry and commerce, chronic racial and class segregation, and regional political fragmentation, that have influenced the trajectory of Detroit.

In making sense of the city's decline, other scholars have focused on a narrower agenda - the housing crisis,[188] education,[189] the role of the central business district,[190] as well as the function of the automotive industry.[191] Each of these efforts made by scholars to understand the economic, social, racial and political complexities of the region have contributed to the untangling of the very complex history of Detroit and its transformation over the course of the twentieth century. From considering the role of post war urban regeneration, to the influence of racial tensions and white flight, and from the impact of the housing market to the decentralisation of the automotive industry, scholars have created a robust understanding surrounding Detroit's decline. What becomes clearly evident from the literature is that Detroit's decline cannot simply be ascribed to, or explained by, one particular factor, but rather the transformation of the city is a confluence of various social, economic, political and spatial circumstances, each influencing the city in many ways.

2.2.2 The rise of the phoenix: contemplating the future of Detroit

Amidst this prolonged decline, tangible physical transformation and the perception of what 'Detroit' represents have undergone significant change in the last decade. Narratives of Detroit told by both scholars and the media have for so long been positioned around that of decline, yet through the study of Detroit's depopulation and deindustrialise spaces, urban scholars, municipal decision makers, community members and developers alike have begun to think about the city's future in terms of growth and development. The city's decades long decline now provided fertile ground to contemplate not loss, but rather the notion of possibility in Detroit.

Following the city's municipal bankruptcy filing in 2013, and the subsequent intensification of neoliberal policies, low entry barriers in terms of inexpensive real estate, and the amount of capital needed to start a business, opportunities were created for commercial and residential development to occur. Largely driven by billionaire investor and Michigan native, Dan Gilbert, the 7.2 square miles of Detroit's downtown in particular, has become the centrepiece of a narrative of 'regeneration' and 'growth'. Through his property development corporation,

---

[188] Van Allsburg, M., Property abandonment in Detroit. *Wayne L. Rev.*, *20* (1973)
[189] Mirel, Jeffery. The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81. (University of Michigan Press, 1999)
[190] McDonald, John F. "Some causes of the decline of central business district retail sales in Detroit." *Urban Studies* 12.2 (1975): 229-233.
[191] Thomas, June Manning. "Planning and industrial decline lessons from postwar Detroit." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 56.3 (1990): 297-310.

Rock Ventures, Gilbert, as of 2018, has purchased nearly 100 buildings in the downtown area.[192] Reactivating these once abandoned spaces into eateries, retail outlets, office buildings and residences, Gilbert's efforts have physically and culturally transformed the city, promoting a narrative of investment and opportunity that the media, city boosters and some residents have latched on to. Gilbert's 'Opportunity Detroit', the marketing arm of Rock Ventures, actively promotes this narrative through large banners and posters which are spread throughout the downtown area, often times gracing the sides of large buildings and new construction sites. (Figure 7) Opportunity Detroit and Rock Ventures not only promote events and new spaces in the city, but they also provide particular amenities that, as a result of Detroit's decline, have largely been lacking for many decades. For example, small 'Opportunity Detroit' shuttle buses provide transportation services for those employees working in Gilbert-owned businesses, and private security forces, employed by Rock Ventures, patrol public streets and spaces downtown. Many have begun to question what influence these redevelopments and the privatisation of security have made regarding access to public space and what it means for the design, amenities and facilities to be in private hands[193] yet none the less, these transformations have served as indicators that the function, identity and economic value of the city is being redetermined. Conceptions of what Detroit *was* and what Detroit *is*, is constantly evolving under the shadow of this new perceived growth. Author Rebecca Kinney explains that amidst increased investment, 'Detroit - precisely because of its failure of the American Dream - is an ideal site for the twenty-first century of that vision to take place.'[194] The mainstream narrative of Detroit's regeneration has therefore become primarily a story of celebration, progress and opportunity.

These narratives of growth which have emerged have also led to a dramatic shift among academics and the design community in particular, in contemplating Detroit's recovery and resilience and imagining the city's possible futures. For example, in 'Reimagining Detroit'*,* John Gallagher, a long-standing reporter for the *Detroit Free Press*, focuses not on the causes of the city's decline, but rather asks the question, 'Where do we go from here?' In framing the city's decline as an opportunity - 'A smaller city creates the canvas to become a better city'[195] he writes - Gallagher introduces readers to innovative projects that are already underway in

[192] Devin Culham. "This Map Shows All of the Detroit Buildings Owned by Dan Gilbert." *Detroit Metro Times*, August 20, 2018. https://www.metrotimes.com/news-hits/archives/2018/08/20/this-map-shows-all-of-the-detroit-buildings-owned-by-dan-gilbert.
[193] Brian Doucet and Edske Smit, 'Building an Urban "Renaissance": Fragmented Services and the Production of Inequality in Greater Downtown Detroit', *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 31.4 (2016), 635–57.
[194] Kinney, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier*.
[195] John Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining an American City*, p. 11

the city, including urban agriculture initiatives, the reactivation of vacant lots, and explores new models of governing the city. Author Michel Arnaud also focuses on the rebuilding of Detroit in this book 'Detroit: The Dream Is Now: The Design, Art and Resurgence of an American City'. Through pictures, he explores Detroit's transforming spaces by interviewing the city's entrepreneurs, artists and makers. The United States Pavilion at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale is another example of how the decline of the city has fostered an imagining of the city's future. The exhibition entitled, 'The Architectural Imagination', showcased the work of twelve American architects who each presented their visions for six areas in the city that would transform underused spaces in innovative ways. Cynthia Davidson, one of the exhibits curators, explained, '"The Architectural Imagination" introduces speculative architectural projects into the mix as a way to spark the collective imagination, to launch conversations about design, and to position Detroit as a model postindustrial city, one that is more equitable and prosperous in entirely new ways.'[196] The exhibit was celebrated by many but also met with fierce criticism. A coalition of activists, artists, architects, and community members called Detroit Resists, questioned the ability of the exhibition to accurately engage with the deep rooted social, economic and political issues that have been engrained in Detroit for decades.[197]

Many of these narratives of growth are tied to Detroit's physical landscape and the ways in which these spaces have been represented. Photographs of Detroit's decaying buildings and crumbling infrastructure have been a prominent part of representations made of the city over the past two decades and are exemplified best by the work of photographer Camilo José Vergara[198] as well as Lowell Boileau's project, The Fabulous Ruins of Detroit.[199] Though many authors argue that the proliferation of these images that focus only on the aesthetics of decay in architecture observe the ongoing crisis of poverty and unemployment in the city,[200] they are strongly tied into the discursive scripting of Detroit as a blank slate for artists, architects and creatives to project new imaginaries and ideas onto the city. As Hersher explains, 'these understandings presume the city as a site of development and progress, a site defined by the capitalist economy that drives and profits from urban growth. The contraction of such a site, therefore, provokes corrective urbanism that are designed to fix, solve or

[196] Cynthia Davidson, 'The Architectural Imagination', *Log 37: The Architectural Imagination Catalog*, 2016, p. 25
[197] "Detroit Resists: Digital Occupation of the U.S. Pavilion," May 25, 2016, https://issuu.com/detroitresists/docs/detroit_resists_catalogue)
[198] Camilo José Vergara. *American Ruins* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999)
[199] Lowell Boileau, "Detroit 360," Detroit YES, 2005, https://www.detroityes.com/360/)

[200] Dora Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline*, p. 75; Millington, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation, and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan'

improve a city in decline.'[201] This blank slate mentality, and other conceptions of the city that privilege narratives of urban renewal, have been criticised by authors who suggest that they focus on a narrow set of ideas and do little to ground narratives of renewal with the lived experience and reality of much of Detroit's population.[202] In many ways, these narratives continue to illustrate that the ways in which we envision the city are deeply rooted in a belief of infinite progress and a linear trajectory of urban transformation.

Moreover, there is increased concern amongst scholars regarding the viability of this new development. Martelle focusing on the dynamic between the development taking place and the long standing issues of decline experienced by the city, explains that these improvement 'do nothing to address the city's core problem: disinvestment and abandonment propelled by corporate decisions framed and aided by government policies, from housing and free trade, with an overlay of stubbornly persistent racism'.[203] Moreover, there is doubt that these investments in Downtown and Midtown, including for example the new upscale restaurants and retail outlets as well as the sports complexes, will be used by a vast majority of Detroit's population outside of the Downtown, and there is likely insufficient market demand for more widespread retail investment.[204] As a result, while some scholars see positive signs of re-development in the increased public-private partnerships in the city, foundation support, and corporate relocations[205] others note that any rebirth is limited by inequality, i.e. by 'urban shrinkage as a performance in whiteness'.[206]

As an understanding of Detroit's decline has been so heavily tied to notions of race and inequality, so too is its narrative of regeneration. As we have seen, and as the next chapter will develop further, Metropolitan Detroit is framed by a local history of intolerance, racism and extreme segregation, which has been largely shaped by public policy.[207] The socio-spatial division between the city itself and the wider metropolitan region, often characterised by a poorer black city and wealthier white suburbs,[208] is, as scholars have begun to highlight, being

---

[201] Andrew Herscher, 'The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit', *Places Journal*, 2012

[202] Siobhan Gregory, 'Detroit Is a Blank Slate: Metaphors in the Journalistic Discourse of Art and Entrepreneurship in the City of Detroit', in *Renewing Places* (presented at the Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference, Savannah, Georgia: American Anthropological Association, 2012), pp. 217–33 (p. 218).

[203] Scott Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, p.234

[204] Peter Eisinger, 'Is Detroit Dead?', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 36.1 (2014), 1–12.

[205] Lewis D. Solomon, Detroit: Three Pathways to Revitalization (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2014).

[206] Thomas C. Pedroni, "Urban Shrinkage as a Performance of Whiteness: Neoliberal Urban Restructuring, Education, and Racial Containment in the Post-Industrial, Global Niche City," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 32, no. 2 (April 13, 2011): pp. 203-215)

[207] Igor Vojnovic and Joe T. Darden, "Class/Racial Conflict, Intolerance, and Distortions in Urban Form: Lessons for Sustainability from the Detroit Region," *Ecological Economics* 96 (2013): pp. 88-98)

[208] Joe T. Darden., *Detroit, Race and Uneven Development*, Comparative American Cities (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Reynolds Farley and others, 'Stereotypes and Segregation: Neighborhoods in the Detroit Area'

(re)produced between the downtown core and the rest of the city of Detroit. Doucet and Smit draw our attention to the ways in which these new developments and narratives are creating a socio-spatial fragmentation between the Downtown and the rest of the city. They explain, 'Detroit is a highly fragmented city. Greater Downtown, quantified as *Detroit 7.2*, is rapidly becoming a series of prosperous islands where investments are taking place and improvements are noticeable…However, when we critically examine where this is happening and who is benefiting, it gives us pause for concern.'[209] They continue by explaining that the growth in 7.2 square miles of the Downtown area, which represents just 5% of both the city's area and population is primarily being driven and experienced by white individuals, yet at the same time, 'much of the rest of the city is still in economic, social and demographic decline.'[210]

Reminiscent of patterns of splintering urbanism, fragmentation and privatization of urban space that happen around the globe, furthering the boundaries between 'core and periphery',[211] this targeted investment in the downtown is further contributing to issues of fragmentation in the region by creating a distinct division between the 7.2 square miles of Greater Downtown and the rest of the city of Detroit. The strategy promoted by 'Opportunity Detroit' in particular, often times targets its advertisements towards a younger, more educated workforce, implying, as Kinney highlights, that there is not a young and educated workforce already in Detroit.[212] In 2017, Opportunity Detroit put up a banner on a building at the corner of Woodward Avenue and Congress Street that displayed the slogan 'See Detroit Like We Do', with a photograph of nearly all white people despite the US Census data showing the city to be more than 82% black.[213] (Figure 8) Though the banner was quickly taken down, and Gilbert apologised for the misrepresentation, it underscores the narratives of racial segregation that are being reproduced under the current regeneration initiatives. Therefore, what becomes apparent in the investments of Gilbert and the developments of the downtown area, 'is the influx of businesses that meet and serve the needs of a highly desired population

---

[209] Brian Doucet and Edske Smit, 'Building an Urban "Renaissance": Fragmented Services and the Production of Inequality in Greater Downtown Detroit'

[210] Brian Doucet and Edske Smit, 'Building an Urban "Renaissance": Fragmented Services and the Production of Inequality in Greater Downtown Detroit'

[211] Ash Amin. *Post-Fordism: A Reader*. (Blackwell Publishers, 1994); Edward Soja. *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2000); S. Graham and S. Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (Taylor & Francis, 2002);

[212] Kinney, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier*. p. 129.

[213] Robert Allen, "Gilbert on Controversial Downtown Sign: 'We Screwed up Badly'," *Detroit Free Press*, December 14, 2019, https://eu.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2017/07/24/gilbert-downtown-detroit-sign/503929001/); Emma Winowiecki, "Mostly-White 'See Detroit Like We Do' Ad Draws Backlash and Apologies," *Michigan Radio*, July 24, 2017, https://www.michiganradio.org/post/mostly-white-see-detroit-we-do-ad-draws-backlash-and-apologies)

of a young, educated, and, in Detroit, increasingly white population.'[214] As Kinney highlights, 'even as Detroit as a whole, a city signified by working-class blackness and postindustrial authenticity, is commodified to sell the city, the city's rise is built for and with the intent of a demographically shifting - whiter and more educated - Detroit.'[215]

While recent narratives often analyse the regeneration of Detroit, focusing primarily on the perceived growth taking place within the Downtown area, other scholars have also begun to engage with possibilities for Detroit's future outside assumptions of perpetual growth. In *The City After Abandonment*,[216] for example Margaret Dewar and June Manning Thomas examine the causes and consequences of the physical abandonment of the city by considering social, economic, cultural and environmental issues. After examining various ways in which certain cities in the United States have coped with sustained population loss, the authors begin to consider what cities become after abandonment focusing on the ways in which communities are coping with the rapid and widespread abandonment of urban landscapes. However, the authors here tend to place emphasis on the political and organisational resources that address the issue of vacant land - including for example, policy decisions by the local government, the changing role of community development corporations and the establishment of new institutions including regional land banks. While Dewar and Manning Thomas explore the precarious nature of decline, and specifically the issue of the vacant land, they do not fully resolve the distance between the broad causes of abandonment and local initiatives. Herscher on the other hand considers what the future of Detroit means for those individuals who live in the city. He explains that 'Detroit is frequently framed as a city in need: of investment, infrastructural improvement, good governance and many other things. And yet, a city in need is also something else besides. Needs create spaces and opportunities for alternative means of achieving viable urban lives.'[217] Framing these alternative means by way of the term 'unreal estate', which describes a site of manifold possibilities of alternative uses, actions and practices',[218] Herscher highlights an extensive list of spaces and groups who have transformed Detroit's abandonment into active and occupied spaces. While Herscher documents the ways in which these spaces are used by residents, he does not fully capture the perspectives and visions of those who are actively engaged in (re)making these spaces.

[214] Kinney, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier*.
[215] Kinney, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier*.
[216] Margaret E. Dewar, and June Manning Thomas, eds., *The City After Abandonment*, The City in the Twenty-First Century, 1. ed (Philadelphia, Pa: Penn, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2013)
[217] Andrew Herscher, *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit*.
[218] Andrew Herscher, *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit*.

The tensions inherent in these narratives of growth and regeneration illustrate that there remain gaps in our understanding of how the decades long decline of Detroit has impacted the city today. While each of these accounts produce a robust understanding of the conditions associated with the decline of Detroit, as well as narratives around the potential future of the city, the fundamental impacts of the ways in which the Detroit's decades long urban decline has impacted the lived experience of those individuals in the city remains relatively absent. Detroit's decline is not only a complex reality of the past, but of the present as well.

2.3 Shifting the scale from the city to the neighbourhood

In many ways, the approach taken by scholars, design professionals and the media alike in making sense of Detroit's transformation has largely followed the tenants of the ecological school of thought whereby cities and neighbourhoods are understood as passing through various stages from growth, to decline to renewal.[219] As we have seen, the language around Detroit's decline has not only focused on the 'death' of the city, but equally, on its regeneration. Detroit's decline fits comfortably within these cyclical narratives of urban change, for they frame the city's decline in the context of progress and growth, whereby it is always possible to envisage a recurrence or return,[220] a tenant that America has been drawn to since the beginning of the nineteenth century.[221]

Though this is one of the primary ways by which Detroit's decline has been understood and conceptualised, this very linear trajectory of the city offers a limited understanding of the complex relationships that make up the city and has several shortcomings. First, this view is grounded in notions of positivism and progress, whereby cities should follow a linear trajectory towards improvement and modernity. In this way, space is viewed as neutral, separated from the social, political and economic factors that influence its trajectories. Viewing the city through this lens operates on a paradigm of dichotomous type constructions whereby 'traditional' societies acquire the attributes of 'modernity'.[222] In the context of Detroit, this dichotomy is very much apparent in the way in which the city's history is discussed – from pre-industrial farmland to industrial might, or from post-industrial ruin to

[219] Edgar M.Hoover and Raymond Vernon. *Anatomy of a Metropolis: The Changing Distribution of People and Jobs within the New York Metropolitan Region.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959)
[220] Denis Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (University of California Press, 2007))
[221] Beauregard, *Voices of Decline*, p. 7.
[222] Dean C. Tipps. "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15, no. 2 (1973): 199-226. p. 203.

regeneration and creativity. Yet, this perception ignores the complexities and nuances of the city's history of time.

Second, this conceptualisation homogenises the city, simplifying the experience of decline. The literature on Detroit is very diverse in many ways, but widely homogenous on the other. On the one hand, the approaches by which scholars engage with the study of the city's decline as well as the subject matter of their focus is nuanced. At the same time however, analyses often adopt a macro-level analyses of Detroit's transformation, focusing on the scale of the city as a whole. While some degree of interurban homogeneity can be assumed, there is a collective tendency to generalise the changing nature of the city. Arguably, this is due to the spatial scale of analysis that is used to understand and identify trends of growth and decline. Studying the city from a macro perspective allows us to more readily recognise fluctuations in population, economies, industries and housing stock among other factors, making it much easier to identify trends of growth or decline and draw conclusions about the ways in which cities transform. Moreover, adopting a macro level analysis of the city further perpetuates viewing the city in terms of dichotomies – empty space/occupied space, city/suburbs, downtown/neighbourhoods – which are also deeply rooted in racial conceptions of place.

While this macro level approach of studying the city allows for a clear narrative of growth and decline, it seldom recognises the complexity of how these changes have differentially affected the distinct areas within the city itself. As Amin and Graham remind us, 'The contemporary city is a variegated and multiplex entity – a juxtaposition of contradictions and diversities, the theatre of life itself. The city is not a unitary or homogenous entity and perhaps it never has been.'[223] While some scholars have argued that there is a growing tendency to 'overprivilege the local', especially within postmodern critical urban studies[224], this level of analysis is often missing in the case of Detroit. The city is, like many other urban areas, made up of many diverse neighbourhoods, many with their own unique social make up.[225] Yet, the ways in which the city's decline has experienced by different neighbourhoods is often lost as a result of the scale by which scholars analyse the city, as much of analyses happen on the city wide level. This is not uncommon; as Sayyar and Marcus explain, 'Urban

---

[223] Ash Amin and Stephen Graham, 'The Ordinary City', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22.4 (1997), 411–29 (p. 418).
[224] Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1996) p. 20-21
[225] These neighbourhoods differ from the city's defined 'districts' and are self-defined with no formal administrative characteristics. The names and boundaries of Detroit's neighbourhoods vary in formality; some are well defined and long established while others are more informal.

studies…mostly focus on regional or micro-levels, with fewer studies concerning the levels in between.'[226] They argue therefore that analysis of specific neighbourhoods, groups of neighbourhoods or even districts are important to the future of urban studies – a gap which this dissertation seeks to build upon.

Finally, interpretations of Detroit's decline often rely upon demographic and economic measures to highlight urban variation. Quantifiable factors signify the relationship between evolution and devolution of various aspects of urban life and therefore become a valuable and representative way of measuring urban change. In the case of Detroit, these quantitative indicators and physical attributes (i.e. decay, abandonment, vacancy) linked to notions of decline are often what has created a distinct place identity for the city - Detroit as the exemplary case study of urban decline. While these indicators help to identify and make sense of Detroit's transformation, they do little to explain what has happened to the city as a result. As argued by Hall, relying solely upon quantitative data does little to render a complex or fine-grained explanation of change and camouflages the crucial nuances of cultural exchange and social interaction.[227] As such, there is a greater need to understand the city from a different perspective, incorporating quantitative measures, but also more qualitative insight.

2.3.1 A perspective grounded in experiences of the everyday

As we have seen, existing studies of urban decline have interpreted the phenomenon primarily as a fluctuation of measures of growth and prosperity, largely limiting their basis for interpretation to economic and demographic interactions. These readings provide a foundation for observing urban change over time, however, an understanding of how these changes affect the immense diversity of human activity and their ability to (re)shape socio-spatial patterns remains elusive. All too frequently, the study of urban decline becomes separated from the lived experience of the city.

Comprehending the ways in which decades long decline in Detroit has influenced the present situation in the city, as well as understand how it has impacted the everyday lived experience of its residents, requires us to consider the relationship between space and place and the deeply embedded historical social, political and economic factors that have influenced the city today. To do this requires a shift away from the positivist perspective which views the city as

---

[226] Sara Sardari Sayyar and Lars Marcus, "Urban Diversity and How to Measure It – an Operational Definition of Classes and Scales "(Montreal, 2011), https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:469916/FULLTEXT01.pdf)
[227] S. Hall, *City, Street and Citizen: The Measure of the Ordinary*, Routledge Advances in Ethnography (Taylor & Francis, 2012), pp. 4–5.

linear, and rather understand space and place as relational. Relying on a notion of absolute space based off of Euclidian geometry, [228] the interpretive and ecological traditions of neighbourhood change have been the primary ways in which narratives of Detroit's decline have been constructed. However, as has been illustrated, this view has several shortcomings. As such, this dissertation will adopt a relative view of space that understands space as relational, a view which is often associated with Einstein's space-time concept.[229] Drawing on the sociocultural and political economy schools of thought on neighbourhood change, this perspective understands space as relational in the sense that it does not exist independent of objects and events – rather it is dependent on social and cultural processes and substances that make it up.[230] As Harvey explains, 'Processes do not operate in but actively construct space and time and in so doing define distinctive scales for their development'.[231] This perspective attempts to expose the contingent nature of space and place, placing emphasis on 'fluidity, reflexivity, contingency, connectivity, multiplicity and polyvocality'.[232] According to Harvey, space is dependent on the processes and substances within it; therefore, space is made not by underlying structures but by diverse social, economic, cultural and physical processes which themselves are 'made by the relations established between entities of various kinds'.[233]

Here, we recognise space and place as socially and culturally produced, or in the words of Doreen Massey, as 'simultaneity of multiple trajectories'.[234] Massey argues elsewhere, that geographers and social scientists should adopt an understanding of how space and time are shaped by social relations: 'we need to conceptualize space as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global.'[235] Within this perspective, space becomes 'a meeting place', 'where relations interweave and intersect'.[236] Edward Soja also understands space as relational, arguing that 'the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translations, transformations, and experience.'[237] Using the term 'spatiality'

---

[228] R. Scruton, *Modern Philosophy: An Introduction and Survey* (Pimlico, 1994), p. 361.

[229] John Agnew, 'Space: Place', in *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography's Binaries*, Society and Space Series (London: SAGE Publications, 2005).

[230] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).

[231] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Wiley, 1997), p. 53.

[232] Simin Davoudi and Ian Strange, 'Space and Place in the Twentieth Century Planning: An Analytical Framework and an Historical Review', in *Conceptions of Space and Place in Strategic Spatial Planning*, ed. by Simin Davoudi and Ian Strange, The RTPI Library Series, 17 (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 7–42 (p. 37).

[233] Jonathan Murdoch, *Post-Structuralist Geography: A Guide to Relational Space* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2006), p. 19.

[234] Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2005), p. 61.

[235] Doreen Massey, 'Politics and Space/Time', *New Left Review*, I, 1992, 65–84.

[236] Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," *Marxism Today* 38 (1991): pp. 24-29

[237] Edward W Soja, Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory (London; New York: Verso, 2010), 80. 142

to reflect upon the dynamic nature of space, Soja untangles 'naturalness' from material conditions of place and suggests that spatiality dynamically affects our life experiences - that there exists 'an essential connection between spatiality and being'.[238] Therefore the relational perspective of space sheds light on the heterogeneity and multiplicity of cities, allowing us to recognise these spaces 'as sites of multiple geographies of affiliation, linkage and flow'.[239]

This perspective challenges the cyclical conceptualisation of urban change that views growth and decline as part of a natural process of cities by disputing a linear understanding of time. As Strange and Davoudi note, of the cycle of change that cities undergo, 'we are witnessing not the "death of place" or its "resurgence", but the recognition of the *constant making* and *remaking* of space and place.'[240] Conceptualising space in this way allows us to think about urban decline not as a natural outcome of the cycle of urban change, but rather something that is produced and something that is experienced in different ways. The following chapter will consider this more closely, but examining the ways in which planning and policy have laid the foundations for Detroit's decline and how they have left lasting legacies on the ways in which the city is experienced today.

---

[238] Edward W Soja, Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory (London; New York: Verso, 2010), 80. 119.
[239] Amin, Ash. "Regions Unbound: Towards a New Politics of Place." *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 86, no. 1 (2004): 33-44. p.38.
[240] Davoudi and Strange, p. 35.

Figure 7 Opportunity Detroit banner on the side of a building in Downtown Detroit (Source: Reuters)

Figure 8 Opportunity Detroit's 'See Detroit Like We Do' banner displayed in a shop front window in Downtown Detroit (Source: Michigan Radio)

3. Decline in Detroit

The city of Detroit has always embodied the notion of the American dream. The story of Detroit's growth was exemplary of the nation's growth. As Detroit transitioned from a riverside town to an industrial city, it became a 'frontier of technology, industry, and innovation as headquarters for some of the nation's most prominent industries'.[241] This idea of the frontier[242], as Detroit scholar Rebecca Kinney describes, is

> *one of the most powerful and enduring American narratives, [signifying] both progress and possibility; it is a physical location, but just as important, it is a way of orienting ourselves toward the world, a means of looking forward both temporally and ideologically…a place to stake claims, realize success…[and] a place to locate dreams.[243]*

Throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, Detroit emerged as America's frontier, symbolising the epitome of urban growth and progress. Transformed by the industrial revolution, cities themselves became the physical manifestations of the link between growth, progress and modernity, and Detroit is exemplary of this. Detroit's 'rise to national prominence in the early to mid-twentieth century is' as Poremba describes, 'a marker of the modern industrial moments of Fordism, Taylorism, and the growth of capitalism'.[244] For decades, he city's trajectory appeared to be moving forward, and it became a symbol of one of the greatest modern American cities - its population constantly growing, its industry

---

[241] Peter Saunders, 'Reasons Behind Detroit's Decline', *Corner Side Yard*, 2012 <http://cornersideyard.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/reasons-behind-detroits-decline.html> [accessed 19 February 2017].
[242] As popularized by Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis
[243] Sophia Psarra and Conrad Kickert, 'Detroit - The Fall of the Public Realm : The Street Network and Its Social and Economic Dimensions from 1796 to the Present', in *Eighth International Space Syntax Symposium*, ed. by M Greene, J Reyes, and A Castro (Santiago de Chile, 2012), pp. 1–26.
[244] David Lee Poremba, *Images of America, Detroit: 1860-1899* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 1998).

booming, its infrastructure expanding and its wealth accumulating. Author Mark Binelli explains,

> *[Detroit] had become the Silicon Valley of the Jazz Age, a capitalist dream town of unrivaled innovation and bountiful reward…The cars rolling off the assembly lines existed as tangible manifestations of the American Dream, the factories themselves a glimpse of the birth of modernity… Workers… migrated to the city in droves, doubling Detroit's population in a single decade, from 465,000 to nearly a million, making the city, by 1920, the fourth largest in the nation. The art deco skyscrapers bursting from the downtown streets like rockets must have seemed like monuments to Fordism's manifest destiny. Everything pointed up.[245]*

At the beginning of the twentieth century the idea of Detroit - symbolic of the American dream, progress and modernity - entering into a period of decline almost seemed unrealistic and impossible.

The 1960s were a tumultuous decade in many American cities, and in Detroit, the situation was no different. What began as an era of hope, defined by the election of John F. Kennedy and his 'New Frontier 'agenda promising reason, progress, order, and equality, quickly escalated into a decade marked by rebellion, violence and inequity. Amidst protests surrounding the Vietnam War, environmental justice and LGBT rights, the Civil Rights Movement was intensifying, giving rise to a series of violent racial confrontations across the nation.[246] In the summer of 1967, 'the apex of the 1960s cycle of urban unrest',[247] 164 racially oriented civil disorders broke out in 128 cities including Detroit, Newark, Philadelphia, Harlem, Omaha, Chicago, Baltimore, and Minneapolis.[248]

As mentioned in chapter two, the 1967 racial uprising that took place in Detroit has long been considered a turning point in the city's history. Although Detroit's population had been

---

[245] Binelli, *Detroit City Is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis*, p. 3.

[246]' Between 1965 and 1968, 329 urban rebellions took place in 257 U.S. cities, resulting in nearly 300 deaths, 60,000 arrests, and hundreds of millions of dollars in property loss. 'Ashley Howard, 'Prairie Fires: Urban Rebellions as Black Working Class Politics in Three Midwestern Cities' (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012). p. 1

[247] Beth Bates, Timothy Bates, and Grace Boggs, 'Where Are the People? Review Essay on Thomas Sugrue's The Origins of the Urban Crisis', *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 27.4 (2000), 13–26.

[248] Though each of these caused significant damage, physically and socially, the uprising in Detroit was considered the most violent and destructive. The 1967 racial uprising in Detroit was one of the deadliest racial riots in American history, lasting five days and resulting in 43 people dead, 1,189 injured, over 7,200 arrests, and more than 2,00 buildings destroyed. The riot was considered the worst in American history, lasting five days, and only surpassed by the 1992 Los Angeles riot twenty five years later. See Max Arthur Herman, *Fighting in the Streets: Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), p. 76.

fluctuating for decades prior, it was not until after this event that the city's population dropped significantly. Around the same time, the automotive industry was suffering due to domestic saturation, rising oil prices, and the impending economic recession in the United States,[249] leaving Detroit with too few jobs and its dominant industry crumbling. Though, as Sugrue argues, Detroit's decline began before the 1967 uprising,[250] it is at this moment in Detroit's history that urban decline, defined by a decrease in population, job loss, physical decay, and economic strife, was becoming recognisable. As the decades progressed, Detroit led the nation in unemployment, crime, poverty per capita and infant mortality,[251] homes were rapidly abandoned and the infrastructure decaying. As the 1970s and 1980s continued, so too did these processes of decline.

As urban decline became an unyielding possibility, city officials confidently assumed that they could find a way to lift Detroit out of its downward spiral; nowhere is this idea more evident than in the building projects of the late twentieth century. As early as the 1960s, when an urban crisis in Detroit seemed imminent, the city government and a few wealthy businessmen began spearheading several building projects in hopes of re-stimulating growth and reversing trends of depopulation, disinvestment and decentralisation. The non-profit group, 'Detroit Renaissance', was formed by a consortium of twenty-six business, industrial, and civic leaders[252] and their first initiative was, at the time, the largest privately financed project in the world - a $500 million development that would include a hotel, office and residential space located on the riverfront that was aimed at re-stimulating growth in Detroit and counteracting urban decline.[253] In 1972, the construction of what became known as the Renaissance Center (Figure 9) began, and by 1973, despite the building only being at its earliest phase of construction, the project was economically and politically impacting the area; surrounding property values were increasing, demand was high for nearby buildings and manufacturing sites, and the planned Detroit-Windsor Tunnel was relocated to be closer to the new construction. The media and city boosters were touting the building as a symbol of Detroit's rebound from the ills of the post-war era. On April 15, 1977, at the Renaissance Center's dedication ceremony, Henry Ford II, chairman of Detroit Renaissance, described the

[249] Saunders, 'Reasons Behind Detroit's Decline'.p. 437
[250] Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.
[251] Max Arthur Herman, *Fighting in the Streets: Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).
[252] Wolfgang Streeck, 'Industrial Relations and Industrial Change: The Restructuring of the World Automobile Industry in the 1970s and 1980s', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 8 (1987), 437–62.
[253] Ze'ev Chafets, *Devil's Night: And Other True Tales of Detroit* (Vintage Books, 1991).

symbolic importance of the building by proclaiming, 'Detroit has reached the bottom and is on its way back up.'[254]

When it opened, the Renaissance Center was comprised of one tall hotel tower, four shorter office towers and a three-story cement-block base. The site was physically separated from the city by large concrete berm, making pedestrian access difficult. The space offered places to park, work, shop, eat, and go to the cinema – functioning as a 'minicity' within Detroit. However one major impact of this particular set up and configuration is that visitors were no longer able to contribute to Detroit's street life or spend money in the small independent businesses along the city's main avenues.[255] Moreover, as Desiderio highlights,

> 'The center's "imagineering" seemed to warn many citizens of Detroit that this was not necessarily a building meant for them. It was not only physically separated from the rest of the city…but also the stores inside catered to a middle- to upper-class clientele. Some critics came to see the center as a "fortress" for the middle- and upper-class whites who still wanted a downtown experience. Symbolically, the center brought the suburbs to downtown Detroit.'[256]

This development, and others like it were designed to redefine the city, both physically and symbolically at a time when the reputation of Detroit as experiencing an 'urban crisis' was driving people away.[257]

Though built with the intention of driving growth and transformation in the Downtown area, and subsequently the city as a whole, 'the structure failed to appeal to workers, shoppers and Detroiters 'and prematurely went up for sale in 1982 after being unsuccessful in attracting the business it desired.[258] In 1996 General Motors purchased the building, which had cost $350 million to construct, for a mere $72 million, transforming it into its world headquarters.[259] The Renaissance Center never successfully catalysed redevelopment and unfortunately, this was just the beginning of many fruitless attempts to bring Detroit out of its economic,

---

[254] Ze'ev Chafets, *Devil's Night: And Other True Tales of Detroit* (Vintage Books, 1991).

[255] Francis Desiderio, '"A Catalyst for Downtown": Detroit's Renaissance Center', *Michigan Historical Review*, 35.1 (2009), p. 84.

[256] Francis Desiderio, '"A Catalyst for Downtown": Detroit's Renaissance Center'. p. 84

[257] Francis Desiderio, '"A Catalyst for Downtown": Detroit's Renaissance Center'. p. 84

[258] Richard Bak, *Detroitland: A Collection of Movers, Shakers, Lost Souls, and History Makers from Detroit's Past* (Detroit: Painted Turtle, 2011).p. 106

[259] Rebecca J. Kinney, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

demographic and social troubles.[260] The example of the Renaissance Center and numerous other projects following, prompts us to ask why these types developments and investments have proven unsuccessful in addressing Detroit's decline?

The failure of the Renaissance Center to catalyse growth in the city forces us to return to an interrogation of the way in which decline has been largely understood. In the case of the Renaissance Centre, Detroit's officials believed that a stimulation of economic growth through the creation of a commercial centre would be enough to revive the city's faltering economy and population loss. The belief that private interests and the market economy could solve the city's problems undermines the extent to which the city experienced 'decline'. This way of addressing urban decline, assumes not only a belief in growth which is largely driven by economic forces, but does little to recognise the socio-spatial complexities and relationships that make up the city's fabric – or as Soja explains, 'the translations, transformations, and experience'.[261]

In the following sections, this chapter will illustrate the ways in which urban decline, as it has been experienced by Detroit, is not simply a matter of population loss or economic strife, but that it is a much more complex phenomenon created by deeply embedded structural and social factors. By focusing on public policies, land-use patterns and infrastructural development, this dissertation aims to shift the fundamental understanding of decline in the city and challenge the rise and fall narrative that has been so widely employed to understand Detroit's trajectory. This chapter explores two related ideas. First, the seeds for Detroit's decline were embedded into the period of Detroit's principal growth. This perspective begins to challenge the linear understanding of boom to bust that has come to define the city. Second, Detroit's planning and land use policies have prioritised the progress of the automobile industry, rather than creating a just and equal city for its residents; a circumstance which has led to long-lasting, and deeply embedded issues of inequality that lie at the heart of Detroit's struggles.

---

[260] Since the 1970s, the city government, private businesses and foundations have initiated various efforts to stimulate the city's economy in an attempt to fuel demographic, physical and economic growth. Detroit in the 1980s and 1990s began to experience a small revival in the Downtown and Midtown areas with the renovation of the Fox Theatre, the construction of the skyscraper One Detroit Center and the building of three new casinos. In the 2000s, the construction of Comerica Park and Ford Field, the homes of the city's baseball and football teams respectively, transformed a part of the downtown into a new sports district, allowing the city to play host to the 2005 MLB All-Star Game, the 2006 Super Bowl XL, the 2006 World Series, WrestleMania in 2007 and the NCAA Final Four in 2009. Yet still, these investments were unable to bring the city out of its decline.
[261] Edward W Soja, Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory (London; New York: Verso, 2010), 80. 142

To begin exploring the relationship between these two interrelated ideas, this dissertation turns to Detroit-raised and Chicago-based urban planner Pete Saunders who introduces the ways in which Detroit's antiquated and idiosyncratic land-use character has not only facilitated Detroit's decline, but has prevented the city from achieving the post-industrial growth that has been expected as a result of a linear belief in urban transformation. Saunders explains,

> *Planning, or lack thereof for more than a century, is why Detroit stands out. While cities like Chicago, Philadelphia and Los Angeles…put a premium on creating pleasant built environments for their residents, Detroit was unique in putting all its eggs in the corporate caretaker basket. Once the auto industry became established in Detroit, political and business leaders abdicated their responsibility on sound urban planning and design, and elected to let the booming economy do the work for them.[262]*

Here, Saunders moves beyond the factors typically discussed by scholars as contributing to Detroit's decline, including, but not limited to, issues of deindustrialisation, depopulation and decentralisation, instead drawing attention to the relationship between the built environment and those living in the city of Detroit. By alluding to the importance of the daily life of the city's residents, Saunders begins drawing out a reference to understanding decline through the lens of the lived experience.

Furthermore, by suggesting that Detroit's challenges, 'began *precisely* with the rise of the auto industry during the 1900s and 1910s, not from the beginnings of its decline 50 years later or from ill-fated attempts to resuscitate it since'[263] directly challenges the linear narrative of boom to bust by suggesting these two concepts are much more intertwined than previously suggested. Saunders' argument, though not extremely robust is, as much as one can tell, the most articulate, but other authors, including Psarra and Kickert, underscore the role of Detroit's infrastructure and planning legacies. Developing an approach where emphasis is placed on the ways in which the spatial structure of the city has facilitated decline, Psarra and Kickert argue:

> *Looking at the spatial structure of the city, we argue that in each phase of growth and decline, space was critical in facilitating certain economic and*

---

[262] Peter Saunders, *The 'Reasons Behind Detroit's Decline' Series*, 2014.
[263] Peter Saunders, *The 'Reasons Behind Detroit's Decline' Series*, 2014.

social patterns to take place. From the strategic location of the first workshops and factories to their expansion to factory complexes, and from the decentralisation of factory plants to the suburbanization of housing and retail, the shaping of the urban network facilitated the rise of the industrial city, while also sowing the seeds for its post industrial demise.[264]

Using Detroit's street patterns as lens to view the city, Psarra and Kickert illustrate the way in which spatial networks relate to socio-economic factors that contribute to the prosperity or decline of Detroit. Here, they emphasise that the spatial network that once helped to build the interconnected city of industrial manufacture, was gradually expanded and altered, facilitating the emergence of the segregated city.

This chapter builds upon the perspectives of the authors above by examining the ways in which the urban fabric possesses social, economic and environment potential, to an extent much more than what is usually credited for by scholars, policy makers and urban planners. From tracing the development of Detroit's street pattern, to looking at the influence of four key factors that came as a direct result of the growth of the automobile industry, including rapid annexation, the choice of housing stock, racially oriented land use policies, and the growth of Detroit as a consumer city, this chapter develops a deeper understanding of Detroit's decline. An examination of the lasting legacies of each of these four factors begins to reveal why the efforts to reverse the city's urban decline in recent years have been unsuccessful, and suggests that the fall of Detroit was, perhaps, inevitable.

3.1 Becoming the Motor City: The growth of an American metropolis

In 1701, a group of one hundred French soldiers and one hundred Algonguin Indians, led by French explorer Antoine de La Mothe Cadillac, established a settlement at 'le détroit '('the strait') on what is now the coast of Michigan. Over the next two hundred years this town would transform into one of the most important manufacturing cities in the United States. Its access to raw materials from the surrounding forests, local soil, and mines, as well as its proximity to and use of the natural waterway systems, accelerated the momentum of development so that by the nineteenth century, what became known as the city of 'Detroit ' was one of America's most prominent cities of manufacturing and trade. By 1860, Detroit was, in terms of population, the nineteenth largest city in the United States, and home to

---

[264] Sophia Psarra and Conrad Kickert, 'Detroit - The Fall of the Public Realm : The Street Network and Its Social and Economic Dimensions from 1796 to the Present'

diverse ethnic and cultural groups.[265] Detroit became a pioneer in iron manufacture, a leader in the production of Bessemer Steel, and in the rolling of steel rails. The city was the largest manufacturer of railroad freight cars and one of the largest producers of pharmaceuticals, second only to New York.[266] It led the way in the stove-making industry, the paint and varnish industry as well as serving as the main producer of plant, flower, and fruit seeds. During this time, Detroit was also the largest city for ship building in the Great Lakes, the largest manufacturer of ornamental and useful hardwoods and a pioneer in the production of alkalis as a result of its natural salt mines.[267] As journalist Richard Bak describes in *Detroit Land*,

> *…Industry in the future Motor City was more diversified during this big-shouldered period than at any other stage in its long history. Hundreds of companies, large and small, produced an array of products…In the process of flexing its muscles, Detroit "had lost most of its small-town characteristics and had become a real city, big and bustling". [268]*

At this time, the city was spatially compact with its diverse manufacturing base and resident population all located within a few mile radius of the downtown area. Lumber and timber production, furniture and refrigerator manufacturing, tobacco production, printing and publishing houses, foundry and machine shops, and flour and grist mills all flourished due to their location along the River's edge, allowing for access to power and an easy method of transportation to ship and receive goods. In 1805, however, a devastating fire destroyed many of the city's buildings and infrastructure, halting Detroit's growth.

In an effort to rebuild the city following the destruction, an affluent and influential Judge Augustus Woodward proposed a new vision for the layout of Detroit based on Pierre Charles L'Enfant's layout for Washington, D.C. Woodward recommended a system of hexagonal street blocks organised around a central node, with wide avenues radiating out like the wheels of a spoke (Figure 10). The basic structure of this street pattern continues to serve as the backbone of Detroit's spatial network today. The structure of Woodward's initial plan helped rebuild the city, heavily facilitating early urban growth and playing a key role in subsequent

---

[265] Oliver Zunz, 'Detroit's Ethnic Neighborhoods at the End of the Nineteenth Century' (Ann Arbor, 1977).
[266] Martin Marger, 'Ethnic Succession in Detroit Politics 1900-1950', *Polity*, 11.3 (1979), 340–361 (p.1).
[267] Martin Marger, 'Ethnic Succession in Detroit Politics 1900-1950', *Polity*, 11.3 (1979), 340–361 (p. 1).
[268] Oliver Zunz, *Detroit's Ethnic Neighborhoods at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Ann Arbor, 1977).p. 2

development.[269] This plan allowed for the city to remain compact and easily accessible, and promoted development within the newly formed squares, circuses and open ground spaces created by the bisecting angled streets. The radial layout satisfied the use of grand open places and close intimate urban spaces simultaneously.[270] The web of diagonal thoroughfares created an intricate matrix of angled streets and irregular parcels giving the city centre its distinct character to this day.[271] Though designed to extend throughout the entire city, Woodward's plan, would only materialise to cover half of one square mile before being abandoned in 1835 as a result of legislative barriers, disagreement on the final vision of the plan, and the difficulty of purchasing the private farms and properties surrounding the city proper.[272] Despite its flaws, abandoning the Woodward Plan was especially short sighted in light of the city's imminent growth. What would occur over the next century is a period of rapid urban development under an absence of a city plan, creating devastating consequences for the city that would be felt over the next one hundred years - and it arguably began with the production of the automobile.

3.1.1 The introduction of the automobile

In 1893, Charles Brady King, an engineer working in Detroit, visited Chicago's Colombian Exposition where he witnessed Gottlieb Daimler's self-propelled carriage. Upon returning to Detroit, he began designing and building one of his own, and on 6 March 1896, King test drove his automobile along Woodward Avenue reaching speeds of seven miles per hour. Three months later, one of King's mentees, Henry Ford, test-drove his first car. At the time, these 'horseless carriages 'were too expensive for the general population, but what Ford was able to do, that King was not, was develop a method to mass produce these vehicles – a vision which sparked a revolution in automobile manufacturing and changed Detroit forever.

Detroit was ideally situated to be the heart of the American automobile industry. Thomas Sugrue writes,

> *Detroit was in the center of America's industrial heartland… All of the raw*
> *materials needed for automobile production were easily accessible to the city*
> *by the Great Lakes waterways and by rail. The coal regions of mountainous*

[269] Martin Marger, 'Ethnic Succession in Detroit Politics 1900-1950' (p. 256).
[270] 'How the Renaissance Center Changed the Landscape of Detroit'.
[271] ''How the Renaissance Center Changed the Landscape of Detroit'.
[272] Elizabeth Anne Martin, *Detroit and the Great Migration, 1916-1929* (Ann Arbor, 1993).
After this development occurred in the form of subdivisions who would plat their own land. It was approved by the council and did not have to adhere to the Woodward plan so it was independent.

Pennsylvania and West Virginia were no more than a day away by rail. The great steel mills of Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Cleveland, Gary, and Chicago were all within a few hundred miles of the city. The iron and copper ore regions of northern Michigan and Minnesota were easily accessible by ship. At the confluence of east and midwest, Detroit's central location gave its auto producers easy access to the capital and markets necessary for its phenomenal growth.[273]

The growth of the automobile industry in Detroit completely transformed the city socially, economically and spatially. Between 1900 and 1925, the city experienced its largest period of physical, demographic and economic growth ' –not coincidentally, the same period when automobile production skyrocketed.[274] During these two decades, Detroit's population grew from 285,704 to 993,678 with its land size increasing from twenty-eight square miles to 136.[275] As social scientist Steven Klepper states, 'There was no secret formula behind this growth. It was fuelled by the concentration around Detroit of the automobile industry, which by 1929 was the largest industry in the U.S.'[276]

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the automobile industry placed Detroit on a path towards unrestrained development.[277] The expansion of the automotive industry created a demand for labour that spurred a wave of migration to the city. Though the city's population was steadily rising since it was formally established, it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that Detroit's population witnessed a significant increase. This can be attributed, in part, to the new labour demands brought on by the growing automobile industry. Detroit entered the twentieth century with a population of 285,000 and by 1920 this number exceeded one million. It 'was the fastest growing city of the decade prior to 1926 when Los Angeles displaced it as the boom town of the Twenties'[278] ; 'Never before had a city expanded to such vast dimensions in so brief a period of time'[279] describes historian Oliver Zunz. The growth of the city and the employment opportunities that it presented

---

[273] Thomas Sugrue, "Living in the Motor City: Autoworkers, Race, and Urban Geography," From Motor City to Motor Metropolis: How the Automobile Industry Reshaped Urban America (Automobile in American Life and Society, 2004), http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview2.htm)
[274] Thomas Sugrue, "Living in the Motor City: Autoworkers, Race, and Urban Geography"
[275] US Census Data.
[276] Steven Klepper, "Disagreements, Spinoffs, and the Evolution of Detroit as the Capital of the U.S. Automobile Industry," *Management Science* 53, no. 4 (2007): pp. 616-631
[277] Kenneth T Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1985). p. 95
[278] Peter Ling, *America and the Automobile: Technology, Reform and Social Change* (Manchester University Press, 1992) p. 75
[279] Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism*.p. 342

attracted immigrants from Europe, Canada, and other regions of the United States and by 1950, Detroit's ethnic heterogeneity 'was perhaps exceeded only by New York City's'.[280]

In addition to the creation of an ethnically diverse city, the demographic growth of Detroit shifted its racial make-up. Between 1916 and 1930, as part of what is known as the Great Migration of the twentieth century,[281] an estimated one million black southerners migrated to northern cities, fleeing the unsatisfactory economic opportunities and harsh segregationist laws of the south. Those African-Americans arriving in Detroit[282] and other northern industrial cities including New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, were able to find a factory job that paid nearly three times more than what blacks could make working the land in the rural South.[283] In Detroit, work was typically found in the automotive factories, where there was promise of equal jobs and equal pay; however, it soon became evident that equality in the workplace existed far from the grounds of reality, as wage discrimination, job availability and racism became commonplace.

Not only was the city demographically transforming during this time, but its physical character began to change as well. With the automobile industry involving the assembly of the cars themselves, as well as the production of the car parts, manufacturing plants saturated Detroit's landscape. Yet, whereas other cities that relied on the manufacturing sector as their main industry typically developed in a way that created a spatial separation between its industry and housing, Detroit's manufacturing plants were spread throughout the city boundaries; 'only the manufacturers of consumer goods - food products, furniture, tobacco, publications, and miscellaneous products such as soap, leather goods, and woodwork – were still located primarily in the inner city.'[284] Detroit developed a principal industrial crescent along the concentric circles of the railroad axes, where many factories were located, but unlike other cities, scores of smaller industrial shops filled the blank spaces, creating a very dense landscape of industry and a lack of separation between those areas and areas of

---

[280] Martin Marger, 'Ethnic Succession in Detroit Politics 1900-1950'
[281] See, History.com, 'Great Migration', *HISTORY* <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/great-migration>
[282] 'In 1910, the Black population of the city numbered only 5,741, a mere one percent of the total population. By 1920, the number…had grown to 40,838, with most of the increase coming after 1917. This number would double again before the end of the decade, when African-Americans came to comprise 7.7 of the entire Detroit population'. History.com, 'Great Migration', *HISTORY* <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/great-migration>.
[283] History.com.
[284] Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism.* p. 297

residences.[285] Automobile factories became widespread throughout the city (Figure 11), dominating the landscape. A 1920/21 edition of the Detroit city directory explains:

> *A peculiar situation has developed in Detroit during the last decade with regard to the location of industries throughout the city. There are no well-defined factory districts, such as are found in most cities. Instead the plants are to be found in every section. The rapid increase in population since 1910 has caused the city to spread out, so the many large plants, which only a few years ago were located far outside the city limits, now are found in the center of some otherwise pleasant residence district, or even far downtown in the neighborhood of office buildings, shops and theaters.[286]*

The size of these factories is also of importance. The first auto plants were modest enterprises, 'usually operated by small scale designers and assemblies rather than manufacturers'[287] and relied on a complex network of local suppliers for their parts. As Henry Ford began to pioneer the techniques of mass production, the plant sizes grew accordingly. The Packard Plant[288], River Rouge Plant and Ford Highland Park Plant are prime examples of the sheer scale of these manufacturing centres that emerged as a result of this shift in technology. As the automotive plants grew in size, so too did the need to structure and control this rapid development.

3.2 The Paradox of Detroit's Urban Growth

Despite early attempts to establish spatial order, after the Woodward Plan was abandoned, Detroit never formally adopted a long-term plan to guide city development. As a result, development was disorderly, haphazard and occurred without restriction. The absence of zoning ordinances, in addition to an abundance of undeveloped farmland, created a situation that made it permissible for industrial sites to locate anywhere in the city, thus creating an urban landscape inundated with manufacturing plants. Though not evident at the time, the spatial development of the city would have later ramifications and significantly accelerate the city's physical decline. The landscape that began materialising in Detroit not only

---

[285] Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism.* p. 297.

[286] Jerome Gale Thomas, 'The City of Detroit: A Study in Urban Geography' (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1928), p. 116-20.

[287] James Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader*, ed. Stephen M Ward (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2011) p. 9.

[288] As an example of the size of these factories, the Packard Plant was in 1910, for example, the largest automotive plant in the United States as it sat on forty acres (16 ha) of land, employed 40,000 workers at its peak and comprised of four million square feet of factory space.

transformed the city into a symbol of American progress, but at the same time laid the structural foundations for many of the city's later challenges. It is during this period of rapid industrial growth, driven by the development of the automobile industry, where the consequences of development under the absence of a city plan became noticeable. As Jerry Herron explains, 'At every turn the inventors of modern life – of its machines, its aspirations – seemed unable or unwilling to grasp the *meaning* of what they were in the process of creating and unleashing, and what they were thus undoing and destroying.[289]'

Detroit's economic and demographic growth, anchored primarily by the auto-industry, completely re-engineered the social and spatial makeup of the city's urban fabric. As the following sections will illustrate, the rapid demographic and industrial growth placed extreme pressure on the city's urban infrastructure, creating an immediate need for physical expansion, an updated transportation network and additional housing. The city was tasked with the challenge of managing the cascading effects of this growth and it struggled to do so. The planning decisions, land use policies and infrastructural development that occurred in response to the rapid urban growth set the foundations for racial segregation, rapid urban decay, and a city which placed greater precedence on its industry rather than its citizens. By tracing the histories of Detroit's annexation and physical land expansion, housing developments, race relations, the development of the commercial corridors, this dissertation will illustrate the ways in which the transformation of the urban fabric has created lasting social, economic and environmental impacts, each influencing the reasons behind Detroit's decline and contributing to the ways in which the experience of decline is felt today.

3.2.1 Annexation and the physical growth of Detroit

Detroit's demographic and industrial growth at the beginning of the twentieth century physically constrained the city. Housing supply was limited, and undeveloped land within the city boundaries was scarce, slowing down the construction of new industrial plants. It soon became evident that there was a need to expand the city's municipal boundaries in order to accommodate the influx of people and the growth of the manufacturing sector. Municipal annexation, or the legal expansion of city boundaries,[290] became the primary mechanism with

[289] Jerry Herron, 'The Last Pedestrians', *Places Journal*, 2012 <https://doi.org/10.22269/120410>.
[290] wdet 101.9 Fm, 'Why Do Hamtramck and Highland Park Exist inside the City of Detroit?', *Curiosi-D*, 2014.

which the city of Detroit was able to physically accommodate its growth.[291] Though Detroit had been carrying out annexations since the time of Judge Woodward, the pace of such land incorporations was slow and unable to keep up with the need for space as a result of the rise in population and industrial expansion. In response, between 1900 and 1925, Detroit underwent a period of quick and aggressive annexation in conjunction with the growth of the automobile industry to address the needs of the growing population and industry. What became evident, is that while this practice of annexation successfully accommodated the growing population and increased demand for manufacturing, the rapid accumulation of land destroyed the city's ability to adequately provide municipal services and increased the amount of bond and municipal debt.

Three factors made the physical growth of the city possible: the topography of Detroit's natural landscape, the incorporation of the Home Rule Act of 1909 and the willingness of the surrounding villages to be incorporated. First, Detroit had an advantage over other cities in terms of opportunity for physical growth. The city's particular geographic location had few natural boundaries and therefore, the restrictions of physical expansion, were at their early stages, nearly limitless. Furthermore, much of the land surrounding Detroit was rural farmland, whose owners were simply waiting their incorporation into the city for this would provide the areas with municipal services.[292] Second, The Home Rule Act of 1909 also aided the city's ability to rapidly annex. This act allowed municipal governments to incorporate surrounding villages and cities thus changing their boundaries, allowing 'cities and villages to frame, adopt and amend their charters, and to pass laws and ordinances in regard to their municipal concerns'.[293] Prior to this, and because of U.S. constitutional law, cities only had those powers given to them by state authorities.[294] In 1908 when the Michigan State constitution created The Home Rule Cities Act, municipalities were given greater powers. As Eric Luther, Research Director for the Citizens Research Council of Michigan, explains, 'before 1908, the definition of local government and the boundaries of each individual local government were defined in Lansing [the state capitol] ...And the movement away from

---

[291] Following the US Civil War, annexation became a common place way of expanding city boundaries to not only accommodate immigrating populations but also as a way to increase the tax base. Annexation is also pursued by local governments for a host of other reasons: as strategies for growth management and economic development, opportunities to provide services for fringe residents, a solution to prevent the splintering of metropolitan areas into small units of local government and so on. See Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City*. P. 120; Edwards p. 1

[292] Edwards. P. 290-291

[293] Francis M Grunow, 'A Brief History of Housing in Detroit', *Model D Media*, November 2015. P. 201 Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism*. p 119

[294] This is also referred to as the Dillon Rule. Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism*.

that…with the home rule cities act strengthened local government and gave them a lot more security on how the rules worked and how things were going to be done.This strength in [295,] municipal power allowed for the city to create an aggressive annexation plan that would accommodate the burgeoning population emerging as a result of the growth of the automobile industry.

Finally, Detroit's annexation was made possible by the simple eagerness of surrounding villages to be incorporated. George Galster explains in *Driving Detroit*, 'Around 1900, most suburban townships eagerly voted for annexation by Detroit, anticipating the extension of city infrastructure to a predominantly rural, undeveloped area'.[296] An advertisement placed in a 1925 issue of the *Brightmoor Journal* by The Brightmoor Annexation Association, illustrates such eagerness. The advertisement outlines eight advantages of annexing into Detroit, listing factors that include reduced prices of water and insurance, Detroit City gas, better sewers and hospital services, higher property values, cheap transportation and better money facilities in the form of Detroit banks.[297] The promise of better services and infrastructures is what made annexation something to be desired, and therefore the process of integrating new territory generally went smoothly. The decision for surrounding villages to be incorporated into the city 'was ratified by a referendum in which proponents of annexation to the city won by wide margins, since only the city had the money to equip the peripheries with modern services'.[298]

While annexation is not unique to Detroit, its timing is. As Edwards describes, 'After the Civil War, as immigration and industrialization caused explosive growth in cities in the east and Midwest, using annexation to acquire large tracts of land became increasingly popular…[but] From the turn of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II, annexation slowed.'[299] Over the next ninety years, from 1815 to 1905, Detroit increased its size from 1.360 square miles to 28.750 square miles. While this growth was substantial, it was nowhere in comparison to that of other cities annexing at similar times. For example, Philadelphia consolidated with Philadelphia County in 1854 to expand its area from two to

[295] Mark Binelli, *Detroit City Is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis* (Picador USA, 2013).
[296] Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism*. P. 53. Zunz also describes, 'In the twenty-year period from 1900 to 1920, only the annexation of Fairview Village in 1907 caused a fight, when the saloonkeepers…opposed the annexation bill. Fairview was badly in need of a sewer system, however, which, at an estimated installation cost of $260,000, the villagers could not afford; the city health commissioner thus advised the city that the sewerage work and hence annexation of the village was necessary "to preserve the health of the citizens of Detroit"'. P.290.
Delray is another example of a 'hostile' takeover
Hamtramck and Highland Park did not annex
[297] Brightmoor: A community in Action
[298] Grunow, 'A Brief History of Housing in Detroit'. p. 290
[299] B.E. Taylor, 'Brightmoor's Growth 47% During Last Year', *B.E. Taylor Real Estate News*, August 1924. p. 2

130 square miles and Chicago, in 1889, added 133 square miles to the city limits by annexing much of the far south side of the current city, and smaller scale annexations expanded other cities boundaries significantly.[300] As annexations elsewhere in the United States began to slow down at the turn of the century, Detroit's began to speed up. For a period of one hundred years, from 1805 to 1905, Detroit grew by only twenty-eight square miles. Then, in a span of a mere twenty years from 1905 to 1925,[301] Detroit's land size increased significantly from 28.750 square miles to 134.675 square miles, a 368% increase, with its greatest jump taking place from 1915 to 1926 where it grew from 46.9 square miles to 139.2 square miles. Figure 12 depicts the parcels of land annexed to the city by year. The pace of this growth would have significant effects on Detroit in decades to come.

As the annexations continued, the city began to accrue substantial municipal debt. The construction of sewers, the laying of water mains and the funding required for the establishment of additional fire and police departments for example, required significant financial investment. The annexation of land increased the valuation of the city's property, while at the same time increasing the cost to maintain these new areas, resulting in a subsequent growth of bonded indebtedness and municipal debt. The financial difficulties at the time were of concern, but this was a situation no different from other American cities experiencing a similar pattern of growth. However, what made Detroit unique was the velocity of this change. The constant accumulation of land required further financial investment, eventually creating significant economic troubles that would uninterruptedly accumulate as the century continued.

The timing of the annexations is also significant in understanding how this process influenced Detroit's decline. Unanticipated, the Great Depression followed the most accelerated period of Detroit's demographic and physical growth. Though this period of economic depression affected cities all over the United States, Detroit was influenced first, and arguably the worst. Historian Arthur Woodford describes, 'Due to its industrial makeup and heavy dependence on the automobile industry, Detroit had been one of the first cities to feel the Depression.'[302] Not only was the auto industry and its workers severely influenced due to the loss of jobs, but 'the Depression was creating almost unsolvable problems for the city'; the housing market was

---

[300] John W Carey, *Brightmoor: A Community In Action* (Detroit, 1940). p. 2
[301] From 1905 to 1926, the City of Detroit continued to annex land at a rapid pace, but it became increasingly difficult as surrounding territories were incorporated and in 1929, as a result of an amendment to the Home Rule Act, it became legislatively challenging to go through the process, eventually putting a halt to annexations.
[302] This is Detroit, 1701-2001By Arthur M. Woodford p. 120-121

suffering, people were unable to pay their rents and mortgage contributing to levels of high levels vacancy, and the banking crisis in Detroit[303] was severely affecting municipal spending: firemen, police, and teachers were not only owed back pay by the city but were continuously being laid off during this era of financial distress.[304] Moreover, this meant that financially, the city was unable to pay for necessary infrastructural expansions to these newly annexed portions of land. Though the annexation expanded the city's boundaries, the Great Depression halted its sustainable development.

During this rapid period of growth, Detroit also established the Detroit Terminal Railroad (DTR). The DTR greatly contributed to the rise in manufacturing, but would also unknowingly create a physical barrier between the existing city and the newly annexed areas, constraining infrastructural expansion. As the industrial sector was flourishing and manufacturing plants were locating throughout the city, it soon became evident that the existing infrastructure was unable to adequately service the growing network of industrial buildings. The manufacturing plants locating near what was then the city's edge, were not accessible by rail, making the movement of supplies and products very difficult. To remedy this issue, railroad companies from around the nation, including Detroit, came together to construct an infrastructure intercepted all the major rail lines coming into a city. The DTR was completed in 1909 and encircled the core of the city in what became known as 'the beltline'. The beltline succeeded not only in servicing those factories that were located directly along the line itself, but it was also able to reshuffle boxcars at the yards to different lines, allowing for a greater distribution of goods. The DTR proved to be a very successful infrastructural addition for many manufacturing companies as they were able to immensely increase their production using the rail line and its boxcars to ship and receive goods. The use of the DTR continued to rise throughout the first half of the twentieth century eventually reaching its peak in the 1950s.

While the DTR significantly aided the growth of the manufacturing industry, what was not accounted for at the time of its construction was the expansion of the city's rapidly growing boundaries. Upon its completion, the DTR fully circled the outskirts of Detroit. However when the city underwent its most aggressive period of annexation from 1915 to 1926, the DTR became located directly between the existing boundaries of the older part of the city and the large portions of newly annexed land. By encircling the older portions of the city that

---

[303] R.L. Fuller, *"Phantom of Fear": The Banking Panic of 1933* (McFarland, Incorporated, Publishers, 2011), p. 127.
[304] R.L. Fuller, *"Phantom of Fear": The Banking Panic of 1933,* 2011*, p.127

were already developed or rapidly developing, it created an industrial corridor that acted as a boundary between the established core and the newly annexed areas of the city. This corridor would significantly impact the rate of development to the newly outer annexed lands constraining infrastructural expansion of the city to just the older core areas. As illustrated in Figure 13 the DTR constrained growth around the central core and restricted potential growth outward into these newly annexed neighbourhoods, again impacting the capacity for development. This would also eventually influence the spatial development of the city's later streetcar system. As one notices, in Figure 14 the portions of the established inner city were well serviced by streetcars while the areas annexed in the 1920s, received limited service. Saunders explains, 'The very areas that could've developed as streetcar neighbourhoods, in the same fashion as in Chicago or Los Angeles, were prevented from doing so because of the spread of manufacturing uses or the blight they presented to residential uses.'[305] The rapid annexation placed extreme pressure on the city's infrastructure, contributing to the accumulation of municipal debt very early on. Moreover, the unconstrained and unsystematic amassing of land led to very haphazard urban development which in turn created a spatial landscape that catered more to helping the automobile industry grow rather than to creating an urban environment that satisfied the needs of its residents.

3.2.2 Detroit's housing stock

Another way in which the city's physical transformation has influenced patterns and experiences of decline, is the legacy left behind as a result of the housing stock used to accommodate the increasing population during the city's period of rapid growth. While a substantial body of literature exists, focusing on Detroit's housing history, the topic is often approached from the perspective of race relations and racial discrimination.[306] Overlooked by many, yet a significant factor in understanding Detroit's decline, is the type and quality of housing that was used to accommodate Detroit's rapidly growing population at the turn of the century.

During the first half of the twentieth century three factors heavily influenced the social and spatial residential landscape of Detroit: the out-migration of Detroit's rapidly growing elite; the increased rate of home-ownership among blue-collar auto workers; and the immigration of African Americans from the southern states. Before Detroit's aggressive period of annexation

---

[305] Peter Saunders, *The 'Reasons Behind Detroit's Decline' Series, Part 9*, 2014.
[306] See Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*

from 1905 to 1925, most citizens lived and worked within the confines of Grand Boulevard and what were independent villages along the river, as illustrated in Figure 15. In 1910, the majority of Detroit's 465,000 residents, explains LeDuff, lived in 'shacks, lean-tos, cottages, rows of brand new bungalows, arts-and-crafts single families and duplexes, bulging boarding and rooming houses (some having previously served as Gilded-Age mansions), multi-story masonry apartments, and residential hotels'.[307] The population was made up of a large portion of ethnic immigrants whose residential clustering created a complex diversity in the landscape, differing in architecture, layout and housing type.[308] Before the manufacturing shift of the early 1900s, the most spacious residential section of town was along the Woodward strip that extended from the river, and the city's primary land use during this time was almost totally residential. However, 'By 1920, Detroit had become a mature industrial metropolis, altogether different from the burgeoning industrial city of the turn of the century'.[309] The boom of the automobile industry as well as increased production during World War I, fostered the growth of the city and the population grew phenomenally; 'as a result of this phenomenal growth in size and production, an entirely new society emerged in Detroit in the 1910s'.[310]

By the mid-twentieth century, Detroit was home to the highest paid blue-collar worker in the country. This created a higher standard of living for the average working family and allowed for a new era of home-ownership. The migration of groups into the city including immigrants, aspiring auto workers from around the Midwest, and blacks from the south, generated a mass demand for housing. Even with the annexations that occurred to acquire new land, there was not enough room to keep Detroit a low-density city. This uptick in population and physical growth called for additional housing to accommodate a new wave of workers. To compliment the growth of the auto industry and the narratives of opportunity and optimism in Detroit, banks and financial institutions began selling, building and financing homes to an emerging white middle class with the new idea of home ownership and living the American dream.[311] Many new residential developments were planned to accommodate this new working class population and tract housing neighbourhoods consisting of single family detached wood

---

[307] LeDuff, p.319.
[308] LeDuff, p. 319.
[309] Richard Harris, 'The Rise of Filtering Down: The American Housing Market Transformed, 1915-1929', *Social Science History*, 37.4 (2013), 515–49. p 286.
[310] Carey. p 286
[311] Dora Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

framed homes, with their own front and back yards detached garages began to emerge around the city.

The neighbourhood of Brightmoor is representative of these early developments that catered to a growing white middle class. Developed by real-estate developer Burt Eddy Taylor in 1921, Brightmoor was fashioned as a development of inexpensive housing for people moving to Detroit to work in industry. As people moving into the city were interested in home ownership,[312] B.E. Taylor began to develop accordingly. Brightmoor was exemplary of the neighbourhoods that were developed during the turn of the century to meet the rising need of housing for Detroit's growing blue collar population. Taylor's houses were often cheap to manufacture and could be erected quickly to satisfy the demand. Taylor himself engaged in building houses, but he also was willing to sell unimproved lots to those workers who wanted to build from scratch.[313] The houses built by the lot buyers were often cheaply and quickly built as well. A 1951 report published by the Brightmoor Community Center describes these houses - they were 'a potpourri of designs and materials because zoning or restrictions were not a part of the planning. In one area familiarly called "Kitchen Town," one room houses started off the new home owners…As the wage earner got a little money ahead, rooms were added one at a time'.[314] Brightmoor, and similar areas including Grixdale Farms and Ravendale represent the very haphazard and unplanned residential growth that occurred in conjunction with the rise of the automobile industry.

During the next decade, a new type of housing would dominate in Detroit, the Levittown style house. This mass-produced suburban tract house developed in the northeast United States but would come to define much of Detroit's residential landscape. Symbols of post-war suburbanisation of the United States, 'These simple-looking structures in fact grew out of a highly sophisticated combination of advanced manufacturing and financial techniques that for the first time put the single-family detached suburban house within the budget of most middle-class and even working-class families.'[315] Two programs accelerated the rate and success of this particular style of housing, with the first being unique to Detroit. Robert Fishman, Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning at University of Michigan, describes

---

[312] David Allan Levine, *Internal Combustion: The Races in Detroit, 1915-1926* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976). P. 1
[313] Amy E Hillier, *Redlining and the Homeowners' Loan Corporation*, 2003. P. 527
[314] Brightmoor Communty Centre. 1951.
[315] Fishman, 'The American Metropolis at Century's End: Past and Future Influences'.

For the postwar workers of the Detroit linear city, the American dream was guaranteed by what became known as the "Treaty of Detroit." This was the name given to a series of labor agreements between the Big Three[316] and the United Auto Workers (UAW, negotiated by labor leader Walter Reuther around 1950, that provided for long-term, multi-year contracts; guaranteed scheduled wage increases based on cost-of-living allowances and increased productivity; and generous fringe benefits such as health insurance, unemployment and pensions.[317]

This agreement essentially maximized the efficiencies of these planned neighbourhoods. For working men, these wages allowed for the purchase of a house and a car – the workers 'piece of the American dream.[318] The second program that accelerated the growth of the Levittown style home took place through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Fishman again, explains,

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) had in the 1930s created the template for what we now see as "Levittown style" postwar suburbia: the affordable, small tract house designed to be mass produced; standardized, automobile-oriented subdivision design; and a system for low-interest, low-down-payment long-term self-amortizing mortgages financed by local thrift institutions[319]

Though the full impact of the FHA system was only apparent after World War II, many elements of this program were in place by 1941; so, although these areas were platted for development as early as 1941, it was not until 1947 or 1948 that the subdivisions were completed.

As the car made transportation easier and more affordable, a new demographic of blue collar workers emerged as homeowners and began moving to areas of the city that were close and convenient to their work in the factories. As blue collar workers moved into some areas, Detroit's affluent residents began seeking out more modern, quieter districts to live in. Thomas Sugrue explains, 'By the 1920s, Detroit's rapidly-growing elite began moving to

---

[316] The Big Three refers to the largest automobile manufacturing companies in Detroit, Ford Motor Company, General Motors and Chrysler Automobiles.
[317] Robert Fishman, 'Detroit: Linear City', in *Mapping Detroit: Land, Community, and Shaping a City*, ed. by June Manning Thomas and Henco Bekkering, Great Lakes Books (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015), pp. 77–100 (p. 93).
[318] Fishman, 'Detroit: Linear City', p. 93.
[319] Fishman, 'Detroit: Linear City', p.93.

sections of the city remote from factories, to outlying city neighborhoods like Rosedale Park, English Village, and Palmer Woods, and increasingly to new suburbs.'[320] This trend accelerated with the exponential growth of the industry, yet some residents were already moving away, being drawn to the more outlying districts of Indian Village and Boston-Edison as early as 1900.[321]

In these outlying neighbourhoods, they began building houses of varying designs including English Tudor Revival, Bungalow, Colonial Revival, Ranch, Dutch Colonial Revival and French Renaissance to name a few. Developers would often impose deed restrictions that would aim to maintain a certain level of construction quality. For example, a warranty deed from 25 June 1919 for Lot 1206 in the Rosedale Park neighbourhood states: 'On said lot no structure shall be built except for dwelling house purposes only to cost not less than $6,000 and said dwelling shall be at least two stories in height or an approved type of bungalow…Said dwelling shall have full basement of brick, stone, or cement…'. [322] The building designs also reflected the financial status of the new residents. An account of the history of homes in this area describes,

> *Many of the homes in Rosedale Park were "custom-built by their owners with a variety of architectural styles and features such as libraries and breakfast rooms" (Scott 2001:85). As described in a neighbourhood promotional publication, homes in the district typically have "between three and five bedrooms, and two thousand to twenty-five hundred square feet…[with] fireplaces, two car-garages, and are tree shaded and landscaped" (Rosedale Park Improvement Association Ephemeral Files, c. 1985; courtesy of Harriett Mottley). [323]*

The movement of Detroit's elite to neighbourhoods further away from the centre established strong-hold communities with sustainable architecture that would last for years to come.

While considering the type and durability of housing may not be a critical element in understanding the dynamics of growing cities, it is essential for understanding the nature of urban decline. Durability of housing, as Glaeser and Gyourko argue, predicts at what rate

[320] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Becoming the Motor City: Immigrants, Migrants, and the Auto Industry*.
[321] E.J. Hill and others, *AIA Detroit: The American Institute of Architects Guide to Detroit Architecture* (Wayne State University Press, 2003), p. 1.
[322] 'Rosedale Park Historic District - National Register of Historic Places Registration Form', 2004 <https://focus.nps.gov/GetAsset?assetID=57e2f164-2081-4eeb-a536-8b31b328fb58>.
[323] 'Rosedale Park Historic District - National Register of Historic Places Registration Form'.

cities will experience decline.[324] More durable houses will experience physical and economic decline slower than those which are cheaply built. Today, many of the neighbourhoods in Detroit that were built with a higher quality of construction remain physically intact, have stable housing prices, and are occupied with strong neighbourhood communities. In comparison to those neighbourhoods that were not planned out and constructed of poorer quality building materials, one can argue that the type of housing stock and the level of planned development greatly influenced the patterns of decline that we see today. Poethig et. al of the Urban Institute conducted a study in 2017 finding that Detroit's housing market continues to be affected by low homeownership rates and weak housing supply and demand.[325] Much of this can be attributed to the fact that eighty percent of Detroit's current housing stock was built before 1960[326] and the present condition of these residential structures is strongly related to their age. Many homes have been poorly maintained, resulting in a large number of vacant and dilapidated houses. The average age and condition of Detroit's present-day housing stock means that homes may need significant repairs and may not meet the housing preferences of current homebuyers. Additionally, neighbourhood deterioration on a large scale and the abandonment of commercial strips and retail inhibits investments and market demand.

The preference in Detroit of building single-family detached homes also heavily influenced the ways in which Detroit experienced its decline. From the time of Detroit's growth as a city, the housing mix remained heavily in favour of single-family detached homes, 'with over 65 percent of all occupied residential lots inside the city being used for this purpose', exceeding the national average of sixty percent.[327] In other industrial cities, row-houses, high rise apartments and tenements are common; in Detroit, these are rarities. As Detroit grew, two-thirds of the residential structures were detached, single family homes and another fifth were two-family homes, nearly all of them with gardens and yards.[328] As author Francis Grunow describes, Detroit '…perfected--and got addicted to--a new model for building cities. We built prolifically, to the exclusion of other housing types. The single-family detached house proliferated here, a "monocrop" like no other, filling mile upon mile of subdivision.'[329] Detached homes spread out the density of the city, and when large areas of neighbourhoods

---

[324] Glaeser, Edward L. and Gyourko, Joseph, "Urban Decline and Durable Housing" (2005). Penn IUR Publications. 10.
[325] Erica Poethig and others, *The Detroit Housing Market: Challenges and Innovations for a Path Forward* (Urban Institute) <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/detroit-housing-market/view/full_report>.
[326] Poethig and others. This is due to a lack of redevelopment activity to replace these older homes.
[327] Francis M Grunow, 'A Brief History of Housing in Detroit', *Model D Media*, 2015.
[328] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Becoming the Motor City: Immigrants, Migrants, and the Auto Industry*.
[329] Grunow.

made up of these houses experience vacancy and abandonment, the effects of physical decline are experienced to a greater extent. As the next chapter will illustrate, the neighbourhood of Brightmoor is exemplary of this phenomenon.

Understanding the influence of the housing type in Detroit allows us to further examine the relationship between growth and decline. Because homes in Detroit were built at the same time, but have declined at different rates and in different ways, one can make the argument that decline is not simply the inverse, or mirror image of growth. Moreover, this factor begins to highlight the nature of decline and its influence on the fragmentation in Detroit. Different areas in the city are made up of varying housing stock, and have deteriorated at different rates over time, thus illustrating that Detroit is not a homogenous city. Chapters four and five will examine this notion of fragmentation more in depth, highlighting the influence of housing type in dictating experiences of decline in the city.

3.2.3 Race Relations

As a frequent topic of scholarly inquiry and media attention, the history of Detroit's race relations has long been understood as a contributing factor to the city's decline. Though racial tensions significantly increased in the post-war period, informal discrimination and racial segregation existed for well over a century prior. However, in the period following World War II, 'Most every policy development and major political decision…was strongly influenced by racial conflict' explains Farley, 'And a variety of governmental decisions and macroeconomic trends had tremendously different consequences for black and whites.'[330] One of the most pressing and influential of these policies during this time were the racially discriminatory residential housing policies that shaped the social-spatial landscape of Detroit, leaving a legacy well into the present day.

The rapid annexation that occurred as a way to accommodate the growth of the auto industry and its increased work force produced an array of new neighbourhoods, yet many of these new neighbourhoods were developed for, and sold to, white tenants only. The black population, unable to purchase homes in these neighbourhoods, were restricted to living in certain areas of the city that were largely black enclaves such as Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. Although housing in these areas were often deteriorated and overcrowded, there were

---

[330] Reynolds Farley, 'The Bankruptcy of Detroit: What Role Did Race Play?:', *City & Community*, 14.2 (2015), 118–37 (p. 119).

seldom other options. Racial housing segregation during these early decades of the twentieth century not only occurred as a result of entrenched racism that was built into societal constructs at the time, but it was because these practices were also supported by racially oriented federal and local policies. Restrictive covenants for example were one of the main tools used to prevent blacks from entering white neighbourhoods. These contractual agreements between two or more parties, restricted the use of property to particular tenancies 'and by the 1920s - the peak years of the migration and of the subdividing and house-building - racial covenants restricting ownership of property to Caucasians only characterized nearly every new housing development begun in Detroit'.[331] If these covenants somehow failed to keep black citizens from moving into white neighbourhoods, white residents would often forcefully expel them, whether through destroying their property or inciting violence.

Another tool used to institutionalise the social and spatial segregation of the Black community that was also supported by federal policy was the practice of 'red lining 'instituted after the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) through the National Housing Act of 1934. This government agency was established after the Great Depression to slow the dramatic increase in the rate of housing foreclosures[332] and to set standards of construction and insure loans. Based in the practice of mortgage lending, their policies were often racially discriminating. Relying on maps that appraised real estate risk and residential security, such as those created by the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) (Figure 16) the FHA would determine whether certain areas of the city were deemed fit or unfit for investment by banks, insurance companies, loan associations and other financial institutions. These maps delineated neighbourhoods by a system of colours - green, blue, yellow and red. Green signified the most desirable areas, blue were good areas, yellow indicated that an area was declining and red spots were areas with the highest risk.[333] FHA-backed loans were often limited to the green and blue areas, areas that were restricted to white buyers only. The red neighbourhoods that were primarily made up of blacks and other minorities, were typically considered ineligible for FHA backing. This had a profound effect on opportunity for wealth accumulation and social mobility within the black community. Outlined by Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas Shapiro in *Black Wealth/White Wealth*,

---

[331] Melvin L Oliver and Thomas M Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth* (New York: Routledge, 1997). P. 130
[332] Melvin L Oliver and Thomas M Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 18. P.394
[333] Brent Gaspaire, *Redlining (1937-)* <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/redlining-1937> [accessed 15 November 2016]. p. 404

African Americans who desired and were able to afford home ownership found themselves consigned to central-city communities where their investments were affected by the 'self-fulfilling prophecies' of the FHA appraisers: cut off from sources of new investment their homes and communities deteriorated and lost value in comparison to those homes and communities that FHA appraisers deemed desirable.[334]

Redlining as a practice occurred in cities around the United States, including Chicago, Baltimore, New Orleans, Los Angeles and New York, cities which continue to show evidence of racial inequality and segregation today. Despite the FHA and the New Deal acting as supportive tools with the aim of assisting growth, these loan programs, with few exceptions, excluded African Americans and residents of racially diverse neighbourhoods. As a result, far fewer blacks, even those who found relatively well-paying work in the manufacturing industry, could own their own homes. As Manning-Thomas explains, 'These two devices - zoning and racially restrictive covenants - effectively protected socioeconomic segregation and limited the mobility of people of color'.[335]

Between 1941 and 1945, when Detroit was commonly referred to as the 'Arsenal of Democracy' and praised for its role in contributing to wartime manufacturing, racial tensions were steadily increasing. During this period, an additional 100,000 African Americans moved to Detroit; this influx in population combined with the discriminatory real estate practices created a severe housing crisis. Small and contained race riots began to take place throughout the city, protesting the situation. In 1942 however, these riots escalated into a larger demonstration known as the Sojourner Truth Homes Riot. A federally funded housing project built specifically for African Americans, the Sojourner Truth Homes were built in a predominantly white neighbourhood, which enraged the white population living in the area and in February of that year, white mobs attempted to keep the black residents from moving into their new homes by organising hate strikes and provoking violence. This unrest and the continued escalation of racial tensions would lay the foundation for the deadly race riots in June of 1943; lasting for 48 hours, these riots killed 34 people (25 of them black and mostly at the hands of police or National Guardsman), wounded 433 (75% of them black) and

---

[334] Melvin L Oliver and Thomas M Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 19.
[335] June Manning Thomas, "Planning History and the Black Urban Experience: Linkages and Contemporary Implications," *Journal of Planning Education and Research,* 14 (1994), p. 4.

destroyed property valued at $2 million ($27.8 million in 2016) mostly in the black neighbourhood of Paradise Valley.[336]

Not only did housing segregation contribute to, and instigate racial riots and demonstrations, but it affected the spatial morphology of the city. The neighbourhoods that were backed by federal mortgages and deemed desirable would often thrive, while those considered less desirable showed early signs of decay and disinvestment. Because lending institutions deemed these areas as high risk places for investment, residents, or potential residents were unable 'to secure conventional mortgage loans for the purchase or repair of neighborhood homes.[337] The decision to disinvest in these areas accelerated the process of physical decay creating a cycle of segregation and decline. As historian Brent Gaspaire notes,

> *Attempts to improve these neighbourhoods with even relatively small-scale business ventures were commonly obstructed by financial institutions that continued to label the underwriting as too risky or simply rejected them outright. When existing businesses collapsed, new ones were not allowed to replace them, often leaving entire blocks empty and crumbling. Consequently African Americans in those neighbourhoods were frequently limited in their access to banking, healthcare, retail merchandise, and even groceries.[338]*

Furthermore, these predominately black neighbourhoods, such as Paradise Valley and Black Bottom, would shape 'the canvas upon which postwar planners began to paint city improvements'.[339] These areas restricted to the black population, were often located in the central part of the city and were first on the agenda for slum removal. As immigration continued and overcrowding became a prominent issue, the physical condition of the area began to deteriorate even further – and city officials began to take notice. The Gratiot Area Redevelopment Project, conceived during the 1940s as part of the larger 1946 Detroit Plan, is exemplary of the urban renewal projects that took place in the post war period that not only aimed to eliminate blight in the city but that, whether meaning to or not, further escalated racial tensions. As June Manning-Thomas describes,

> *From the city's perspective, the core issues were basically quite simple. The Gratiot area formed an unhealthy, unprofitable, and unsightly eastern flank*

---

[336] Dominic J. Capeci and Martha Wilkerson, 'The Detroit Rioters of 1943: A Reinterpretation', *The Michigan Historical Review*, 16.1 (1990), 49.
[337] Capeci and Wilkerson, p. 513.
[338] Brent Gaspaire, *Redlining (1937-)* <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/redlining-1937>.
[339] Miroslav Base, *The Development of Detroit 1701-1920: A Planning History* (Detroit, 1970). P.2

> *for the central business district…From the Black community's perspective,*
> *at first, Gratiot offered the promise of clearing out poor housing and*
> *replacing it with something better…The truth soon dawned that*
> *redevelopment and re-housing of low income dwellers were not necessarily*
> *connected.*[340]

The Gratiot Project sought to accelerate 'slum clearance and highway construction programs, while stopping completely the public housing component and doing little to alleviate the severe housing shortage faced by the African-American community'.[341]

As part of this plan, two new highways, 1-75 and 1-375 were plotted out directly along Black Bottom and Paradise Valley's main artery, Hastings Street, and a brand new affordable housing project, the Brewster housing project, was built. By the 1950s and 60s, the continued clearance of this 'slum' area allowed for the construction of Lafayette Park and other surrounding developments. While these redevelopments provided an image of urban renewal, they did little to help relocate the African American residents who lost their homes. John Gallagher writes, there 'was a misguided notion that somehow freeways were going to benefit cities, and instead what they've done is destroy neighborhoods.'[342] Like many other cities in the United States at this time, urban renewal typically meant the removal of black neighbourhoods.[343]

The legal mechanisms used to segregate black and white communities as well as the urban renewal projects in the mid-century have had lasting ramifications that continue to divide and separate Detroit today. As of 2016, the city of Detroit and its surrounding metropolitan area remain the most racially segregated city in the United States. Figure 17 is a map created by Dustin Cable at University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, depicting the extent of the racial segregation of the area. White individuals are represented by blue dots, African Americans by green, Asians by red, Latinos by orange and all other race categories from the US Census represented in brown. Whereas other cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, Atlanta and Birmingham have distinct areas where the populations are more racially homogenous than others, no other city has as stark of a physical dividing line as Detroit. The racial divisions in Detroit correspond almost exactly with its municipal boundaries with the

---

[340] Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, p. 58.
[341] Goodspeed, p.2.
[342] wdet, *CuriosiD: How A 1900s Black Detroit Community Was Razed For A Freeway*
<https://wdet.org/posts/2015/10/19/81771-curiosid-how-a-1900s-black-detroit-community-was-razed-for-a-freeway/>.
[343] See Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*

most distinctive being the northern border of Eight Mile Road. North of Eight Mile, in the edge cities of Ferndale and Southfield for example, the population is predominately white, whereas directly south of Eight Mile, in the city boundary of Detroit, the population is predominantly Black.

Examining current trends in land vacancy and poverty of Detroit today also reveals the lasting spatial legacies of these early racially oriented policy decisions. If we consider the 1943 redlining map and compare it with the current map of the vacancy of Detroit, (Figure 18) we notice a striking similarity in the location of the neighbourhoods deemed undesirable, to those neighbourhoods with the highest levels of vacancy today. The same can be observed by comparing the redlining map with a map illustrating poverty levels in Detroit (Figure 19). Areas once designated as red on the FHA map very strongly correlate to those with high levels of vacancy; the yellow areas to moderate vacancy, and blue and green areas with low vacancy. A map depicting the spatial distribution of resident income per capita illustrates similar socio-spatial trends (Figure 20).

As these maps represent, the effects of red lining, segregation and urban renewal have had a lasting impact on the socio-spatial fabric of Detroit today. The persistent patterns of racial segregation that continue to define the metropolitan region can be directly traced back to racially discriminatory residential housing policies of the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, the correlation between these patterns of racial segregation and high rates of poverty and vacancy allow us to partially explain narratives which have emerged around Detroit's decline. As chapter two illustrated, narratives of Detroit's decline have often been constructed along lines of race – describing Detroit as a poor black city surrounded by rich white suburbs. The legacy left by these policies has created a situation where poor black residents are geographically, economically, and politically separated from more affluent whites.[344]

3.2.4 The impact of the commercial strip

In looking at the ways in which the urban fabric has created lasting social, economic, and environmental impacts on the city today, which have significantly contributed to the city's decline, the physical characteristics of the public realm must also be considered. One of the ways in which Detroit exhibits its uniqueness can be found in the patterns of its spatial

---

[344] Reese et. al. *"It's safe to come, we've got lattes": Development disparities in Detroit*

network. While the way in which Detroit's street scape developed supported its growth, it also had detrimental effects on the rate of its decline.

The street layout of the city of Detroit provided the framework for the development of a 'linear city'. This idea, proposed by Soviet architect and planner Nikolay Milyutin in the late 1920s, and subsequently inspired Le Corbusier's 'Industrial linear city', [345] was meant to serve as a theoretical/utopian solution to the problem of urban congestion by organising transit and architecture around functional delineation. Robert Fishman, explains the industrial linear city:

> *Instead of the traditional densely clustered industrial zone, factories would be spread along rail lines leading out from major cities. Served also by parallel highways, industry would enjoy the benefits of the efficient movement of raw material and finished goods along these rail and highway routes without incurring any of the delays caused by urban congestion. Since the rail lines extended to open countryside, there would be plenty of room not only for massive plants but also for affordable workers' housing to be built close to the factories in the open green terrain just beyond the rail lines...[346]*

Although both of these proposals were set forth as utopian and theoretical solutions to a complex urban problem, 'What neither Milyutin nor Le Corbusier realized', Fishman explains, 'was that their quasiutopian linear cities were actually being built – in Detroit.'[347]

The realisation of the linear city in Detroit and this specific physical structuring supported Detroit in becoming one of the leading manufacturing centres of the nation. As a result, however, daily aspects of everyday life were ignored in favour of catering to the rapidly growing automotive industry. One way this can be observed is in the pattern of commercial development. As Detroit physically expanded, the city began to adopt a strip model of commercial development over a nodal model. Detroit's street pattern, with its radial arteries connecting grids of residential streets, provided an ideal environment for a strip model of commercial development to occur. Categorised as 'A linear pattern of retail businesses along a major roadway, characterized by box-like buildings with prominent parking lots visible

---

[345] Jacques Guiton, *The Ideas of Le Corbusier on Architecture and Urban Planning*, trans. by Margaret Guiton (New York: G. Braziller, 1981), p. 111.

[346] Robert Fishman, 'Detroit and the Acceleration of History', *Log 37: The Architectural Imagination Catalog*, 2016, p. 42.

[347] Robert Fishman, 'Detroit and the Acceleration of History', *Log 37: The Architectural Imagination Catalog*, 2016, p. 42.

from the roadway, multiple driveways, large signs, and a dependency on automobiles for access and circulation',[348] commercial strips began to saturate Detroit's major thoroughfares.

The nodal model of commercial development places greater emphasis on the creation of commercial districts at major intersections and is often supported by public transit, is pedestrian oriented and often includes multifamily residential uses above the ground floor commercial uses.[349] The strip model, on the other hand, creates low density districts and favours the use of the automobile. By favouring the strip model of development, Detroit developed into a city with one downtown, or one major commercial node, for its entire 140 square miles. Although the commercial corridors did provide many amenities, the major shopping areas, including department stores, hardware stores, clothing stores and entertainment venues such as theatres, opera houses, museums and libraries, were located primarily in the Downtown area. The Downtown area became the primary location for leisure and recreation, but this was especially difficult to access. Not only were many of the neighbourhoods located a significant distance from the centre, but heavy traffic conditions increased the efforts it took to get there.

The strip model of urban development was easily adapted in Detroit. Detroit's grid like street pattern invited this type of corridor layout. The major road arteries, bounded by the residential grids, provided easy thoroughfares on which to build a linear pattern of retail businesses. Commercial strips were also favourable to business owners as rents were lower than the downtown and they still had a clientele of those people who lived in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the strips were also less congested than the downtown, and with the growth of the car, these areas became even more desirable as people could avoid heavy traffic. 'As the primary access routes that connected downtown to the outlying residential districts, explains Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, Associate Dean of the UCLA School of Public Affairs and Professor of Urban Planning, 'the strips quickly became important and vibrant places for commercial, recreational, and residential activities.'[350] However, as the automobile continued to dominate as the primary mode of transportation and suburbanisation became a dominant force following World War II, the scenario began to change. Throughout the United States, the commercial strip began to suffer.

---

[348] Ross Moldoff, 'Controlling Strip Development', *Planning Commissioners Journal*, 53, p. 1.
[349] Moldoff, p. 1.
[350] Anastasia Loukiatou-Sideris, 'Inner-City Commercial Strips: Evolution, Decay: Retrofit?', *The Town Planning Review*, 68.1 (1997), 1–29 (p. 3).

Loukaitou-Sideris describes that the urban downtowns never expanded to encompass the land surrounding the strips and instead this land was devalued as highways were built by-passing the inner cities. The housing along and behind these corridors filtered down to low income families as the middle class moved out to the suburbs. [351] With the creation of Detroit's 'edge cities'[352] the downtown soon became obsolete. Not only were these edge cities able to provide the housing that families desired, offering bigger homes and larger properties, but they offered retail parks, shopping malls and entertainment facilities that were much more accessible than Detroit's downtown. As the economic crisis of the inner city deepened in the 1960s and 1970s, the demand for commercial space along these strips fell dramatically and decay became common place; 'Without adequate public funds the public realm deteriorated. Pavement, trees, and street furniture disappeared, parking lots multiplied, and corridors became collections of unrelated buildings and incompatible uses.'[353]

The overabundance of commercial strips throughout the city of Detroit, combined with economic disinvestment and suburbanisation, contributed to the rapid decline of Detroit. Because these commercial strips saturated the city, once the strips declined, so too did the surrounding areas. The amalgamation of this widespread commercial decay with the industrial resulted in drastically high levels of urban decay. Although certain areas of commercial activity have survived, they are not as abundant or diverse as they once were, creating issues for residents of the city who wish to access particular goods and services. Though this will be furthered explored in the following chapter, an illustrative example is, once again, the neighbourhood of Brightmoor. Fenkell and Schoolcraft Avenues, once vibrant and thriving retail corridors, presently suffer from closed businesses and physical decay. This has resulted in the neighbourhood losing essential urban amenities including banks, libraries, pharmacies and even grocery stores. Brightmoor is an extreme example of the negative effects of the decay of these commercial strips, but one that is very representative of the failures of this strip model of development.

An abundance of retail and commercial activity accompanied the development of the commercial corridors, yet as the metropolitan landscape began to transform, these areas became obsolete. As the report, *From Vacant to Viable* outlines,

---

[351] Loukaitou-Sideris, p.3.
[352] Joel Garreau, Edge City: Life on the New Frontier.
[353] Loukaitou-Sideris, p.3.

Changes in suburban development, the structure of the retail industry, and spending patterns of the past half-century have left once-bustling corridors with substantial vacancy...As a consequence, inactivity, abandonment, and decline define many commercial corridors in Detroit. Deteriorated properties hinder potential future owners 'ability to reuse existing structures; unused and unmaintained property also hurt the viability of businesses[354]

As such, 'The shift in consumer preferences left Detroit's commercial corridors with more properties than demand dictated'.[355] While the commercial strip helped Detroit to accelerate its growth by supporting the needs of the automotive industry, it also had a significant impact on the eventual decline of the city. This suggests that the spatial character of Detroit, in addition to the economy, has contributed and continues to contribute to the city's experience of urban decline.

3.2.5 The issue with city planning: a failed attempt to control growth

In thinking through the ways in which Detroit's built environment evolved over the course of the twentieth century, a question arises regarding the administration's involvement in setting out planning guidelines to control the way in which the city developed. Traditionally, city development would be guided by a master plan that would not only promote economic development and the operational efficiency of a city, but that would also ensure that the basic essential urban amenities were available to its people. In the case of Detroit, however, there was a noticeable absence of planning guidelines for the first half of the of twentieth century. In many ways, the city would often compromise planning principles to accommodate development that would generate new jobs and increase the city's tax base.

From the beginning of the city's rapid development, there were increased strains on the infrastructure which, as a result of lack of planning guidelines, created cascading effects for the city of Detroit. Even as early, 1918, 'the city had "outgrown practically every public utility and most every private facility"',[356] which in turn meant that, 'local infrastructure demands increased, leading to substantial construction projects building or improving roadways and bridges, gasoline stations and repair shops, and motels to serve the suddenly

---

[354] Lee Adams and others, 'From Vacant to Viable: Strategies for Addressing Commerical Corridors in Detroit', 2010, pp. iii–iv
[355] Adams and others, p.1.
[356] Martelle, p. 99.

much more mobile nation.'[357] As a result, the city began to acquire massive debt as the funds to support the expansion of such services were obtained largely from bond issues. During the 1920s, annual outlays for capital purposes sometimes exceeded $40 million so that by 1932 the city's tax supported bonded debt was $286 million.[358] Though the city's bankruptcy filing did not occur until 2013, early signs of economic strife can be traced back to this very early period of growth.

As the growth continued and debt increased as a result, the city of Detroit attempted to utilise planning and policy as a way to control the economic situation. Between 1900 and 1918, five city plans were commissioned by city administration; 'yet a 1927 publication called these plans "interesting from a historical standpoint but worthless for other purposes" and complained that 'they now occupy valuable storage space in the city garage.'[359] During this time, Detroit was the second fastest growing city in the nation in terms of population[360] and the fact that the city did not have a city plan or adequate zoning ordinances to manage this growth soon presented issues. The development of the Detroit City Plan Commission (DCPC) in 1919, was a direct result of the city recognising the need to address the burdens with which it was faced through the formal implementation of city planning as a component of municipal reform.[361] Their proposed Building Zone Plan for Detroit in 1919 acknowledges that the city has, up until that point, been unable to adequately manage the city's growth, stating,

> *Burdensome municipal expenditures have quite naturally resulted from such haphazard methods of city growth and, in quite recent years, cities have begun to pay attention to the cause and effect of city growth and their control. "City Planning" is the name now given to the means employed to control the physical development of the city. By regulating the width, character and alignment of streets, by controlling the location and design of transportation facilities, by planning parks, playgrounds and other recreation facilities, etc., in advance, an attempt is made to control the city's growth and to meet the existing needs.[362]*

[357] Martelle, p. 99.
[358] June Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013).
[359] Manning-Thomas (2013) quoting DCPC 'Annual Report of the City Plan Commission, 1927" (Detroit: DCPC 1927) p 3
[360] Beth Bates, Timothy Bates, and Grace Boggs, 'Where Are the People? Review Essay on Thomas Sugrue's The Origins of the Urban Crisis', *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 27.4 (2000), 13–26 <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02717260>.
[361] City Plan Commission, *A Building Zone Plan for Detroit* (Detroit, 1919). P.36
[362] Commission. P. 5

This plan describes the importance of introducing zoning ordinances as well as city planning as a formal institutionalised mechanism in Detroit and while these early reports were useful, the role of the planning commission remained unstable and its impact minimal in these early years. Manning-Thomas describes, '… Detroit lagged far behind other cities in adopting a comprehensive plan or a zoning ordinance. The Detroit Common Council did not approve a zoning ordinance until 1940, after twenty-two years of effort, and it did not publish a complete master plan until 1951'.[363] She continues by offering a detailed analysis of the length that it took to adopt a plan and ordinances, citing the impact of the rapid annexations making new maps quickly obsolete, a lack of state enabling legislation, conflict of interests regarding land speculation, and the Great Depression that not only led to drastic staff cuts but slowed growth considerably in all aspects of the government.[364] The inability for the planning department to adequately address the rapidly growing city severely impacted the infrastructural growth and municipal services. This would have a lasting effect on Detroit for the century to follow.

Without a city plan during the most rapid time of its growth, Detroit developed around the needs of the automobile industry and the residential growth that surrounded it. Detroit was a complete urban-industrial landscape. As Thomas Sugrue describes, 'factories, shops and neighborhoods blended together indistinguishably enmeshed in a relentless grid of streets and a complex web of train lines'.[365] The city's spatial layout, the automotive industry, 'and the retail economy of the city were inseparably bound in a symbiotic relationship through the combined function of interdependent dimensions'.[366] Without a master plan and effective zoning ordinance, city growth during the first three decades of the twentieth century happened very organically, meeting the immediate short term needs of its residents and industry, rather than taking into consideration long term sustainability and creating a sense of place. While this appeared successful at the time, this type of growth would have severe ramifications as the decades progressed.

In many ways, the long-lasting effects of this organic planning continue to be felt today. The city's spatial network today, whereby a downtown business district is surrounded by largely abandoned residential areas is clearly inefficient and severely inhibits positive economic

[363] Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*. p.36.
[364] Manning-Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*. p.37.
[365] Thomas J Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, p. 18.
[366] Sophia Psarra and Conrad Kickert, 'Detroit - The Fall of the Public Realm : The Street Network and Its Social and Economic Dimensions from 1796 to the Present', in *Eighth International Space Syntax Symposium*, ed. by M Greene, J Reyes, and A Castro (Santiago de Chile, 2012), pp. 1–26 (p. 6).

outcomes in the city. Moreover, the system of streets and highways were initially built for population three times the current size of Detroit, and therefore do not serve the needs of a much smaller population today. As Owens et. Al highlight, 'the high cost of maintaining this large infrastructure has led to fiscal problems, an under-provision of essential public services, and ultimately to bankruptcy and default.'[367] There has also been an under-utilization of this urban infrastructure which further accelerates the city's decline. A key challenge that Detroit faced historically was creating a balance between supporting the growth and economic success of the automotive industry, while also ensuring the city was a place that sustainably supported its residents. Unfortunately, the ineffective management of the development and growth of the city of Detroit through appropriate policies had detrimental and long-lasting effects that would influence the trajectory of the city, contributing greatly to its eventual decline.

3.3 Challenging the narrative of boom to bust to boom

This chapter aimed to contribute to the discussion of Detroit's decline, by placing particular emphasis on the ways in which the transformation of the city's urban spatial fabric has contributed to lasting social, economic and environmental impacts today. What each of the four examples presented here – rapid annexation, the importance of the housing stock, race relations and the development of the commercial strip - illustrate is that Detroit's decline is not simply an issue that can be understood by economic or demographic measures, but rather that there are deeply embedded social and spatial factors which have contributed to the city's transformation. While these factors are typically excluded from research on the life cycle of Detroit, they foreground many of the social and economic dimensions of the city's decline today. In each of these examples, we have seen how the foundations for the city's economic and demographic decline emerged during the period of Detroit's growth.

First, we saw how rapid annexation placed extreme pressure on the city's infrastructure, contributing to the accumulation of municipal debt very early on. The unconstrained and unsystematic amassing of land also led to very haphazard urban development which in turn created a spatial landscape that catered more to helping the automobile industry grow rather than to creating an urban environment that satisfied the needs of its residents. Second, the type of housing stock in Detroit contributed to both the rate at which the city's residential

---

[367] Raymond Owens III, and Esteban Rossi-Hansberg, and Pierre-Daniel Sarte, "Rethinking Detroit", Princeton University (2019), p.2

areas declined as well as to spatial patterns of this decay. Those areas which were built more quickly to accommodate the influx of incoming manufacturing workers would decay much sooner and to a greater extent than those neighbourhoods which were built with much more sound housing. This uneven spatial distribution of decay would lead to a fragmented city, defined by different levels of decline. Furthermore, patterns of racial segregation that continue to define the city and its metropolitan region today can be directly traced back to racially discriminatory residential housing policies of the mid-twentieth century. Mortgage lending practices, restrictive covenants and practices of urban renewal significantly influenced the racial makeup of the city from very early on. The legacy of these practices continues to influence patterns of racial segregation and largely correlate with other economic and environmental factors as well, including levels of poverty and vacancy rates. Finally, the decision to support a strip model of commercial development rather than a nodal one supported the rapidly growing residential areas as well as the expansion of the automotive industry. However, this pattern eventually created an overabundance of commercial space that helped to accelerate the city's decline once Detroit began to witness a decrease in population.

What becomes clear from each of these examples is that Detroit did not experience a distinct trajectory of rise and fall. While economic and demographic indicators illustrate a linear trajectory of growth and decline, there are other social, economic and environmental factors which have contributed to a very complex historical transformation. Moreover, by studying the relationship between these spatial networks and social patterns, it becomes clear that the seeds for Detroit's decline were directly embedded into the city's period of initial growth. Considering each of these factors allows us to reconsider the lens with which Detroit's decline has been viewed. The following two chapters will continue to investigate the complex nature of the city's decline by shifting the scale of study from the entire city to two neighbourhoods in particular, Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale respectively in order to better understand how Detroit's historical trajectory has differentially affected social and spatial patterns and practices at the neighbourhood level. They build upon the historic ideas developed in chapter three, but also offer a contemporary reading of how this phenomenon affects urban praxis today.

Figure 9 The Renaissance Center, August 2017

Figure 10 Woodward Plan (Source: Plan of Detroit," (1824). Image courtesy Clark Library, University of Michigan)

Figure 11 Distribution of manufacturing plants circa 1960 (Source: 1960 Detroit Auto Show Program; Detroitography)

Figure 12 Map indicating growth by annexation (Source: Manual, County of Wayne, Michigan 1926)

Figure 13 Map of the Detroit Terminal Railroad circa 1916 (Source: New York Central Railroad Annual Report in 1916)

Figure 14 Detroit Street Car Lines, 1941 (New York Public Library Digital Collections)

Figure 15 Population density of Detroit, 1925 (Source: The Detroit Educational Bulletin" Research Bulletin No. 9 – October 1925.)

Figure 16 Residential security map or "Red-lining" map of Detroit, 1939 (Source: Home Owners Loan Corporation)

Figure 17 The Racial Dot Map of Detroit (Source: The Racial Dot Map, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service)

Note: One dot represents one individual. Blue - white. Green – black. Red – Asian. Orange – Hispanic. Brown – Other race/Native American/Multiracial.

Figure 18 Vacancy Map of Detroit (Source: DWPLTP Technical Team and Hamilton Anderson Associates)

Figure 19 Percent of population living in poverty by Census Tract in Detroit from 2016 (Source: Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies)

Figure 20 Median Household Income by Census Tract in Detroit in 2014 (Source: Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies)

4. Defined by Decline: Brightmoor

Twelve miles northwest of Downtown Detroit is the Brightmoor neighbourhood (Figures 21-22). Though just a short distance from the Downtown area, this part of the city is strikingly different from the commercial and cultural core. Once densely populated with houses for the working class, Brightmoor today is characterised by its extensive vacancy and abandonment. In many parts of the neighbourhood no houses are left standing, and those that are, are often abandoned and in a state of decay and disrepair, or boarded up and vacant. Trash is often found strewn along roadside curbs and empty lots have transformed into ad hoc dumping sites. Though particular areas of the neighbourhood have retained a sound housing stock and are home to active and connected communities, much of the area is comprised of wide-open swaths of land that are often engulfed by wild landscape, disrupting the traditional order of what is often imagined as an urban residential neighbourhood. (Figure 23) One may spot the occasional neighbour sitting on their front porch or child riding a bicycle down the road, but for a large part, residential activity is absent. The main commercial corridor, Fenkell Avenue, echoes such similarities. Derelict buildings are interspersed with empty lots. Liquor stores, gas stations and hardware stores occupy most of the inhabited buildings, while grocery stores, coffee shops and places of entertainment are seemingly non-existent. One may notice few people walking along the main roads, and some sitting out front of businesses, but generally the commercial corridor, too, is characterised by an eerie feeling of emptiness.

Unlike the suburbs and some neighbourhoods that surround it, Brightmoor struggles substantially with issues of depopulation, poverty, crime, and access to public services and urban amenities; as such, the Brightmoor neighbourhood has become closely associated with the phenomenon of urban decline for it represents many of the key issues faced in Detroit today. For example, Brightmoor has a poverty rate of 42.5 percent, one of the highest in the

state of Michigan[368] and an average household income of just $33,442, falling below the city of Detroit average of $39,838.[369] Furthermore, while accurate statistics of employment are hard to obtain, it is estimated that around twenty-two percent of the neighbourhood's residents are unemployed.[370] The vacancy rate is around twenty-nine percent and empty lots outnumber the still-standing structures.[371] The level of spatial decay in the neighbourhood is also significant. Brightmoor is characteristic of extreme physical deterioration and urban wilding, and has developed an urban landscape akin to what Gandy terms 'unintentional landscapes', where the spaces of the neighbourhood have undergone a transformation towards something disorientating and against the utilitarian discourse.[372] The landscape that has emerged in this neighbourhood begins to raise questions about urban decline and the extent to which it has transformed the environment. In many ways, Brightmoor exhibits all of the trends and patterns that have typically been associated with urban decline – a significant loss in population, high levels of physical decay, above average rates of poverty and unemployment, and low median household income to name a few. These factors have become the defining characteristics of the neighbourhood and have, as a result, made Brightmoor the ideal place to study the phenomenon of urban decline.

Like many neighbourhoods in the city, the boundaries of Brightmoor are arbitrarily defined.[373] There are, however, two dominant interpretations of the areas geographic delinations: one set forth by the non-profit Skillman Foundation, which uses zip codes to determine neighbourhood boundaries, and the other created by Loveland Technologies using a compilation of various sources, including user submitted data, and the real estate database, Zillow, to determine the most commonly understood neighbourhood boundaries. The latter will be used for this research for it is more aligned with boundaries described by the residents of the neighbourhood themselves.[374] Brightmoor is a roughly four square mile neighbourhood

---

[368] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 16.
[369] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 16.
[370] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 14.; Accurate estimates of employment/unemployment/underemployment rates are difficult obtain as the the Department of Labor does not survey small areas such as individual neighbourhoods. Furthermore, calculations do not include those who have given up looking for a job which may also skew an accurate number. The most reliable source which provides statistics at the neighbourhood level for measures of unemployment is the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. However, since the data are collected over a period of five years, and unemployment rate fluctuates quite quickly over time, one can only make observations of the neighbourhoods relative to the city as a whole.
[371] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 12.
[372] Matthew Gandy, 'Unintentional Landscapes', *Landscape Research*, 41.4 (2016), 433–40.
[373] Detroit, unlike cities like Chicago or New York for example, never standardized its neighbourhood names or borders and as a result, the names attributed to various areas in the city often reflect common usage rather than political boundaries, and have remained dynamic over time.
[374] For example, the Skillman foundation incorporates the Eliza Howell area into their boundary of Brightmoor. However, the Eliza Howell neighbourhood has a completely different physical character than that of Brightmoor and the residents describe themselves as their own neighbourhood and pay for their own private security services that does not patrol other areas of the Brightmoor neighbourhood.

bordered by the CSX railroad tracks to the south, Puritan street to the north, Evergreen to the east and the Detroit City limits, Dacosta Street and Outer Drive West to the west. Much like the whole of Detroit, the topography of the area is relatively flat with a few small hills, and is comprised primarily of residential blocks, arranged in a rectangular grid-like pattern with streets running north-south and east-west. The north-south streets are occupied largely by residential units and the distance between the roads running east-west are twice the distance as those running north-south. Outer Drive, Lahser Road, Schoolcraft Road and Fenkell Avenue are the main thoroughfares for the neighbourhood, and the I-96 highway and Telegraph Road provide connections to the rest of the city and the region. Fenkell Avenue and the intersection of Schoolcraft Road and Evergreen Road are Brightmoor's main commercial corridors. The neighbourhood is home to Eliza Howell Park, the fourth largest public park in the city of Detroit at 250 acres (100 ha) and small pocket parks are spread throughout Brightmoor as well.

Brightmoor has recently become the subject of a slowly growing body of research that acknowledges the extensive decline of the neighbourhood, but which places primary focus on the regeneration initiatives and speculative futures being envisioned for the area. In particular, scholars have studied the role of community development corporations in driving future development,[375] visions for alternative land use,[376] and have highlighted the rise of urban agriculture initiatives.[377] Overall, the literature on Brightmoor tends to follow the general trend of research on urban change, which focuses 'heavily on the context of growth'.[378] While existing research sheds light on processes of transformation and alternative ways of using land and envisioning the city, it leaves understanding the processes of decline underdeveloped.[379] It would stand to reason that we would not be able to understand the possibilities for Brightmooor's future if we do not understand why it has declined.

[375] June Manning-Thomas, 'Targeting Strategies of Three Detroit CDCs', in *The City after Abandonment*, ed. by Margaret E. Dewar and June Manning Thomas, The City in the Twenty-First Century, 1st ed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 197–226.
[376] Ashley Flintoff, Andrew Peters, and Michael Smith, *Brightmoor Unearthed: A Neighborhood Analysis*, 2011; Kimiko Doherty and others, *A Land Use Plan for Brightmoor* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, April 2008) <https://taubmancollege.umich.edu/pdfs/student_work/planning/a_land_use_plan_for_brightmoor.pdf>; Margaret E. Dewar and Robert Linn, 'Remaking Brightmoor', in *Mapping Detroit: Land, Community, and Shaping a City*, ed. by June Manning Thomas and Henco Bekkering, Great Lakes Books (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015), pp. 143–66.
[377] Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit*; Andrew Herscher, *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).
[378] Margaret E. Dewar and others, 'Learning from Detroit: How Research on a Declining City Enriches Urban Studies', in *Reinventing Detroit: The Politics of Possibility*, ed. by Michael P. Smith and L. Owen Kirkpatrick, Comparative Urban and Community Research, volume 11 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2015).
[379] Dewar and others.

As Brightmoor very clearly represents many of the key problems in Detroit today, it becomes a particularly good area for studying more closely the complexities of urban decline. The first section of this chapter approaches the area from a historical perspective in order to understand how decline has transpired in the neighbourhood. By considering the history of the neighbourhood's development, this research will draw attention to the importance of understanding how a specific historical context can facilitate and even predict the onset of urban decline. The second and third sections of this chapter look more closely at the public realm, considering public space, urban facilities and amenities, and the provision of public services to understand how decline has influenced the spaces of everyday use in the neighbourhood. The fourth section focuses upon how residents are coping and engaging with conditions created by decline in Brightmoor and questions the long-term implication of such initiatives. Finally, this chapter concludes by considering how decline is imagined and how this imagination influences the way we perceive urban decline.

4.1 Westbrook Street: The Implications of Brightmoor's Pattern of Development

At first glance, the image of this street corner (Figure 24) can easily be mistaken for a photograph of a wild prairie; the small houses surrounded by large trees and wild grass are far from typical images of an urban environment. Taken at the corner of Westbrook and Eaton Street, just thirteen miles from the Downtown area defined by large skyscrapers and a somewhat dense urban fabric, and the just two miles from where the city borders the suburbs, this photograph represents a landscape of vacancy and abandonment that is prevalent throughout the neighbourhood of Brightmoor. As of 2010, Brightmoor's vacancy rate was 29.4%, double that of 2000 and higher than the city-wide average of 22.8%.[380] Recent figures show that empty lots outnumber structures (4,985 compared to 4,821), and of the structures still standing, a mere 60% are in good condition.[381] Illegal dumping and arson crimes are also common in the area, contributing to ongoing issues of decay and deterioration.

This landscape of abandonment and decay in the local context is often referred to as 'blight', and is a defining feature of Brightmoor. A word with agrarian origins, initially specifying 'any baleful influence of atmospheric or invisible origin, that suddenly blasts, nips, or destroys plants', 'blight 'today is used in an urban context as a metaphor to refer to anything

---

[380] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment.*
[381] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment.* p. 16.

deemed 'offensive 'undesirable 'or categorised as a 'problem 'within one's neighbourhood.[382] Within the discourse of urban renewal, 'blight 'is also used in reference to a 'disease', spreading, and threatening to turn healthy areas into slums. The presence of widespread blight throughout Brightmoor takes on a powerful presence as it often creates an awareness of a reversion back to the natural world as the 'disease 'of decay spreads. The regulatory forms of well defined lots, streets, sidewalks and driveways are deconstructed by decay as lots become overgrown and structures erode. In this neighbourhood, the presence of such widespread decay has given the neighbourhood the nickname of 'Blightmoor'.

On Westbrooke Street, vacant, overgrown lots are interspersed with houses, some abandoned, some occupied. Arson crimes are quite visible and illegal dumping is also widespread. This particular area is amongst a roughly one square mile section in the centre of the neighbourhood which is perhaps amongst the most affected by decline in Brightmoor – many homes have deteriorated, trees outnumber standing structures, trash is dumped along the road, and driveways lead to empty, overgrown lots (Figure 25). Most of the houses that remain in this area are one-story units that suffer from a lack of maintenance and are rapidly deteriorating in quality.

As chapter three began to illustrate, Detroit's decline is not simply an issue that can be understood by economic or demographic measures, but rather, there are deeply embedded social and spatial factors which have contributed to the city's transformation. The physical, demographic, and economic challenges that characterise Westbrooke street and other areas like it in Brightmoor, only reveal a fraction of a larger narrative of decline. The spatial landscape allows us to visible recognise decline in the area and the measurable statistics point to present day challenges; however, understanding the decline of Brightmoor through this lens does little to help us understand the ways in which these changes have impacted and influenced the neighbourhood and those living in it today. Therefore, in order to begin to comprehend the scale and extent to which Westbrooke Street, and other areas in Brightmoor have changed over the last century, we must go beyond the landscape of decline and consider a greater scale of factors and histories. As the next chapters illustrate, a closer investigation into the area's initial development reveals that this landscape of decline is inextricably tied to its historical past.

---

[382] The Vacant Properties Research Network, *Charting the Multiple Meanings of Blight: A National Literature Review on Addressing the Community Impacts of Blighted Properties* (Keep America Beautiful, 20 May 2015) <https://www.kab.org/sites/default/files/Charting_the_Multiple_Meanings_of_Blight_FINAL_REPORT.pdf> [accessed 7 March 2018].

4.1.1 The Original B.E. Taylor Brightmoor Neighbourhood

In 1921, real estate developer and entrepreneur B.E. Taylor purchased twenty-seven tracts of farmland about five miles west of the then city limits with the intention of capitalising on Detroit's rapid automobile growth and the significant populations coming to work in the factories. Taylor partitioned these tracts of land into fourteen different subdivisions that would make up the Brightmoor community (Figure 26). Each subdivision was divided into 4000 square foot (about 372 square meters) plots and interested buyers were offered three options: the sale of a lot with a standard 'Taylor home '(Figure 27) to be built for an average price of $3,500; the option to rent-to-own a Taylor Home for $35.00 a month; or the opportunity to purchase a lot and build their own home.[383] In it's earliest phases, the Brightmoor development was exclusively about home-ownership for the working-class citizen. Taylor had a captured audience in the newly arrived industrial workers who, for the first time with their wages, could now invest in property. The Brightmoor development grew rapidly; in just three years, from 1922 to 1925, the population of the neighbourhood skyrocketed from eight people to 11,319 and the number of homes increased from just six to 3958.

Taylor's original homes were built and designed by building-craftsman; no architects were involved in the process of Brightmoor's development, nor was any substantial city planning. This led to a community whose initial houses were often of poor quality and design and a neighbourhood that initially suffered from a lack of municipal infrastructure. The original Taylor Homes, were primitive in their construction and extremely minimal in their features. Typical houses were comprised of 'two bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen, each room equipped with one light with a pull cord. For an extra $35.00, an outhouse with a chemical toilet was provided.'[384] Each house was built to a standard set of plans referred to by numbers and all of the necessary materials for construction were provided.[385] 'Locally hired day laborers would haul the materials to the building sites',[386] quickly erecting each home; Taylor's houses were often built within eight hours[387] and were going up at a rate of about

[383] The Historic Designation Advisory Board, p. 3.
[384] The Historic Designation Advisory Board, p. 3.
[385] Carolyn S. Loeb, *Entrepreneurial Vernacular: Developers' Subdivisions in the 1920s* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 66.
[386] The Historic Designation Advisory Board, p. 3.
[387] Healthy Environments Partnership, *Brightmoor's Lydon Greenway: Catalyst for Community Revival*, 2007 <http://www.hepdetroit.org/images/PDFs/Report-LyndonGreenway.pdf>.

one block per week.[388] Taylor homes were built on cedar posts and timber foundations and did not include basements. Each room contained just one window, despite there often being room for two, and decoration and ornamentation was minimal if existent at all. These early houses did not have plumbing or utilities, including running water, gas or telephone lines, they were poorly insulated and in frequent need of repair.[389] Additionally, the lack of building and zoning restrictions, except those preventing 'coloured 'residents from moving into the neighbourhood, allowed purchasers to erect homes of differing designs and materials. The neighbourhood of Brightmoor soon became a community made up of cheap housing stock which would not last if not properly maintained. Additionally, because Brightmoor was not officially a part of a formal municipality, it lacked basic municipal service, such as water and sewage systems as well as paved roads. Although Taylor did attempt improvements, including paving the sidewalks, beautifying boulevards, funding police and fire protection, building parks and funding a baby clinic and a community centre, the early community lacked a basic urban infrastructure.

The early character of the Brightmoor neighbourhood, however, was transient. These modest houses were built with the intention that they would later be expanded or modernized; for example, in many cases, homeowners would initially purchase two lots, 'one for their house and one for the future to build a more substantial home as their employment opportunities grew.'[390] The initial builds were only designed as the first step towards the construction of larger homes, exemplifying how Taylor developed this subdivision with the intention that the booming automotive industry would continue to grow and thrive, providing Brightmoor's working-class residents with the financial means to upkeep and improve their homes. Yet as the automotive industry continued to grow, so too did the Brightmoor subdivision, and in 1925, the community voted to annex itself into the city of Detroit.

The decision to become part of the city was important for the Brightmoor community, yet would prove to be problematic for Detroit. Even as it was fully incorporated, Jorgensen describes, 'The city probably never took on a more unwelcome addition. Everything needed to be done, including transportation, fire and police protection, healthy services, paving, drainage.'[391] Therefore, whereas Brightmoor greatly benefitted from the annexation, receiving street lights, paved roads, city water, sewage and gas infrastructures, and connection to the

[388] Neil Mac Lean, 'Hubertschool', 5 March 2003 <http://www.hubertschool.org/files/hhstmclcomp.jpg>.
[389] Loeb.
[390] The Historic Designation Advisory Board, p. 3.
[391] Mary West Jorgensen, 'Planning for Housing in Brightmoor', in *Brightmoor A Community in Action*, 1940, p. 61.

city's transportation services, the annexation of Brightmoor, in addition to other neighbourhoods, into the city limits created financial and infrastructural hardships for Detroit as a whole as the city somehow needed to find ways to fund these improvements. While the annexation was largely welcomed, there were groups of residents who did not want the responsibility that came with incorporating into the city. The incorporation meant that houses were required to update and be brought up to city sanitary and building codes. Though some residents were able to modernize their houses, planning home improvement and remodelling projects, others found it difficult to finance the instillation of these utilities and often allowed their houses to reach a state where they were in need of major repair.[392]

The onset of the Great Depression beginning in 1929, created additional financial difficulties for the city with particular social and spatial ramifications being felt in predominantly working class areas like Brightmoor. Wages were drastically reduced, and many residents lost their jobs, and as the decade wore on the number of families on welfare significantly increased. Brightmoor, whose residents were largely working-class and employed by the automotive industry, suffered more than others. During this period, residents without work began moving out of the area, leaving behind their homes with no subsequent buyers and those who stayed, but were suffering financially, allowed their homes to deteriorate. In order to prevent the value of the area from considerably dropping, Taylor 'reconditioned hundreds of the little homes with paint, new decorating, new foundations, a minimum of plumbing and resold them, this time at reduced prices, something more nearly approximating their value.'[393] The Federal Housing Administration eventually deemed Brightmoor, 'physically and socially sick' and a potential slum area.[394] Due to the various social and economic factors at the time, the majority of the original Brightmoor community was never 'modernized 'or rebuilt as it was originally intended and as such Taylor's subdivision was largely left to depreciate in value and physical condition.

Westbrook Street, described above, was part of this original B.E. Taylor development and represents today the residual effects of these early decisions on the eventual decline of the neighbourhood. The houses along Westbrook were part of Taylor's earliest developments that were constructed of poor material and not subject to eventual renewal or regeneration. As a result of continued neglect, this particular area of Brightmoor became so severely deteriorated

---

[392] Jorgensen, p. 62.
[393] Jorgensen, p. 62.
[394] Jorgensen, p. 62.

that in 2015, Westbrook Street was targeted as part of a city-wide blight demolition program to rid the area of vacant and abandoned homes. Westbrook Street and others like it not only illustrate the fault at looking at the city from the perspective of rise and fall, exemplifying how urban decline was actually the resumption of decisions rooted firmly in the development of the city during its principle period of growth, but this example begins to illustrate the severity of decline in transforming the physical landscape and altering the very condition of the urban fabric.

The physical landscape found along Westbrook Street is exemplary of much of the Brightmoor neighbourhood, yet there are particular areas that represent a contrasting spatial environment. Braile Street is another residential street in Brightmoor. South of Fenkell Avenue, the landscape of Braile Street looks very similar to that of Westbrook, yet north of Fenkell Avenue, one encounters a very different residential landscape. Compared to the area south of Fenkell, houses are larger than the original Taylor homes, streets are well maintained with little to no evidence of arson and dumping, and while there is the occasionally vacant home or empty lot, for the most part the area is quite dense. As one travels further westward, the same pattern repeats itself - Patton Street, Fielding Street, Stout Street, Kentfield Street, Hayden Street, and Vaughan Street are all well maintained, front yards are landscaped, the streets are clean and almost all of the houses on these blocks are occupied. This part of the Brightmoor area stands in stark contrast to those defined by widespread blight and abandonment, and upon first look it appears as though this area is an entirely different neighbourhood.

This area of Brightmoor, on Braile, north of Fenkell, is not a part of the original Taylor neighbourhood; it instead dates to the 1940s and 1950s when the neighbourhood witnessed another phase of development as a result of Detroit's post-war economic boom. In 1940, only twenty five percent of the area known as Brightmoor today was developed; the remaining seventy five percent was primarily farmland. As Taylor's original Brightmoor neighbourhood was depreciating in value due to poor housing stock and weak demand, developers sought to construct a new subdivision of homes rather than rehabilitate the existing area. Plot sizes of the new subdivisions remained the same, but the houses constructed in this post-war era differed in size and materiality from the standardized homes used by Taylor in his early constructions. These were constructed of brick, rather than timber, and were equipped with running water, electricity, and gas and telephone lines. These homes are well insulated, have dug basements and on average they are larger in size with some comprised of a second storey

and a detached garage. Moreover, in contrast to the rental properties, which make up most of the neighbourhood today, these homes are largely owner-occupied. This has fostered a strong sense of ownership and belonging and in contrast to the more deteriorated areas of the neighbourhood and the residents here are more active organising block clubs and small community events. The contrasts between Westbrook and Braile Streets not only represent the diversity of Brightmoor's residential character, but illustrate the importance of considering the historical development on understanding the situation in the city today. Today, Westbrook Street exemplifies the abuses of rapid development and as we will see in the following section, allows us to begin to understand the reasons why Brightmoor has been so severely affected by decline.

4.1.2 The precipitation of Brightmoor's decline

B.E. Taylor envisioned Brightmoor as a community designed and built for the working-class citizen, and in many ways, he accomplished this - providing affordable homes that were built quickly and located close to places of employment. However, Taylor was unequivocally reliant on the sustained growth of Detroit and its industry to main the neighbourhood of Brightmoor. This model of development could only be accomplished so long as the working-class citizen thrived. However, what soon became evident is that the industrial ethos of growth and progress which provided the foundations for the initial development and continuity of Brightmoor, was not a viable model of urban development. Brightmoor is a lens with which to view the city of Detroit during the first two decades of the twentieth century; it materialised ahead of any systematic or sustainable effort of planning, ignoring a long term vision for the city. When taking into consideration the poor housing stock that lent itself to deterioration, the particular model of development that hinged on the continued growth of the automobile industry, and method of planning that sought to meet the immediate short term needs of its residents rather than plan for the long term, one can argue that the decline of the neighbourhood was inevitable. Once again, we begin to see how the decline of the neighbourhood today is a continuation of these early decisions made during the period of the neighbourhood's initial growth.

After 1960, Brightmoor, similar to Detroit as a whole, did not witness any additional development. The pace of industrial flight increased as factories moved from the central city to the suburbs, igniting a mass exodus of people from the city. Like many working class neighbourhoods of Detroit, the population of Brightmoor continued to increase so long as the automotive industry continued to thrive. Brightmoor reached its peak population in 1960,

with 51,947 residents.[395] However, as the manufacturing plants moved outwards into the suburbs, so too did the workers who were employed by them. Dewar and Manning-Thomas explain, 'Large numbers of white households began moving to the suburbs. This exodus originated in part in the search for new housing outside crowded cities, in part in the choice of residential location in relation to jobs in the suburbs, and in part in racially driven white flight from the cities.As new subdivisions were being constructed outside of the city, closer to [396]' the relocated automotive plants and offering homes that were larger in size but still affordable, demand for Brightmoor's older housing stock soon weakened. Families who could afford it, left Brightmoor and as such the neighbourhood would go on to lose about seventy-five of its population over the next fifty years.

Not only did the decentralisation of the automotive industry and the construction of new suburbs spur a decline in population, but these trends ignited a racial shift in both Brightmoor and throughout the whole of Detroit. Until this period, the black population were confined to four primary residential districts. As white households began to move to the suburbs, black residents would purchase their homes,[397] transforming patterns of racial diversity in both the city, and the neighbourhood; a legacy still felt to this day. Despite the dissolution of racially segregated housing within the city boundaries, Detroit continued to remain divided by class and income levels, as working-class black citizens were more likely to move to neighbourhoods such as Brightmoor for example, where the housing stock was much more affordable, and more affluent black citizens to neighbourhoods such as Grandmont Rosedale, Conant Gardens and Boston Edison.

Between 1970 and 2010, the population in Brightmoor decreased by nearly fifty five percent, from 27,564 inhabitants to 12,836 with nearly 7,000 residents leaving between 2000 and 2010 [398] and recent statistics show that this number continues to decrease every year.[399] Not only has this contributed to widespread vacancy, but it has greatly affected property values throughout the neighbourhood as demand for houses is low. Figure 28 highlights the value of properties in Brightmoor as compared to the surrounding areas, representing this trend. This has also ignited a transition from predominantly owner-occupied properties to rental properties, mirroring the same trends experienced by the city of Detroit as a whole. The

---

[395] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment.*
[396] *Dewar and Thomas, p. 4.*
[397] The discriminatory housing policies at the time, continued to prevented black individuals from moving to the suburbs.
[398] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*.
[399] U.S. Census.

single-family homes that constitute much of the neighbourhood today are constructed of such poor quality that owners are only able to make money from them as rental properties, even if they are rehabilitated and in a good condition. Brightmoor also suffers from high levels of foreclosed homes. Deng et al., reporting on the role of tax foreclosures throughout the entire city of Detroit, explain that owners often owe more in property taxes, fees and interest than their houses are even worth.[400] These foreclosed homes are often identified throughout the neighbourhood as those with boarded up windows (Figure 29).

Unfortunately, the volume of these particular houses, as well as the vacant landscape which one finds throughout the neighbourhoods, has attracted a great deal of illegal activity. On site visits it was not uncommon to see the effects of arson and dumping, however, less visible are the activities that often take place within these homes; areas of the neighbourhood with higher levels of blight have become especially attractive to drug dealers, scrappers and prostitutes. Crime reports show high levels of aggravated assault, burglary and larceny throughout the neighbourhood.[401]

4.2 The Disruption of Spatial Order and the Disappearance of Everyday Life

In the case of Detroit especially, the physical deterioration of the city has garnered great attention, and is often romanticised and sensationalised. But beyond the aesthetic appeal of these ruins, the city's physical decadence is a reflection of a much more complex problem: the 'city's social and urban structures have not been able to adapt to a new set of circumstances.'[402] Evidence of particular environmental stimuli, such as decayed buildings and urban blight, often testify to the transformation in which the city has undergone and the inability of the municipal authorities to mitigate it. It is not uncommon to find evidence of ruination and urban decay throughout the city of Detroit, yet in Brightmoor, the situation is particularly extreme. In this neighbourhood sizeable areas of land have reverted back to the wild as a result of decades of neglect and abandonment and the spaces that make up both the private and public realms[403] have largely disappeared. As mentioned earlier in this chapter,

---

[400] Deng and others.
[401] 'DPD: All Crime Incidents, December 6, 2016 - Present | Detroit Open Data Portal' <https://data.detroitmi.gov/Public-Safety/DPD-All-Crime-Incidents-December-6-2016-Present/6gdg-y3kf/data>.
[402] Beatriz Fernández Águeda, *Shaping the Futures for Industrial Cities in Decay: Urban Planning and Memory Retrieval* <http://oa.upm.es/5978/1/FernandezAgueda_ponencia_2010_02.pdf>.
[403] Public spaces in the form of 'open spaces' such as parks, markets, streets and squares, 'closed spaces', including malls, libraries, town halls, swimming pools, clubs and bars, and 'intermediate spaces such as clubs and associations confined to specific publics such as housing residents, chess enthusiasts, fitness fanatics, anglers, skateboarders, and the like', for the most part do not exist in Brightmoor. See Ash Amin, *Collective Culture and Urban Public Space*, Inclusive Cities: Challenges of Urban Diversity (Woodrow WIlson International the Center for Scholars, 2006) <http://www.publicspace.org/en/text-library/eng/b003-collective-culture-and-urban-public-space> [accessed 6 April 2018].

much attention has been placed on planning for the future of Brightmoor. Yet this physical deterioration of Brightmoor has significant implications for life in the community, *today*.

4.2.1 The Absence of Neighbourhood Amenities

Fenkell Avenue is one of the main commercial corridors in the Brightmoor neighbourhood. In the 1950s, when Brightmoor was at its peak population, Fenkell Avenue was the epicentre of social and commercial life for the community. Located along the corridor were banks, a library, grocery stores, hairdressers, hardware stores, bars, restaurants, ice cream parlours, a movie theatre, a bowling alley, the original Brightmoor Community Center and countless other neighbourhood amenities. Today, it sits primarily unused and vacant. The Irving Movie Theatre, is now a vacant lot, the Guardian Detroit Bank building, which once served as the local library branch, is closed and empty, and numerous other buildings have been boarded up, demolished, or destroyed by arson.

The main portion of the Fenkell corridor, between Dacosta and Burt Streets, as of spring 2014, is comprised of 171 total lots; of this number, 107 (63%) are occupied by a structure and 64 (37%) remain vacant.[404] The overall condition of the existing buildings is fair, with many appearing structurally sound but in need of general repair. Though the corridor is walkable, it is primarily designed for the automobile – surface parking lots fill much of the landscape, the density of the area is quite low, the condition of the sidewalks is generally poor, there are no pedestrian crossings, and in the winter months these sidewalks do not get plowed. Figure 30 illustrates the condition of the corridor today. Though Fenkell is meant to be one of the larger commercial streets in Brightmoor, it has little to offer its residents. The Fenkell Commercial Corridor Study, conducted in 2014, comprehensively audited the area and revealed that the commercial strip has a surplus of beer and liquor stores, gas stations, vending machine operators and drinking places, yet lacks many of the basic necessities such as grocery stores, restaurants/cafes, hardware stores, office supply stores, and clothing outlets.[405] Further study conducted by Professor Margaret Dewar found that services that would have once occupy brick and mortar shops on the corridor, such as hairdressers, barbers, cosmetologists, and child-care providers for example, now operate home based businesses.[406]

---

[404] Marguerite Novak and others, *Fenkell Commercial Corridor Study* (Michigan State University, Spring 2014) <https://reicenter.org/upload/documents/colearning/brightmoor2014_report_noa11y.pdf> [accessed 18 February 2018].
[405] Novak and others.
[406] Dewar and Thomas, p. 8.

The transformation of Fenkell Avenue is representative of larger city-wide issues such as disinvestment and depopulation, but it also reflects the failure of Detroit's historical model of urban development. As the previous chapter illustrated, Detroit favoured a strip model of commercial development which resulted in stretches of anonymous single-story commercial buildings that were spread along main roads. This model favoured the use of the car and as such reduced the ability to foster walkable retail corridors. Today, this continues to present an issue. As highlighted by the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation's recent Commercial Corridor Strategy, 'A lack of clustering poses challenges for Detroit's retail environment, as tenants cannot benefit from co-tenancy with other retailers and create a safe, pedestrian-friendly shopping district.'[407] Additionally, the report highlights that the city has an over supply of commercial real estate which 'causes conditions of high vacancy, absentee property owners, minimal investment, and a mismatch in building quality at adjacent parcels, which increases the difficulty of redeveloping larger commercial blocks. Retailers who maintain quality storefronts but are perceived to have deleterious surroundings face additional challenges in capturing sales.'[408] Not only does this illustrate the influence of the historical model of urban development on the area, but it presents us with an example of how decline begets decline.

The absence of these amenities along the Fenkell corridor is representative of a much larger issue faced by the Brightmoor neighbourhood. Within the boundaries of Brightmoor today, there are no functioning medical centres, dentists' offices or large chain grocery stores. There are no banks within the neighbourhood's boundaries, pharmacies, laundromats or dry cleaners. Though there are an abundance of churches, there are no public libraries, and two public schools (one high school and one kindergarten through grade eight). For those who are able, the absence of these types of urban amenities is reason to move out of the neighbourhood. Tyrone, a former resident of Detroit, who now lives in a metropolitan suburb, explains that he had no 'options for things I needed to support my life.' He became frustrated that the number of liquor stores and pawn shops outnumbered amenities such as banks, grocery stores, hardware stores and office supply stores whose services he actually needed. This, along with access to a better school system, is what prompted Tyrone to move outside of the city's boundaries to a nearby suburb where these amenities are readily available. However, for those impoverished residents, moving out of the area is not an option.

[407] Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, *Detroit Commercial Corridor Strategy* (Detroit, Michigan, February 2018), p. 4 <http://www.degc.org/wp-content/uploads/180206_Detroit_Executive-Summary4.1.pdf>.
[408] Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, p. 4.

Consequently, the lack of key urban amenities in Brightmoor creates a difficult situation for many of the neighbourhood's residents as they must travel outside of the neighbourhood boundaries to obtain basic needs or simply make do with those resources available, a situation we will see further explored in the following section.

In addition, the disappearance of these urban amenities, public spaces have declined as well. Aside from the churches and the Brightmoor Community Center, the neighbourhood has few places to congregate reducing the possibility for public encounter and the formation of civic culture.[409] The decay of these spaces in Brightmoor is not simply a representation of processes of urban decline, but their absence actively removes an element of urban public life from the neighbourhood. The extensive spatial decay in Brightmoor has radically altered what Margaret Crawford terms 'everyday space' defined as 'the physical domain of everyday public activity.[410]' If we understand architecture's materiality as the conduit of everyday space,[411] then we can understand the deterioration of it as actively removing a key element of urban life.

The Brightmoor Artisans Collective (BAC) is one of several initiatives that have arisen in Brightmoor in response to the absence of public space. Founded in 2014 with the help of Neighbors Building Brightmoor,[412] the BAC was established 'with the intention of creating and maintaining a safe space where community members could creatively work and learn together to process, market, and consume affordable healthy food.'[413] Though their work focuses specifically on addressing issues of food insecurity in the neighbourhood, the activities they sponsor and the use of the space reflects larger themes, highlighting important patterns of decline that affect the area today. The BAC is located on Fenkell Avenue, opposite an abandoned lot and a Speedy Gas Station, and is adjacent to a liquor store to its east and another abandoned lot to the west. It stands out aesthetically from the other buildings on the commercial corridor. This single story space is painted with bright colourful scenes depicting nature and gardens, there are planter boxes, a picnic table and a sheltered bus stop out front, and attached to the main building are two wooden patios, built by residents and volunteers

---

[409] Amin, *Public Space*.
[410] *Everyday Urbanism: Margaret Crawford vs. Michael Speaks*, Everyday Urbanism. New Urbanism. Post Urbanism & ReUrbanism (The University of Michigan, 2004), p. 9 <https://taubmancollege.umich.edu/sites/default/files/files/MAP%20books/mud1.pdf>.
[411] Dell Upton, 'Architecture in Everyday Life', *New Literary History*, 33.4 (2002), 707–23.
[412] Neighbors Building Brightmoor is a commmunity organisation in the Brightmoor community dedicated to hosting events and offering assistance for residents of the Brightmoor community.
[413] History, Mission & Vision', *Brightmoor Artisans Collective*, 2018 <http://brightmoorartisans.org/whoweare/history/>.

(Figures 31-32). The programming of the BAC is comprised of four main components: a kitchen classroom, a commercial kitchen, the Artisans Cafe & Farmers 'Market and the Community Creation Space. Each of these initiatives aim to create a space where community members can 'work and learn together to process, market and consume affordable and healthy food.'[414]

 It soon becomes clear however after spending time at the BAC that the centre does much more than increase awareness and education about food in the neighbourhood - it has become a community space, a gathering place, providing a setting where people can simply 'hang out'. One of my visits to the BAC was part of the Motown Meals program, a monthly initiative where volunteers cook and serve meals to members of the community free of charge. In the few hours that I was there, individuals would come and go, with some partaking in the meal, and others simply coming by to socialise. Many were considered 'regulars', recognised instantly by the BAC staff, and for others it was their first time visiting. Some stayed for five minutes, others for two hours. In addition to the monthly meal program, the BAC also provides a Community Creation Space that conducts daily programming year round. Neighbours participate in a variety of activities from homework help, to yoga, to movie nights and knitting classes. The space especially caters to the children of the community as it offers extracurricular activities that are not found elsewhere in the community. An employee of the BAC describes 'kids would just show up at the door, asking for food or just simply what's going on.' The BAC in these moments offered not only a glimpse of the activities happening in Brightmoor, but also of the desire of the residents to have a place to gather.

The BAC fills a void in the community by creating a public space where people can congregate. It combines all of the elements that the community has lost - a library, a movie theatre, and cafes for example. It shows how in Brightmoor, the deterioration of these public spaces do not merely represent the process of urban decline, but they actively remove an element of urban public life from the neighbourhood. As Fran Tonkiss argues, 'the distortion or disappearance of public space can be seen as an index of the weakening of public life and also a causal factor in its decay. Public spaces are downgraded by the same processes that reduce any coherent notion of the public sphere in itself'.[415] The lack of public space in

---

[414] 'History, Mission & Vision'.
[415] Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), p. 73.

Brightmoor reduces the neighbourhood's capacity to foster a sense of community. The physical deterioration and disinvestment of the public realm removes a particular interactive social element from the urban experience, or what Lofland refers to as 'the city's quintessential social territory.'[416] The BAC offers not only a glimpse of the activities happening n Brightmoor, but also of the desire of the residents to have a place to gather.

It is also important to note that these challenges are not restricted to the limits of Brightmoor. Many neighbourhoods in Detroit that have suffered from physical decay and blight have identified how the decline of the city reduced the number of public spaces. Barb, the president of the Warrendale community association explained during a walk through her community in southwest Detroit that many residents are frustrated by the lack of gathering places. 'There is nothing to bring people out', she says. She mentions the neighbourhood's one park that has turned into a soccer field and gathering place, but notes that neighbours have expressed interest to have coffee shops and ice cream parlours for example. Bridging Communities, a non-profit on Detroit's west side has taken on another approach to the lack of public space by fashioning their own. During the summer months, the organisation hosts movie nights and cultural exchanges for their multi-ethnic neighbourhood on a vacant and underutilised piece of land across from the Bridging Communities non-profit building (Figure 33). Phyllis, the president of the organisation, explains how they noticed that the space was being underutilized and sought to transform it. Residents of the community adopted a 'do-it-yourself 'mentality and mowed the overgrown grass, and set up temporary facilities, including tents, a projection screen, and tables and chairs to host events. The do-it-yourself effort undertaken by Bridging Communities and the surrounding residents to prepare this area for neighbourhood events, exemplifies a larger problem being faced by communities around Detroit, and especially those communities like Brightmoor that has suffered from extreme levels of physical deterioration. As I have argued elsewhere, these do-it-yourself initiatives and 'pop-up 'activities, in the form of movie nights near Bridging Communities or the various events at the BAC, 'emerge in response to the lack of resources in the city and as a way to counteract issues that have developed out of the urban crisis such as the lack of community space, food injustice, the breakdown of social networks, poverty and homelessness to name a few'[417], the absence of which will be explored in the following section.

---

[416] Lyn H. Lofland, *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory* (Routledge, 2017).
[417] Eve Avdoulos, 'The Pop-Up City in a Time of Crisis: Experimental Strategies for Rebuilding Detroit', in *Moving Cities - Contested Views on Urban Life* (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2017), pp. 205–23 (p. 210).

4.3 The absence of a public service infrastructure

As a result of the population and economic decline that has occurred in Detroit throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the city has lost the ability to fund and support basic services and amenities that residents, businesses, and visitors would expect to find in an urban environment. Scholars have discussed how this has resulted in a poorly maintained infrastructure, a decline in the quantity and quality of city services, a decrease in retail and social activities, the lack of social dynamism and energy, an increase in crime, the stigmatisation of the city's public image and the loss of urban fabric and cohesion.[418] Doucet and Smit highlight, 'Tax revenues are lost as people and businesses continue to leave the city. While revenues decline, public expenditures increase since the maintenance costs for infrastructure and for the upkeep of city services increase and are spread over an ever-declining population.'[419] Neighbourhoods are impacted by this decline. In Brightmoor, we are able to witness the extent of the city's decline through the absence of the provision of city services. Not only does the absence of these services create hardships for the city's residents, but we will see how this situation drives neighbourhood transformation, perpetuates inequality and marginalisation, and preserves a cycle of decline.

4.3.1 Living without city services

After years of disinvestment and decline the entire city of Detroit, and particularly neighbourhoods like Brightmoor, have been experiencing what Judge Steven Rhodes describes as 'service delivery insolvency'.[420] Decades long population decline meant that Detroit reduced its fiscal capacity, resulting in the city being unable to provide basic municipal services to many of its residents – among other issues, public parks were not being maintained, fire, police and emergency services response times were unacceptably long, street lights were scarce, and the public bus system was inadequately serving the needs of its residents.[421] Neighbourhoods that lacked density found themselves de-prioritised in terms of the provision of city services; Brightmoor, having lost over seventy-five percent of its population since 1960 and struggling to maintain a robust physical landscape, has suffered

---

[418] Rybczynski, W., & Linneman, P. D. (1999). How to save our shrinking cities. Public Interest, Spring, 30–44.; Martinez-Fernandez, C., Audirac, I., Fol, S., & Cunningham-Sabot, E. (2012). Shrinking cities: Urban challenges of globalization. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 36(2), 213–225.

[419] Brian Doucet and Edske Smit, 'Building an Urban "Renaissance": Fragmented Services and the Production of Inequality in Greater Downtown Detroit'

[420] Stephen Eide, '"Detroit Resurrected," by Nathan Bomey', *The New York Times*, 29 April 2016, section Book Review <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/01/books/review/detroit-resurrected-by-nathan-bomey.html>.

[421] The inadequate public services in Detroit existed long before the file for bankruptcy.

greatly. Today public service provision throughout the city's neighbourhoods, is poor and at times uncertain.

Reflective of the extent to which the city's decline has influenced the provision of public services can be seen in the historic decision to turn off the city's street light system. In mid-2013, around the time of the city's bankruptcy filing, it was estimated that about half of Detroit's 88,000 streetlights were not functioning.[422] This resulted in block after block of darkened city streets, contributing to the sense of a city in decline and disarray. As a commentary in the *Detroit News* described, 'The dark is one of the most visible and oppressive signs that Detroit's impoverished government struggles to provide even the most basic of services to its dwindling population…'[423] After having exhausted all other rational options to cut the city's budget, the city surrendered most of its remaining streetlights in a debt-forgiveness deal with the local utility company.[424] At one point, it was estimated that around forty percent of the city was in darkness, 'largely as a result of creeping system failure, long-term budget shortfalls and (selectively) abandoned maintenance efforts.'[425] In 2014, Mayor Mike Duggan, along with the newly established 'Public Lighting Authority' initiated the process of installing 65,000 new LED streetlights. While Detroit as a whole has seen an immense improvement, and has become celebrated in the media as becoming the largest U.S. city to have all light-emitting diode (LED) streetlights,[426] areas like Brightmoor, are not witnessing the full faculty of this investment. Lights have been strategically installed throughout the city on blocks that have multiple occupied homes, foregoing those with higher levels of abandonment. In Brightmoor, the residential tracts of the neighbourhood which are dense and comprised of a sound housing stock have seen the installation of the new street lights, but large portions of the neighbourhood continue to remain in darkness.

Police presence is yet another public service provision that is lacking throughout the city of Detroit, especially within the Brightmoor neighbourhood. Again, the city's financial issues contributed to this situation. In 1970, the Detroit police department employed 5,000 officers, yet as of 2017, this number is fewer than 3,000. Despite the fewer number of officers, the

---

[422] Kinzey iii; A 2015 report on the state of Detroit's lighting system reports that, 'Underlying causes included simple lamp burnouts that the city could not replace in a timely manner due to staff shortages; a growing copper and transformer theft problem; deteriorating wire, pole and substation infrastructure; and an inventory of about 20,000 lights still connected via series-wired circuits, so that one lamp or wire failure would cause all of the luminaires in an entire circuit to go dark.'
[423] Cheyfitz, K. (2012) 'Returning light to Detroit', Detroit News, 12 April,
[424] Davey, M. (2011a) 'Darker nights as some cities turn off the lights', New York Times, 29 December, p. A11.
[425] Jamie Peck, 'Austerity Urbanism: American Cities under Extreme Economy', *City*, 16.6 (2012), 626–55 (p. 637).
[426] JC Reindl, 'Detroit Streetlights Go from Tragedy to Bragging Point', *Detroit Free Press*, 15 December 2016 <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/12/15/detroit-streetlights-go-tragedy-bragging-point/95483846/>.

territory requiring patrol has not changed. As Okrent and Grey report, 'Forty years ago, the greatest distance a Detroit Police Department cruiser had to cover to get from its precinct station to a crime scene was less than three miles; today, there are homes in the city more than 7.5 miles from the nearest station'[427] often resulting in longer response times. This is very much the case in Brightmoor, where the nearest station located about two miles south of the neighbourhood. The poor provision of police services compounded by the deteriorated urban landscape constructs a physical and social environment that attracts a host of illegal activities. A former police officer who used to patrol the area described the numerous instances in which he would encounter, in these areas of extreme blight, drug dealers, scrappers and prostitutes, each of which are frequent occurrences in Brightmoor. Overhearing this conversation, another former officer added, 'What's in Brightmoor? Dead bodies that's for sure.' It is important to note that the issue of crime is not new to Detroit. The city ranked at the top of the 'most-dangerous 'cities list for many years, but the continued failure of municipal services to ensure a safe environment as continued to exacerbate these issues. Even when conducting this research, it was advised by residents of the neighbourhood as well as former officers and those knowledgeable of the crime condition, to stay away from certain areas, not to walk in the neighbourhood alone and not to stop your car in particular places for fear of carjacking or robbery. The prevalence of crime in the city might be startling for outsiders, but it often becomes the typical way of life for some residents. DJ, a Brightmoor resident and a student, describes, 'Sometimes at night when I try to do homework, I hear gunshots. It's really mentally challenging to live in that [type of] environment. When I first moved here it really bothered me, but now I'm kind of used to it. 'The desensitization to crime and how it becomes embedded into the way of life of the neighbourhood perpetuates the idea of decline working to demarcate Brightmoor as a neighbourhood where this type of action is normal if not expected.

One of the most visible differences between the Brightmoor neighbourhood and others in Detroit is the excessive amount of dumping visible on the streets, primarily those in the residential areas of the neighbourhood (Figure 34). Here, it is not uncommon to see heaps of trash comprised of small items such as soda bottles and paper, to larger items such as piles of wood and furniture. Prior to the bankruptcy filing, trash collection was the responsibility of the City of Detroit Department of Public Works, however after the reformed fiscal policy, the task of trash and recycling collection was contracted out to private companies. The

[427] Daniel Okrent and Steven Gray, 'The Future of Detroit: How to Shrink a City', *Time*, 11 November 2010 <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2030898,00.html>.

Brightmoor neighbourhood is serviced by 'Advanced Disposal', with standard garbage collection to occur once a week and bulk collection, yard waste and recycling services to occur every other week.

Although the city has employed a private contractor to handle waste disposal, according to residents, the quality of the services has only increased minimally and many continue to cite the infrequency of the service. One resident explains that waste collection in the Brightmoor neighbourhood varies based on population density. The more densely populated areas, such as those around the Brightmoor Farmway,[428] and the areas to the northeast for example, receive waste collection on a regular weekly basis. Those areas that are less densely populated and more heavily ridden with blight and abandonment, are serviced less frequently, if at all. 'It's a crapshoot 'he explains, 'you just get lucky.' If waste is put out for collection but does not get picked up, residents are able to call their district representative and report it, however even in those particular instances, residents may wait between an additional ten days and three weeks for the service to come and dispose of the garbage.

One of the main issues surrounding the lack of waste management in the neighbourhood is the knowledge of the citizens regarding the specifications and rules associated with waste collection. Both the recycling programs, and the bulk waste collection have particular stipulations that many do not follow when they place the items out for collection. The recycling service is less frequent than trash collection, and is only provided to customers who have registered for the recycling program. Registration can be done online or in person at the nearest facility, which is located just south of the neighbourhood. In the case of bulk items, residents do not need to register for collection services, however, there are specific requirements, that if not met, will result in the waste being left on the curb side. Advanced Disposal stipulates that bulk items should be no more than 1,000 pounds or exceed one cubic yard in volume and may not include remodelling or construction debris or hazardous waste (including paint, batteries, fuel etc.) It becomes very clear that many residents are not following these guidelines, placing items on the curb side exceeding the size limit or material guidelines. These piles are slowly added on to and eventually become heaps of trash that do not meet the standards for waste collection and are left on the street.[429]

---

[428] The Brightmoor Farmway is a 21-block area that contains a number of urban farms and community gardens; DJ interview p.187 field notebook

[429] If one has more bulk material than is allowed by the restrictions, one may rent their own dumpster or call the city who will provide an estimate for disposal of the items. However, this involves an additional fee, and for many Brightmoor residents, paying for a dumpster or special removal is not a financially viable option. Yard waste has similar restrictions which many residents are unaware of, leading to a related issues of excess waste and debris accumulation.

One of the reasons that Brightmoor's residents are unaware of the specifications of their services is that many of households in the neighbourhood do not have a computer or internet access, where much of this information is readily available, and the public library, which provides public computers is not located in Brightmoor neighbourhood. This issue of technological connectivity is yet another issue faced by Brightmoor residents.

4.3.2 Motorless in the Motor City

Much like the rest of Detroit, the issue of the transportation infrastructure greatly influences the residents of Brightmoor. Historically, Detroit operated one of the largest municipally owned transportation systems in the world, comprised of over 2,800 vehicles including street cars, electric trackless trolley-coaches and motor buses.[430] Detroit's public transportation system however, was short-lived; the influence of the car as a key object of mass production and consumption greatly impacted the spatial organisation of the city, influencing everything from the street layout to the development of suburban housing and the growth of shopping malls[431] and soon became the dominant form of transportation in Detroit. Although the city's legacy is that of the 'Motor City', with land use patterns almost completely reliant on personal automobile ownership, and very few public transportation options, today, just 74.8 percent of Detroit residents own a car.[432] One of the primary reasons for this is the city's above average cost of car insurance which can range anywhere between $200 to $450 per month - or $2400 to $5400 annually.[433] For many Detroit residents affording such rates can be extremely difficult, considering that the city's median household income is about $28,000.[434] The cost of insurance, in addition to the cost of purchasing and maintaining a vehicle, often makes it a non-viable form of transportation for many Detroit residents. In areas like Brightmoor, where 42.5 percent of individuals live in a situation of poverty, it is not surprising that approximately one quarter of the households in the neighbourhood do not have access to a vehicle.[435]

---

[430] A brief look back at detroit's transit history

[431] Mike Featherstone, 'Automobilities: An Introduction', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21.4–5 (2004), 1–24 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404046058>.

[432] This is compared to national average of 90.8%. See (US Department of Transportation, 2016, p. 1)

[433] The reason for the disproportionately high insurance rates in Detroit is due to the lifetime, unlimited medical coverage in case of an accident. Other US cities place a cap on the medical insurance claim that can be filed and therefore have lower automotive insurance rates. A particular issue that arises in Detroit is what has been termed 'dirty driving', or driving without insurance. Today, as many as 60% of Detroit motorists do not have insurance.

[434] Christine MacDonald and Nicquel Terry, 'Census: Detroit Incomes up for First Time since 2000', *Detroit News*, 2017 <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2017/09/14/detroit-incomes-rise-first-time-since/105588010/> [accessed 20 April 2018].

[435] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 21.

For individuals without a car, the bus system becomes their main form of transportation. Unlike other larger US cities, the Detroit bus system is unreliable for many of its residents because of the way in which it is structurally administered and its geographical reach. Detroit's bus system is comprised of the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transport (SMART), serving parts of Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties and the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) servicing the city of Detroit including Hamtramck and Highland Park. The two systems operate under a cooperative service and fare agreement. Though they are meant to operate as one large unit providing service to all residents of both the city and the metropolitan region, they have different funding bodies and therefore different service restrictions; SMART is funded by suburban taxpayers, while DDOT is a department of the City of Detroit, receiving funding only from residents within the city boundaries. This results in distinct geographic service divisions between the two (Figure 35). For example, SMART can only transport riders from a point in the city to the suburbs or vice versa; it cannot transport riders exclusively within the city boundaries. John Hertel, the general manager of SMART explains, 'I can pick people up at the edge of the city and take them to a job in the suburbs. I can pick people up in the suburbs and take them to certain places and drop them off in the city. I cannot, legally, [transport riders exclusively within the city boundaries].'[436]

Brightmoor is serviced by three public DDOT bus routes. There are two east-west routes, Route 43 – Schoolcraft and Route 18 – Fenkell, located one mile apart and one north-south route, Route 60 – Evergreen, located towards the eastern boundary of the neighbourhood. There are an additional three routes that some residents of Brightmoor use, though they are outside of the neighbourhood boundaries: Route 21 - Grand River, Route 46 - Southfield, and Route 38 - Plymouth. There is an additional north-south route serviced by the SMART bus system that travels along Telegraph Road. The geographic reach of these bus systems are limited, meaning that riders will often have to change buses two or three times depending on the location they are trying to get to.

Anna is a resident of Brightmoor who lives on the east side of the neighbourhood, close to Eliza Howell Park. She lives twelve miles from her place of employment in the Downtown

---

[436] Leonard Fleming, 'SMART Urged to Change Boarding Policy in Detroit', *Detroit News*, 11 January 2015 <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/wayne-county/2015/01/10/smart-urged-change-boarding-policy-detroit/21570061/> [accessed 18 February 2018].

Area and uses her personal vehicle as her primary mode of transportation. Anna mentions that she is fortunate to be in a financial position which allows her to own and maintain a car in the city. She originally began using public transportation when she first moved to the area, however cites issues of accessibility and consistency kept her from using the service. In order to get to her place of employment, from her house, she would have to walk approximately one mile to one of the nearest bus stops on Schoolcraft Road and wait for Route 43. She would ride that route for approximately fifteen minutes and get off at Grand River where she would switch to Route 21. She would ride this bus for approximately forty minutes and then depart to reach her place of employment. This route option would take around one hour and twenty minutes, one way; but by using a car, Anna cuts down this journey to just twenty minutes. Furthermore, the journey would take one hour and twenty minutes only if the bus comes on time. DDOT buses have long struggled with punctuality and consistency, especially on routes that service the less dense areas of the city.[437] For example, an employee of the Brightmoor Artisans Collective recalls an instance in which an elderly man visited the Collective to take home some fresh produce, and then went to the bus stop just outside of the Collective for his journey home. The man waited outside for just over thirty minutes for a bus scheduled to come every twenty minutes, yet the bus had not yet arrived. In other situations, the employee explained, one might have decided to walk, however, due to his age, the man was not capable of doing so. Once the employee noticed that the man was still waiting long after he left, he invited him back inside the Collective to have a coffee while he waited. The employee described that the man ended up waiting for the bus for over two hours.

Poor transit options within the city are just one obstacle for many residents; another issue is regional transit. Regional transport for Brightmoor residents is extremely important because few employment opportunities exist in Brightmoor, and as a Data Driven Detroit study suggests, 'this situation is not expected to change noticeably in the near future…[the study] found that of the four fastest growing job sectors in the Detroit area, none is operating in Brightmoor.'[438] This means that many residents in the area must travel outside of their neighbourhood for employment opportunities, to cities such as Novi and Livonia, which are centres for low-wage jobs in retail and manufacturing. However, Detroit does not have an integrated regional transit system. For many Detroit residents, accessing employment

---

[437] Bill Shea, 'Potential Help for Late Buses, Inefficient Bus Routes in Detroit: Advanced Metrics', *Crain's Detroit Business*, 9 April 2017 <http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20150315/NEWS/303159972/potential-help-for-late-buses-inefficient-bus-routes-in-detroit>.
[438] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 15.

opportunities, businesses or amenities outside of the city boundary becomes an extraordinarily complex and time-consuming task.

The journey from Brightmoor to jobs in the suburbs for example, is often times convoluted. Take for example, the trip from Brightmoor to Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi, one of the region's main shopping centres and magnet for low-wage jobs in retail (Figure 36). This journey, using public transportation, can take anywhere between seventy-seven minutes and two hours and twenty minutes depending on the time of day and direction of travel, and can involve the usage of either three or four different buses.[439] A car journey between the same two points takes a mere twenty minutes. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that Novi, the city in which Twelve Oaks Mall is located, is one of the 'opt-out 'communities for SMART transportation[440], meaning that they have elected not to have a public transportation service run through the city's boundary. The city of Livonia is another example. In 2012, Livonia was the location of 9,447 manufacturing jobs[441] and a main shed for employment opportunities for Brightmoor residents as it is located a mere ten miles from the neighbourhood. However, due to the 'opt-out 'status of the community, public transportation does not run within the boundaries of the city of Livonia, making it extraordinarily difficult for residents without access to a vehicle to access these employment opportunities. In fact, 38,461 manufacturing jobs are located in the opt-out communities, representing 34.1 percent of all manufacturing jobs in Wayne and Oakland Counties.[442] For those residents relying on public transportation, job opportunities become limited due to these legislative and administrative issues. Furthermore, what is particularly frustrating is that both of these examples, Twelve Oaks Mall and the city of Livonia, two main hubs for employment opportunities for Brightmoor residents, could be easily accessed with the extension of the DDOT bus routes as both areas are located on two main roads serviced by the DDOT system within the city boundaries. Route 21, for example, located just to the north of the Brightmoor neighbourhood, stops abruptly at the city boundary, but if it was continued would travel within one mile of the Twelve Oaks Mall. Route 38, located just south of the Brightmoor neighbourhood, if extended past the city boundary would be able to provide transportation service for the city of

---

[439] Chad Livengood, 'Brightmoor to Novi: The Long Ride for Low-Wage Workers', *Crain's Detroit Business*, 18 February 2018 <http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20180218/blog026/653251/brightmoor-to-novi-the-long-ride-for-low-wage-workers>.

[440] In Wayne and Oakland counties municipalities have the option to either opt-in or opt-out supporting SMART, and therefor having it run through their community. The nine opt-out communities include: Novi, Waterford, Lake Angelus, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Keego Harbor, Sylvan Lake, Orchard Lake, Bloomfield Hills.

[441] 'Opting-Out Limits Manufacturing Employment Opportunities for the Transit Dependent', *Drawing Detroit*, 2015 <http://www.drawingdetroit.com/tag/opt-out/>.

[442] 'Opting-Out Limits Manufacturing Employment Opportunities for the Transit Dependent'.

Livonia. The issue of mobility in Brightmoor not only physically isolates the community from the rest of Detroit and the region, as residents dependent on public transportation are limited by where the bus service is able to transport them, but socially it excludes them from particular opportunities available elsewhere such as education and employment.

4.3.3. The (Re)Production of Inequality and the Marginalisation of Brightmoor

The poor provision of city services and a restricted mobility infrastructure speaks to wider concerns of city and regional integration and equality. What becomes very clear is that in a situation where nearly a quarter of the population lack access to a vehicle and where public services are largely unable to fill very basic needs, communities like Brightmoor become both physically and socially isolated not only from the rest of the city of Detroit, but the wider region as a whole. Essential services become are a limited resource reserved for those who can afford it, rather than a public good available for all. Therefore, the infrastructure in Brightmoor both reproduces and reflects urban inequality by facilitating access to productive opportunities as well as playing a key role in the integration of individuals into the social and economic life of the city.[443] Brightmoor becomes akin to what Wacquant describes a space of 'advanced marginality'.[444] He describes, 'the resurgence of extreme poverty and destitution, ethnoracial divisions (linked to the colonial past) and public violence, and their accumulation in the same distressed urban areas, suggest that the metropolis is the site and fount of novel forms of exclusionary social closure in advanced societies'.[445] Thus, we can see from the case of Brightmoor, that processes of urban decline not only effects the physical fabric of neighbourhoods but facilitates the conditions for the production of inequality and marginalisation of the neighbourhood, illustrating that decline is not simply the reversal of growth but a process that alters the socio-spatial conditions and character of a place.

4.4 Attempts at mediating decline

The neighbourhood of Brightmoor has so far demonstrated how processes of urban decline produce a particular set of conditions that disrupt the traditional urban order. These conditions result in the disappearance of urban amenities and public space, interrupt the provision of

---

[443] Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', in *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), pp. 149–50; 'Infrastructure, Interruption, and Inequality: Urban Life in the Global South', in *Disrupted Cities When Infrastructure Fails* (New York: Routledge, 2010); S. Graham and S. Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (Taylor & Francis, 2002); César Calderón and Luis Servén, *Infrastructure, Growth, and Inequality: An Overview* (World Bank Group, September 2014).
[444] Loic J. D. Wacquant, 'The Rise of Advanced Marginality: Notes on Its Nature and Implications', *Acta Sociologica*, 39.2 (1996), 121–39.
[445] Loic J. D. Wacquant, p. 121.

public services, and disrupt spatial continuities fostering inequality and the marginalisaiton of the community. Unlike conflicts such as war or natural disaster, which may create immediate change or uncertainty, Detroit's decline has been a long-term situation, gradually unfolding over many decades. Therefore, hardships created by the lack of mobility, disappearance of urban amenities, and sparse public services for example, have slowly become a way of life for some of Brightmoor's residents.[446] As a result, the community has, over time, developed ways to cope with the conditions created by urban decline.

4.4.1 Survival, Resilience and Resistance

The ways in which Brightmoor's residents have been able to manage under the conditions created by decline can be viewed through three lenses: surviving the situation, being resilient, and at times resisting it.[447] While surviving in Brightmoor can be described as balancing key aspects of everyday life, resilience requires proactive measures to deal with the challenges of reality, and resistance is refusing to give in to the difficult situation and therefore working against it.[448] These three states do not exclude one another, nor are they automatically inclusive, and in Brightmoor, the actions of the residents often shift between them at different times and to different extents.

The lack of urban amenities and public services within the neighbourhood, compounded with a relatively low median income, means that 'many Brightmoor residents are struggling to obtain food, shelter, clothing, heating and lighting, medical care, and the income to purchase these essentials.Therefore, surviving the conditions created by a period of long term [449],[ ] decline can become quite difficult. Residents occasionally must find creative ways to make do, at times resorting to measures that are outside the boundaries of legality. For example, DJ is a resident of Brightmoor who describes himself as 'pretty privileged', explaining 'I have a car, money's ok, I'm white.' He lives in one of the neighbourhood's lower density areas in a house without running water. He explains, 'the person who rented out the house before I got it, didn't actually own it, so to avoid being found out, they illegally drilled into the water

---

[446] It would be misleading to characterise all of Brightmoor negatively; as it has been shown, there are stable and thriving portions of the community. This section, however, will focus on those areas in the neighbourhood that suffer

[447] The definitions of survival, resilience and resistance have been adapted from the Conflict in Cities and the Contested State research project: 'Survival can be described as responding to conflict situations, whilst managing to keep key aspects of everyday life in reasonable balance. Resilience revolves around being in control and recovering from setbacks, and requires proactive measures to preempt the worst conflict abuses. Resistance is the refusal to comply, working against a conflict situation or occupation in an active way.' Conflict in Cities and the Contested State, *Coping with Conflict: Dealing with Everyday Life in Divided Cities* (University of Cambridge, 2012), p. 1.

[448] Conflict in Cities and the Contested State, *Coping with Conflict: Dealing with Everyday Life in Divided Cities*.

[449] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 17.

pipes.' DJ explains that he has not yet fixed the issue, nor will he report it to the city, citing that a city water bill is simply too expensive for him to afford. Instead he will remain on this illegal water tap system until he is able to recognise his eventual goal of creating a self-filtering rainwater system. DJ's situation not only highlights the issue of the informal housing market prevalent in both Brightmoor and throughout Detroit,[450] but also brings to light the ways in which residents 'survival depends upon the 'pursuit of activities that in normal circumstances need little thought or planning'[451], and sometimes relies on carrying out particular activities 'under the radar'.[452]

However, not all of Brightmoor is characterised simply by a means of survival. The neighbourhood has also had an increase in organised activities that have reinforced resilience and resistance within the community. Take for example, the practice of urban farming, which has rapidly emerged as a popular practice in the neighbourhood. In many areas characterised by extensive blight and abandonment, residents have begun to transform the landscape by carefully boarding up vacant houses, beautifying blighted lots and transforming underutilized land into urban farms. The most prominent example in the neighbourhood is the Brightmoor Farmway (Figure 37). As Herscher explains,

> *In the summer of 2009, a consortium of community organizations then began to plan the linkage of these gardens and parks by a neighborhood-scale "farmway." As this farmway developed, it has come to include not only a path connecting around 20 existing gardens, but also new pocket parks, new community gardens, a wildflower garden, an orchard and a market garden for neighborhood youth. The farmway both joins these self-organized projects to one another and also joins them to Eliza Howell Park, an existing public green space in the neighbourhood.[453]*

Created by the residents to reactivate vacant land in the neighbourhood while simultaneously addressing the issue of food access and inequality, The Brightmoor Farmway, is just one example of the physical and cultural resilience found in Brightmoor. The practice of urban farming here, and throughout the city of Detroit, represents the ways in which residents are

---

[450] Claire Herbert, 'Property Rights in the Context of Urban Decline: Informality, Temporality, and Inequality' (University of Michigan, 2016); Claire W. Herbert, 'Like a Good Neighbor, Squatters Are There: Property and Neighborhood Stability in the Context of Urban Decline', *City & Community*, 17.1 (2018), 236–58; Noah J. Durst and Jake Wegmann, 'Informal Housing in the United States: Informal Housing In The United States', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 41.2 (2017), 282–97; Margaret Dewar and others.
[451] Conflict in Cities and the Contested State, *Coping with Conflict: Dealing with Everyday Life in Divided Cities*.
[452] Conflict in Cities and the Contested State, *Coping with Conflict: Dealing with Everyday Life in Divided Cities*.
[453] Herscher, *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit*.

actively working to change and improve their current realities. Also interpreted as a form of resistance against the conditions created by the process of decline, urban farms, as White describes, 'operate as a safe space where [residents] are able to define their behavior as a form of resistance, one in which their resistance is against the social structures that have perpetuated inequality in terms of healthy food access, and one where they are able to create outdoor, living, learning, and healing spaces for themselves and for members of the community. [454]'

In addition to urban farming, other practices have emerged in the neighbourhood highlighting community resilience. These include the self provisioning of public services, such as mowing lawns and cleaning parks; the establishing of a sharing economy where individuals trade goods such as maple syrup or fresh vegetables for other goods or services; and the re-activation of vacant land for more productive purposes such as urban gardening as we have seen, or community gathering places. These spaces and practices that lay outside of formal institutional structures, are not, as Thieme et al explain, 'merely exceptional and imperfect counterparts to the mainstream city 'but rather 'integral to (re)shaping urban practices.'[455]
 In each of these cases, residents are rethinking their relationships to the city and to others and finding ways to exist in an environment affected by processes of decline. However, while these initiatives represent a glimmer of hope in the midst of decline, we must be critical in examining their effectiveness in overcoming deeper issues faced in Brightmoor and their long-term impact.

4.4.2. Temporary Bandage or Long Term Solution?

George Galster, Professor of Urban Affairs at Wayne State University imagines the city of Detroit as a bathtub. He describes, 'The new investments and activities are like water pouring into the tub. But nothing has been done to plug the giant hole at the bottom of the tub.'[456]
In this case, the giant hole in the tub refers to the persistent issues of poverty, unemployment, racism and access to resources that continue to plague the city today. Galster makes it a point to note that while these interventions are indeed providing a short term solution to particular issues in the city, they are doing little to mitigate the deeper and structural issues of Detroit's

---

[454] Monica M. White, 'Sisters of the Soil: Urban Gardening as Resistance in Detroit', *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 5.1 (2011), 13–28 (p. 18).

[455] Tatiana Thieme, Michele Lancione, and Elisabetta Rosa, 'The City and Its Margins: Ethnographic Challenges across Makeshift Urbanism: Introduction', *City*, 21.2 (2017), 127–34 (p. 132).

[456] Brian Doucet, 'Detroit's Gentrification Won't Give Poor Citizens Reliable Public Services', *The Guardian*, 17 February 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/feb/17/detroit-gentrification-poverty-public-services-race-divide>.

decline.[457] Kimberly Kinder, an assistant professor at University of Michigan who has extensively documented the do-it-yourself culture emerging in Detroit in response to conditions created by decline, cautions us that it is 'unfair to expect fragmented self-provisioning to reverse Detroit's trenchant history of disinvestment, racism, and crisis'explaining that these practices underscore 'the need for meaningful, organized, collective responses against neoliberal capitalism and market-based governing.'[458] We must therefore be careful in elevating these practices as capable of reversing decline.

While resident led initiatives, such as the Brightmoor Farmway and the Brightmoor Artisans Collective, dominate efforts being made in Brightmoor to combat the consequences of decline, more organised approaches have been established seeking to mitigate the effects of decline as well. These include various interventions from non-profit organisations such as The Skillman Foundation,[459] the Brightmoor Alliance[460] and Neighbors Building Brightmoor,[461] who have each pledged to engage in long-term investment in the area. The Detroit Blight Authority is another non-profit that has become very involved in the Brightmoor neighbourhood. Since 2014, they have cleared approximately 30 blocks of blight.[462] The blight clearance has removed a vast portion of vacant land in the community and while some herald this act as a first step towards regeneration and a clear sign of the comeback of the city, residents are sceptical. Joe, a long term resident of Brightmoor, highlights that while the blight clearance has done a good job of removing 'undesirables' from the neighbourhood (drug addicts, prostitutes, scrappers), it simply creates unused space which, as of present, has not been planned for any future use. 'What do you do with all of the open land? 'he continues. This situation represents how many of these initiatives are temporary fixes to a much larger problem. While they address immediate challenges in the neighbourhood, they do little to offset the larger issues of urban decline.

[457] Doucet, 'Detroit's Gentrification Won't Give Poor Citizens Reliable Public Services'
[459] The Skillman Foundation. 'Kids Matter Here. An Analytic Review of the 10-Year Good Neighborhoods Initiative'. < https://www.skillman.org/data-and-evaluation/gni/>
[460] Community Development Advocates of Detroit, *Brightmoor Restore the 'Moor Report*, 2014 < https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0CvFLlGAtWMZThTMWFRa21FY1U/view/>.
[461] 'Neighbors Building Brightmoor - Home' <http://www.neighborsbuildingbrightmoor.org/>.
[462] Kirk Pinho, 'Blight Authority Targets Additional 21-Block Area of Brightmoor', *Crain's Detroit Business*, 2014 <http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20140120/NEWS/140129996/blight-authority-targets-additional-21-block-area-of-brightmoor>.

4.5 Distorting the Urban Order: Decline as Urban Transformation

As we have seen, what sets Brightmoor apart from other neighbourhoods in the city is the extraordinary transformation of the physical landscape. This is a neighbourhood, which has not only experienced decline, but has almost become the epitome of it. One can even argue that Brightmoor is perhaps beyond decline, and instead has completely collapsed.[463] The urban wilding that is found throughout the neighbourhood is indicative of how much this area has been transformed over time. Not only does this landscape represent the loss of control of the city and the cycle of decline that has created a systemic issue for the area, but this landscape actively creates a new state of urban being – one that is more nature than urban. This has ramifications. The example of the Brightmoor neighbourhood has illustrated the ways in which processes of decline actively undo both the social and spatial order of the city, often resulting in the loss of vital urban functions, the physical transformation of space, and the production and reproduction of divisions and inequality. As we have seen, not only do these conditions influence the way people live in the neighbourhood, but they require residents to rethink their relationship to the city and re-conceptualise how particular spaces are characteristically being used. Therefore, this research suggests that urban decline is not simply the outcome of various urban processes, but that it is itself, an active agent of change, defined by its ability to transform space in both form and function.

4.5.1. The Return of Nature and the Loss of Control

The decaying landscape of Brightmoor, and much of the rest of Detroit, has become an object of fascination for many. Magazines, photography anthologies, blogs and online news sources have consistently proliferated these images adding to their popularity. Photographers such as Camilo Jose Vergara, Lowell Boileau, and Marchand and Meffre for example, who document the deteriorated state of Detroit, have begun to construct imaginative geographies[464] of the city, as they focus on the abandoned homes and manufacturing plants, crumbling infrastructures and empty streets, highlighting the picturesque decay of what was once America's 'Arsenal of Democracy'. Brightmoor in particular, as one of the neighbourhoods most closely associated with urban decay, has been very closely intertwined with these imaginative geographies of decline. For example, Rollo Romig of *The New Yorker* describes of the neighbourhood, 'Much of Brightmoor matches what Detroit looks like in the popular

---

[463] This is perhaps an argument that can be further explored in continued research.
[464] Said.

imagination—an alarming amalgam of city dump, crime scene, and wild prairie'.[465] While these images and narratives associated with the decay, create an image of Detroit that is easily consumed and often romanticized, they often negate the severity of what urban decline and its ability to transform spaces means for the city.

The transformation of the urban landscape in Brightmoor, specifically the 'wilding 'of the landscape, is significant not only in scale, as large swaths of land have been consumed by the most severe forms of decay including collapsing houses, overgrown lots, complete emptiness and abandonment, and neglect and deterioration, but in that it represents the inability of the city to control the outcome of particular social, economic and physical processes associated with urban decline. This landscape therefore raises questions not only about the future of Detroit and the Brightmoor neighbourhood, but perhaps more fundamentally about the meaning of urbanity itself. As Marr highlights,

> *The conventional wisdom tells us that urban environments are sites for conviviality and the dense meshing of diverse populations, in which there is a strict separation between the country and the city. In Detroit, none of these criteria for what makes a 'proper' 'western' city hold true any longer – or, at least, in the manner in which urban theory tells us to expect.*[466]

The return of nature to the urban landscape found throughout the city, but especially in areas like Brightmoor, is in direct opposition to traditional tenants of American urbanism. In *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, historian Frederick Jackson Turner writes,

> *The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people - to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life*[467]

---

465 Rollo Romig, 'When You've Had Detroit', *The New Yorker*, 17 June 2014 <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/when-youve-had-detroit>.
466 Stephen Marr, 'Worlding and Wilding: Lagos and Detroit as Global Cities', *Race & Class*, 57.4 (2016), 3–21 (p. 11).
467 Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' (presented at the American Historical Association meeting, Chicago, 1893).

Here, Turner places emphasis on the American man's ability to transform the wilderness, in order to, in the words of Frances Grund 'enlarge their dominion over inanimate nature'.[468] However, what we see happening in Brightmoor today is the exact opposite.

The landscape of Brightmoor presents particular environmental stimuli - extensive decay, vacant houses, blight, dumping, and driveways leading to nowhere - that stand in direct opposition to normative perceptions of what a city should be. Rather than man and the city 'winning' a wilderness, in the case of Brightmoor, the wilderness is 'winning' the city. This particular landscape evokes what professor of art history and visual culture Dora Apel calls the 'anxiety of decline'.[469] This landscape, as she describes, 'may be understood as the dark side of modernity...Faith in progress and rationality erodes as economic and ecological crisis, poverty and urban deterioration grow.'[470] The contemporary ruins in Brightmoor and the unrestricted expansion of the natural world on to the man made urban environment, akin to Vidler's 'uncanny architecture'[471] is what Huyssen describes as 'utopia in reverse'.[472] As Gandy adds, 'These devalorised spaces clearly unsettle the organisational telos of modernity.'[473] The emergence of these landscapes, is not only the result of particular economic and social processes, but they appear, reproduce, and prevail as a result of the city losing control over the urban order. They represent a vicious cycle where decline begets decline. This is evidenced by the fact that this process of natural reclamation is not a deliberate act. Unlike intentional re-wilding efforts which have been gaining traction amongst conservationists,[474] the wilding of the Brightmoor neighbourhood is unwanted and uninhibited. It is widespread and unrestrained. Brightmoor has transformed into what Gandy describes as an 'unintentional landscape…an aesthetic encounter with nature that has not been purposively created.'[475] 'The presence of unintentional landscapes' continues Gandy, 'connects with a myriad of zones of neglect'.[476] In the context of Detroit, and in Brightmoor more specifically, this neglect stems from the city's relinquished control over the maintenance

---

[468] Francis J. Grund, *The Americans in Their Moral, Social and Political Relations*, American Culture Series, History Collection (Marsh, Capen and Lyon, 1837), p. 8. [Footnote in Turner, *Frontier*, 1920]
[469] Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline*.
[470] Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline*, p. 5.
[471] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, 5. print (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999).
[472] Huyssen, p. 7.
[473] Gandy, p. 435.
[474] See Dave Foreman, *Rewilding North America: A Vision For Conservation In The 21St Century* (Island Press, 2004); Laetitia M. Navarro and Henrique M. Pereira, 'Rewilding Abandoned Landscapes in Europe', in *Rewilding European Landscapes*, ed. by Henrique M. Pereira and Laetitia M. Navarro (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 3–23 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12039-3_1>; Chris Sandom and others, 'Rewilding', in *Key Topics in Conservation Biology 2*, ed. by David W. Macdonald and Katherine J. Willis (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), pp. 430–51 <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118520178.ch23>.
[475] Gandy, p. 434.
[476] Gandy, p. 435.

of its urban environment. The wilding of the urban landscape therefore must not be viewed simply as an object of fascination and contemplation, but rather as an important moment in the history of Detroit that signifies the inability of the city to maintain and control its urban environment. As such, the wilding of Brightmoor begins to represent the powerful ramifications of urban decline, suggesting that decline is much more than a fluctuation of growth and prosperity, but a process that has the ability to transform both the spatial and social character of the city. Decline in Brightmoor has altered, very visibly, the neighbourhood's physical fabric, but also has reinterpreted the very role of the city itself. It is therefore important to understand urban decline not simply as an outcome of urban change, but as an agent of it.

4.5.2 A Qualitative Change

While many scholars have focused on how quantifiable factors such as population, income, and housing values for example indicate trends of growth or decline, few embrace non-measurable characteristics of the city in attempting to illustrate the same phenomenon. As this chapter has shown, there are particular aspects of the city, such as mobility, access to urban amenities, sense of place and urban inclusion that play a prominent role in understanding the effects of decline on the urban environment. As the case of Brightmoor has demonstrated, urban decline is not simply a measurement of growth or its fluctuation, but a process that ignites a major qualitative change in the neighbourhood.[477] Urban decline not only transforms physical space, but affects the ways in which people live in it as well.

By viewing the challenges that arise out of processes of urban decline as active agents of change rather than passive outcomes of processes of decline, we can begin to see how particular spatial and social patterns change the way in which people think, behave and perceive the neighbourhood. Residents must find new ways of navigating their urban landscapes and often times must re-negotiate traditional uses of space. While these changes can be viewed from a positive perspective, recognising the establishment of urban gardens for example as a new way of adapting to a city in decline, these transformations often have profound and lasting negative ramifications. Not only do processes of decline produce an urban landscape that often disrupts the traditional use of a space, challenging residents to re-think their relationship to those areas and systems around them, but these processes entrench

---

[477] It is important to highlight that this research does not wish to privilege a qualitative reading of space over the use of qualitative methods, for by doing this we are continually entrapped within the very binaries that we wish to escape, but rather highlight the usefulness of exploring urban decline from a qualitative perspective.

socio-spatial divisions and inequality within the urban landscape. It is for this reason that various attempts to cope with decline by the residents of Brightmoor are often unsuccessful in catalysing large-scale change within the neighbourhood. While practices such as urban gardening and establishments like the Brightmoor Artisans Collective may be successful in addressing short-term challenges, they do little to reverse larger socio-spatial concerns.

Furthermore, through the study of Brightmoor, we begin to witness how urban decline eventually becomes subject to itself. As the case of Brightmoor has shown for example, once houses begin to fall into a state of disrepair due to their poor quality, and residents begin moving out of the neighbourhood, property values drop, infrastructure begins to crumble, the public realm begins to deteriorate, municipal services are reduced, urban amenities disappear, and soon, citizens are faced with trying to navigate a challenging urban landscape. The neighbourhood becomes isolated from the rest of the city and region and the community marginalised. Therefore, we must understand processes of decline, not simply as a fluctuation of measures of growth and prosperity, but an active process that disrupts urban order, transforming the neighbourhood, economically, physically and socially.
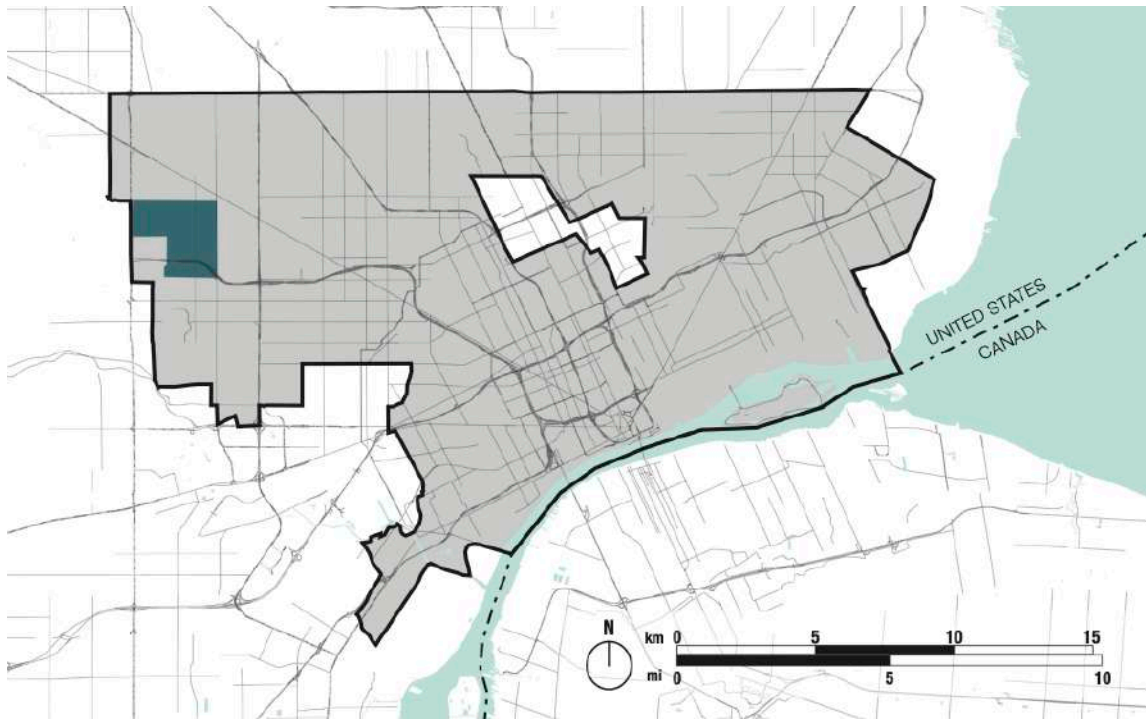
Figure 21 Map of Detroit illustrating the location of the Brightmoor neighbourhood

Figure 22 Map of the Brightmoor neighbourhood

Figure 23 An abandoned property on Dolphin Street in Brightmoor illustrating the extent of urban wilding in the neighbourhood (August, 2016)

Figure 24 Westbrook Street looking west on Eaton Street, April 2018

Figure 25 Panorama of the corner of Westbrook Street and Eaton Street, April 2018

Figure 26 B.E. Taylor's original Brightmoor Subdivisions (Source: McKenna and Associates)

Figure 27 15378 Lamphere Street. One of the few existing original 'Taylor Homes' constructed for the Brightmoor neighbourhood. April, 2018

Figure 28 Property values of the homes within the Brightmoor neighbourhood (Source: Loveland)

Figure 29 Abandoned house with boarded up windows, August, 2016

Figure 30 Fenkell Avenue commercial corridor, August 2016

Figure 31 Brightmoor Artisans Collective, March 2017

Figure 32 Brightmoor Artisans Collective, March 2017

Figure 33 Vacant lot across from the Bridging Communities non-profit. August, 2016

Figure 34 Trash dumping in the Brightmoor neighbourhood. April, 2017

Figure 35 Detroit's public transportation network illustrating the routes of both the DDOT and SMART bus systems (Source: Regional Transit Authority of Michigan)

Figure 36 Illustration depicting the journey between Brightmoor and the suburb of Novi. (Source: Crain's Detroit Business)
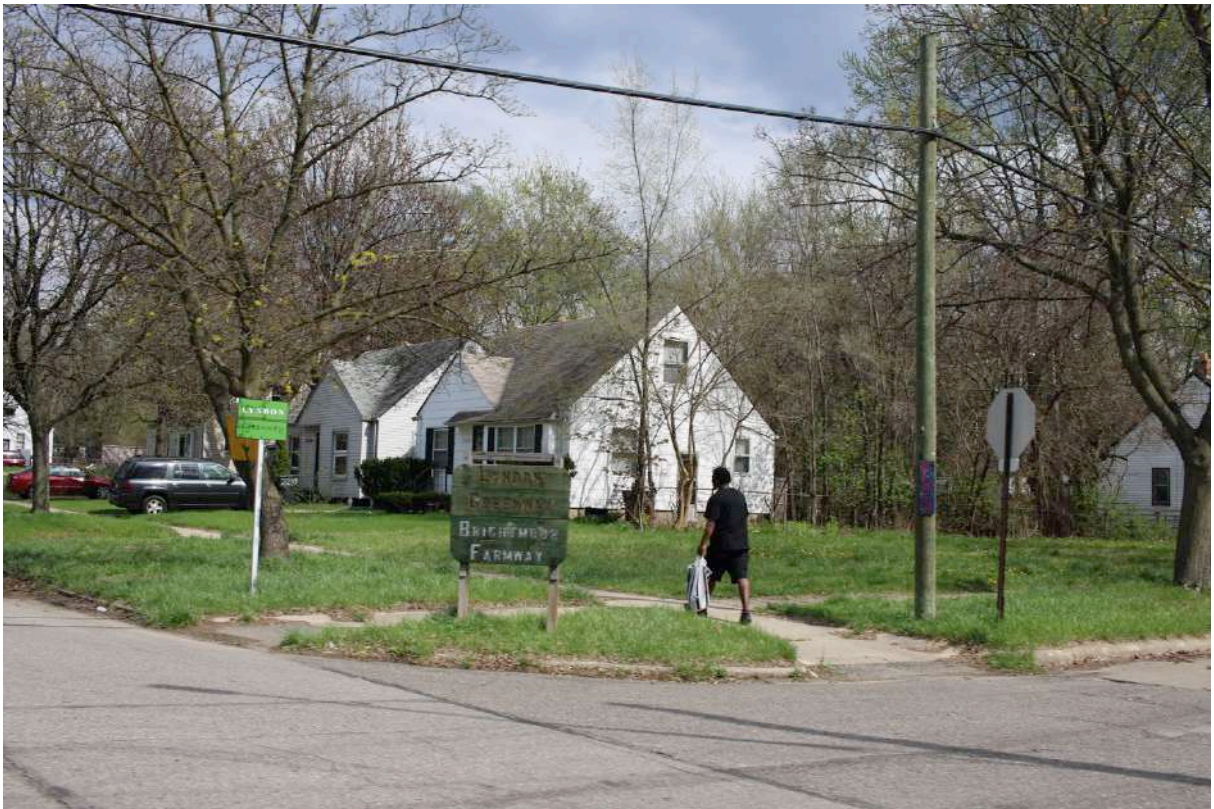
Figure 37 The beginning of the Brightmoor Farmway. April, 2018

5. Stabilisation in times of decline: Grandmont Rosedale

Bordering the western edge of Brightmoor is a cluster of five smaller neighbourhoods, Rosedale Park, North Rosedale Park, Minock Park, Grandmont and Grandmont #1, known collectively as the Grandmont-Rosedale community. Covering approximately 2.5 square miles, the five neighbourhoods present a very different portrait of Detroit in comparison to what Brightmoor tells us of the city. Grandmont Rosedale is dense and residential in character and comprised primarily of single-family homes. The streets, sidewalks and landscapes are well maintained. The neighbourhoods are structured around parks, schools and other civic organisations and the commercial corridors are home to cafes, retail outlets and businesses. Unlike Brightmoor, it is not uncommon to see residents actively engaging in community activities, whether a baseball game at Stoepel Park, a community barbecue at Ramsay Park or a visit to the Northwest Detroit Farmers Market in the North Rosedale Park neighbourhood. Compared to the relative emptiness of Brightmoor, Grandmont Rosedale is lively and vibrant.

The five neighbourhoods (Figures 38-39) are geographically bound together by Grand River Avenue, a diagonal thoroughfare running northwest-southeast from the Downtown area to the suburbs, which also serves as the main commercial corridor for the area. The Grandmont-Rosedale community is bound by McNichols Road to the north, Evergreen Road to the west, Schoolcraft Road to the south, and the Southfield Freeway and Ashbury Street to the east. The area is topographically very flat, and like the majority of Detroit, it is predominantly comprised of residential blocks, arranged in a north-south, east-west, rectangular grid like pattern, with the exception of a small area in the south of North Rosedale Park bordering Grand River where a few residential streets run parallel to Grand River.[478]

---

[478] It is unclear as to why the street pattern in this particular section of the neighbourhood differs from the overall character of North Rosedale Park. Because it was not created as a separate subdivision, one might assume that it was once a private property/farm that was eventually incorporated into the neighbourhood.

Though the five neighbourhoods share many similarities, they do vary in character. For example, Rosedale Park, comprised of around 1,600 homes today, is the only neighbourhood in the Grandmont Rosedale community that is designated a historic district by the City of Detroit. Many of its houses were constructed between the 1920s and 1940s, and are modest, with the size of the house and lot reflecting the solidly middle and upper-middle class status of the original homeowners.[479] North Rosedale is similar in character and size. Minock Park on the other hand, is smaller, comprised of just three hundred homes, with houses in this neighbourhood varying in both in size and materiality. Figures 40-44 illustrate the different types of houses found throughout the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods, from large upscale brick homes of the English Tudor Revival style to smaller single story bungalows.

The neighbourhoods enjoy a high rate of homeownership with just over 80% of occupied housing units being owner occupied.[480] Compared to the whole of Detroit, the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhood has a lower number of young adult and middle-age residents than the city, as over half of its residents are above the age of thirty-five.[481] Additionally, in terms of median household income as well as per capita income, all of the census tracts within Grandmont Rosedale fall within the highest ranges relative to areas across the city.[482] This can perhaps be attributed to the higher educational attainment level among the Grandmont Rosedale community compared to Detroit residents overall.[483] Approximately 14,400 residents live in the five neighbourhoods today[484] and although the racial makeup is 91.7% black and 5.2% white, it is considered one of the more racially integrated communities in the city,[485] a circumstance that will be further explored in the chapter.

What is significant about the Grandmont Rosedale community today is that it exists in direct opposition to traditional narratives and representations of Detroit's decline that paint a picture of a city in decay and distress, struggling with poverty and racial segregation, and in the midst of an urban crisis. It contrasts spatially and socially with neighbourhoods like Brightmoor that have come to define the social and geographic imaginaries constructed of the city. It is not overcome by physical deterioration, it has been able to retain its public spaces and

---

[479] 'Rosedale Park Historic District - National Register of Historic Places Registration Form'.
[480] Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan* (Detroit, Michigan, 2012), p. 7 <https://mi-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Grandmont-Rosedale-Quality-of-Life-Plan.pdf>.
[481] Data Driven 12
[482] Data Driven 25
[483] Fully 90.4 percent of Grandmont Rosedale study area residents have graduated from high school, as compared to 76.8 percent of Detroit residents. In addition, a higher proportion of study area residents have at least a bachelor's degree compared to Detroit residents (28.0 versus 11.8 percent). Data Driven 22
[484] Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan*, p. 10.
[485] Data Driven Detroit, *2012 Data Profile Grandmont Rosedale*, p. 10.

commercial corridors and it is home to active community organisations that take great care of their neighbourhood. Moreover, the Grandmont Rosedale community exists in complete opposition to the racial stereotypes of black neighbourhoods being the worst affected and most deeply irretrievable. As such, the Grandmont Rosedale community reveals the diverse character of the city, challenging traditional narratives of urban decline.[486]

Yet, little is known about why and how the neighbourhood has been able to retain its stability. The Grandmont Rosedale community has not been the focus of a wide body of academic research[487] aside from a few scholars who have highlighted the role of the community development corporations (CDC) within Grandmont Rosedale, specifically looking at their influence on stabilising property values after mortgage foreclosures.[488] As such, the Grandmont Rosedale community presents an opportunity to explore the complexity and dynamism of decline. This chapter will investigate how the community is situated in larger narratives of urban decline, asking why has Grandmont Rosedale not declined in the same way as other areas of the city such as Brightmoor. It will also seek to understand what this particular area of the city can tell us about a potential model for future development.

This chapter begins by examining the influence of the historical development of the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods on its current status today, highlighting both similarities and differences of Brightmoor. The second section looks more closely into how this neighbourhood has been affected by urban decline. While it may not be immediately apparent through observing the physical fabric of the neighbourhood, the Grandmont Rosedale community struggles with many of the same issues of decline found in other neighbourhoods that stem from a lack of city involvement, including issues of vacancy, crime, mobility and infrequent city services. The third and fourth sections explore, how this community has sought to address these issues brought on by decline. What becomes immediately evident is that this community has managed, despite the city of Detroit experiencing years of depopulation, economic disinvestment and municipal disengagement, to

---

[486] We must be cautious not to isolate the Grandmont Rosedale community as an anomalous enclave within Detroit. Other neighbourhoods, similar in physical character, racial makeup, and income and education levels, exist throughout the city; these include Woodbridge, Indian Village, English Village, Lafayette Park, Corktown, Boston Edison and Palmer Woods among others.

[487] Though it has not drawn much attention from scholars, the area has recently become the central focus of an initiative from the City of Detroit Planning and Development Department that aims to create a framework strategy for the Grand River/Northwest area of Detroit, of which all of Grandmont Rosedale and a portion of Brightmoor is a part. This initiative, which will be touched upon later in the chapter, seeks to rehabilitate the commercial corridor and create a landscape design and green stormwater infrastructure.

[488] Manning-Thomas, 'Targeting Strategies of Three Detroit CDCs'; Andrew Goddeeris, 'Securing Neighborhoods', *Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design*, 2014, 110–18; Deng and others.

remain a fairly stable neighbourhood. It will become clear that this is due largely in part to the mobilisation of the residents who, through the use of task forces, block clubs and community organisations, have successfully stabilised the neighbourhood, mitigating the effects of decline. This dissertation also asks whether the Grandmont Rosedale community can provide an alternative way of understanding cities experiencing urban decline by focusing on the stabilization of communities rather than their growth. Finally, this chapter concludes by questioning existing interpretations of urban decline, looking at Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale within the wider context of Detroit.

5.1 Understanding Grandmont Rosedale

5.1.1 'A Purely American Residential Center': The Establishment of the Grandmont Rosedale Neighbourhoods

Much like the Brightmoor neighbourhood, the history of the Grandmont Rosedale communities played an important role in facilitating the area's condition today. In 1835, then President Andrew Jackson gave a deed for eighty acres of land, now known as Grandmont, to a man named Thomas Norton. After being acquired by several families, it was purchased by the Grand River Development Company in 1915 for $16,000.[489] Similarly to Brightmoor, the area was divided into subdivisions with the Grand River Development Company facilitating the sale of lots and houses to eager homeowners. The area was marketed as a 'Purley American Residential Center' in 'America's Fastest Growing City'.[490]

Houses in the Grandmont Rosedale community were similar to Brightmoor in that they catered to the white middle class, and private architects were rarely engaged in construction. Buyers gained inspiration from mass-produced patters and/or worked with construction companies to choose plans. Yet unlike those in the adjacent neighbourhood, these were constructed of better quality materials and built in a wide variety of styles. The influence of the decision for many of the homes to be built of brick, rather than of wood, would have a last impact today as it slowed the rate of natural physical deterioration. Furthermore, it exemplifies how, unlike Brightmoor, the notion of physical permanence was embedded into to this neighbourhood from its initial conception. These houses were not built to be intermediary and temporary, but rather they constructed as permanent homes, without

---

[489] History of Grandmont
[490] 'The Grand River Avenue District of Detroit', *The Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, 22 June 1924).

intention of being added to or rebuilt. One can argue that this initial sense of permanence formed the basis for the type of intentional community atmosphere that is still present in Grandmont Rosedale today. Residents had much more ownership in their houses and community than those of Brightmoor. The neighbourhood was annexed into the city during the same year as Brightmoor, 1926, yet unlike Brightmoor, construction of new homes would continue over the next few decades. Though building was suspended during the Great Depression, it resumed thereafter.

Though today these two neighbourhoods differ greatly in both their spatial and social character, in the decades following World War II, both Grandmont Rosedale and the areas of Brightmoor that were developed in the post-war era were comprised of active community organisations, had good schools, urban amenities, and received same city services. Though separated by their housing type and in some areas, social class,[491] the neighbourhoods can be understood as ostensibly similar. Yet as we will see, processes of urban decline affected each neighbourhood differently. Both communities suffered population loss and a shift in racial makeup, but unlike Brightmoor, Grandmont Rosedale did not become swallowed by urban decline. As the chapter continues, we will begin to understand why.

5.1.2 The Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation: Uniting a community

Today, the success and sustainability of the Grandmont Rosedale community relies heavily on the contribution of the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation (GRDC), an important component in understanding how this community operates. Each of the five neighbourhoods, Grandmont, Grandmont #1, Rosedale Park, North Rosedale Park and Minock Park, and their individual community associations, are currently united under the umbrella of the GRDC. Created in 1989 by a group of community activists as a way to collective assist the community, the GRDC currently operates as a non-profit organization that promotes community revitalisation through programs designed for renovating vacant homes, assisting local homeowners and businesses, beautifying the community and keeping the neighbourhoods safe.[492] Among many other programs, the GRDC organises, for example, the Northwest Detroit Farmers Market, is responsible for overseeing the Grand River Annex, a multi-functional space for the community to host events, and provides support for

---

[491] Though much of the Grandmont Rosedale communities were comprised of white working class individuals, like that of Brightmoor, there were particular areas, including North Rosedale Park and select portions of Rosedale Park and Grandmont that catered to the middle and upper-middle classes.
[492] 'Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation', *Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation* <http://grandmontrosedale.com/>.

neighbourhood level committees such as the radio patrol and the vacant property task force which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The formation of the GRDC has its roots in the decline of the city. In 1978, as 'a response to the exodus of retail and other businesses from the area'[493] the Grand Green Business and Community Association was established. At the time, focus was placed on improving the business district along the main commercial corridor of Grand River Avenue, between Greenfield and Evergreen. In the late 1980s, other organisations began to emerge as the out-migration of people and businesses continued. One such organisation was the Grandmont Rosedale Integrated Neighborhoods (GRIN), which sought to bring people together from across neighbourhoods and promote 'the area as a vibrant, integrated community, at a time when a lot [of] people were leaving the neighbourhood', explains Tom Goddeeris, former executive director of the GRDC in an email correspondence. GRIN undertook many initiatives to try and encourage people to move to the neighbourhood, including organising a 'Open House to show off the neighborhood and attract buyers'.[494] In many ways these early institutions set the foundation for the GRDC today. However, as Goddeeris explains via email, 'What made GRDC somewhat different was that we had a board with equal representation from each neighborhood (originally 4).[495] This equal voice was necessary to ensure buy-in from the neighborhood associations.'[496] Today, the GRDC, with its representation from each Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhood, takes on an extremely important role in the community. As this chapter will show, they assume, in many ways, the administrative responsibilities that would otherwise be considered the role of the city.

The GRDC has adapted over time to fit the needs of its community. Initially, the GRDC was comprised of Rosedale Park, North Rosedale Park, Grandmont and Grandmont #1 as they shared many similarities, 'including similar housing stock, similar neighbourhood associations and much cross-fertilizaiton between residents. 'Godderris explains the decision to eventually add Minock Park:

> Geographically, this made sense because it is surrounded on three sides by
> Rosedale Park and North Rosedale Park. Partly this expansion was prompted
> when housing was going strong in Grandmont Rosedale and few vacant

---

[493] Tom Goddeeris, 15 May 2018.
[494] Tom Goddeeris.
[495] The GRDC originally consisted of Grandmont, Grandmont #1, North Rosedale Park, and Rosedale Park. Minock Park was added later.
[496] Tom Goddeeris.

houses were present. Minock Park had a higher need and was a somewhat lower-income community. GRDC was able to receive a grant from MSHDA under a program called the Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP) that supported holistic approaches to neighborhood stabilization in small target areas. This was a good fit for the Minock Park area. GRDC ended up doing extensive housing rehab, beautification projects, installed neighborhood signage and helped them re-establish a neighborhood organization and structure.[497]

The incorporation of Minock Park and the role that the GRDC played in stabilising the community begins to show the impact that the organisation has on the physical and social condition of these areas of Detroit. Goddeeris continues, 'GRDC, in my opinion, has become a neighborhood institution, capable of adapting to changing circumstances and providing continuity when the market is strong and when the market is weak – when the private sector cannot be found.'[498] As will become more evident throughout this chapter, the organisation structure and capacity of the GRDC is an essential part of the stabilisation of the area.

5.2 Decline in the Grandmont Neighbourhood

Considered one of the more stable areas of the city, the Grandmont Rosedale community has generally been excluded from narratives of urban decline in Detroit. Statistically, the community does not fit into traditional conceptions and explanations of decline. While Grandmont Rosedale has experienced a decrease in population, it has not declined as swiftly or drastically as other neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods retain a relatively low poverty rate, high educational attainment levels and have an above average household income compared to the rest of the city, again contrasting with many narratives of decline in Detroit. The community also stands out in terms of its physical character. While the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods experience issues of vacancy, it is a much less widespread and devastating phenomenon equated to areas like Brightmoor. The residential streets and houses are well maintained and there is little evidence of negligent property owners. Furthermore, the presence and influence of the GRDC, the frequency of community programs including the farmers markets, art fairs, and baseball games that take place throughout the year, as well as the active commercial corridor and the

---

[497] Tom Goddeeris.
[498] Tom Goddeeris.

upkeep of the public parks, indicate that the area, by all accounts, has avoided the devastating trends of urban decline. Yet, as this section will illustrate, an investigation into the every day lives of the community's residents reveal the challenges faced by the neighbourhood, illustrating the dynamic ways in which decline transforms the city and the practices of the residents within it.

Using the Grandmont neighbourhood as a contextual lens to understand the Grandmont Rosedale community as a whole, we begin to see the ways in which processes of decline have socially and spatially transformed the community. Grandmont is one of the five neighbourhoods that make up Grandmont Rosedale. The forty-block neighbourhood is comprised of just over 1000 housing units and has a population of around 2,400 people.[499] Seventy two percent of the households are family households and the median age of residents fall between thirty-five and fifty years old.[500] The neighbourhood is home to Ramsay Park as well as Edison Elementary School and has an active community association, which will be discussed later in the chapter. Grand River Avenue serves as the northern most boundary of Grandmont, and while it provides several commercial and retail amenities for the community, there are few employment opportunities in the neighbourhood as the area is primarily residential; like many other areas of the city, residents must travel outside of their community for work. The Grandmont neighbourhood allows for a more concerted understanding of how decline has spatially and socially transformed the city and also begins to reveal the different ways in which various neighbourhoods have been affected by and responded to decline.

5.2.1 The effects of municipal disinvestment on infrastructure and city services

Unlike the Brightmoor neighbourhood where the collapse of municipal infrastructure has become apparent in the physical condition of the landscape, the Grandmont community's struggle with a deteriorated infrastructure is much less discernible. Visually, it is not immediately evident that the neighbourhood is confronted with a series of challenges that arise from the city's longstanding decline. There are few empty lots, waste dumping is minimal and the scale of the wilding seen in Brightmoor is non-existent. However, through interviews with residents, and observation at community meetings, it becomes very clear that

---

[499] Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan*, p. 10.
[500] Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan*, p. 10.

despite the facade of the neighbourhood, the area also struggles with the consequences of decades long urban decline.

Much of Detroit's built environment today - its public buildings, streets, water and sewer lines - are now 80 to 110 years old.[501] Due to the lack of regeneration or replacement of much of these original systems, they are unable to handle the needs of the present day and as such often breakdown, are dysfunctional and in almost all cases require substantial investments in renovation or replacement. Grandmont, despite its physical condition, is no exception. One example highlights this clearly. At a Grandmont community meeting in April 2017, residents expressed concern over the frequent occurrence of flooded basements and power outages that often follow heavy rainfalls. The city's combined sewer system, whose age makes it prone to compromises in its structural and functional integrity, while also creating the need for extensive and potentially costly maintenance repairs,[502] is often unable to handle the volume of stormwater that gets flushed into thousands of drains in parking lots and along city streets. This results in severe flooding issues throughout the city. Within the scale of the neighbourhood, this means that many houses are frequently flooded. Despite the homes in the Grandmont community being much more structurally sound than those in Brightmoor, they are not exempt from the effects of a poor sewer and drainage system. As a way to remedy this situation, the city began in 2010, investing in Vactor Trucks, which aim to suck up debris as a way to clear the catch basins so that stormwater can drain the water properly.[503] However, this is a short term solution that only provides immediate relief. The residents of Grandmont experience flooding and power outages typically after every heavy rainfall.

These infrastructural issues in the neighbourhood create a particularly difficult situation for the residents to live in, creating feelings of uncertainty and a loss of hope in the ability of their city to provide a structurally sound environment. Unfortunately, this situation may not be solved soon. Although the city has invested in short term solutions, the observation of the continued loss of population and therefore the loss of a tax base required for the upkeep of infrastructure services, the city will not have the financial means to invest in the upkeep of

---

[501] Laura A. Reese and Gary Sands, 'No Easy Way Out: Detroit's Financial and Governance Crisis' (presented at the Interrogating Urban Crises Conference, De Monfort University, Leicester, England, 2013), p. 4 <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/business-and-law-documents/research/lgru/laurareeseandgarysands.pdf>.

[502] Camp Dresser & McKee, *Wastewater Master Plan: Critical Facilities and Flow Management* (Detroit, Michigan: Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, 2003) <http://www.glwater.org/wp-content/documents/procurement/masterplan_wastewater/volume2/Volume2.pdf>.

[503] JA Staes, 'Detroit Adds 8 Trucks That Suck To Clean Catch Basins, Reduce Street Flooding', *Daily Detroit* (Detroit, Michigan, 22 August 2017) <http://www.dailydetroit.com/2017/08/22/detroit-adds-8-trucks-suck-clean-catch-basins-reduce-street-flooding/>.

their municipal infrastructures, allowing them to physically decay and deteriorate. Furthermore, while these issues are observed in Grandmont, they are not isolated incidents restricted to this particular neighbourhood but rather part of an infrastructural epidemic throughout the city.

5.2.2 Mobility and the dilemma of city and regional connectivity

As seen in the case of Brightmoor, the lack of mobility opportunities in Detroit continues to perpetuate the on-going inequality and division present throughout the city, as limited geographic routes and an unreliable transportation system actively isolate particular areas from the rest of the city as well as the region. While areas representative of decline, like Brightmoor, are closely associated with issues of mobility, more stable neighbourhoods typically are not. However, the Grandmont Rosedale communities, as constituents of the city of Detroit, equally rely upon the public transportation systems provided by the city for their residents and therefore face comparable challenges. While the income levels of the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods are generally higher than those in other areas of the city, allowing more individuals to have access to a vehicle, many residents continue to rely on the city's transportation system.

The Grandmont Rosedale community is serviced by six different bus routes as shown in Figure 45, including the newest route 92 - the 'Rosedale Express', which was established by the city in 2017 to, 'connect residents in the densely populated Grandmont Rosedale area of the city to Downtown'.[504] The choice to place this bus route in the neighbourhood is significant, for it does highlight a very specific difference between areas like Grandmont Rosedale and Brightmoor - that is, density of neighbourhoods matters in providing city services. Because the Grandmont Rosedale community is more densely populated, municipal services tend to be provided here. Within the city, the Grandmont Rosedale area is well connected, and even more after the direct route connecting the area neighbourhoods with the downtown was added. However, regionally, the service is still limited. There is one route, 60 - Evergreen, that travels north to a main transfer point where riders can access SMART busses taking them to various locations around the region, however this is the only route that provides access to the suburbs.

---

[504] 'New DDOT Service Expansion Starts Today; 650 Weekly Trips Added', *City of Detroit*, 2017
<http://www.detroitmi.gov/News/ArticleID/1184/New-DDOT-service-expansion-starts-today-650-weekly-trips-added>.

The mobility infrastructures, in particular the bus routes that connect the area, have a great impact for residents throughout the city of Detroit. At the Grandmont Annual Business, Social and Dinner Meeting in April 2017, I was introduced to nineteen year old Tiffany. Tiffany is a lifelong resident of the Grandmont neighbourhood who had just received a scholarship award from the community in order to continue her undergraduate studies in architecture. Towards the end of the dinner, Tiffany and I had a chance to discuss her studies and her life living in the Grandmont area. Tiffany explains that she began her first year of her undergraduate studies at The University in Michigan in Flint, about an hour north from Detroit by car, eventually moving back to the Grandmont neighbourhood with her family after the Flint water crisis.[505] She is currently enrolled at the nearby Henry Ford Community College, located just south of the city in the neighbouring area of Dearborn, Michigan, yet aspires to go to Lawrence Technological University, located north of city of Detroit in the suburb of Southfield, Michigan, not far from the Grandmont community. 'I just can't get there right now', she explains. Tiffany's family of seven - which includes her mother, her father, and her four younger siblings - only have one vehicle. Due to her parent's work schedules and her younger siblings' school commitments, she rarely has access to the vehicle. 'I can take the bus there [to Lawrence Tech], but the schedule is so unreliable and it takes a long time that I would miss some of my classes, and if I need to stay late, I wouldn't be able to get back.' Using a car, the six and a half mile (ten and half kilometres) trip from Tiffany's home in Grandmont to the Lawrence Tech campus in Southfield takes a mere ten minutes to complete. However, using public transportation would require her to walk twenty minutes to the nearest bus stop, take two buses, and then walk another ten minutes to the campus - a travel time of about one hour and fifteen minutes, *if* the bus comes on time.[506]

While Detroit's mobility infrastructure is meant to connect individuals with the city and the region, it often creates greater difficulties for its residents due to the limited geography and poor service. As we have seen with Tiffany, her daily life and the decisions on where to work and attend school are dictated by the limitations of the public amenities available to her. Pullan notes, that seemingly 'connective' infrastructures also act as 'conflict infrastructures'

---

[505] See Susan J. Masten, Simon H. Davies, and Shawn P. McElmurry, 'Flint Water Crisis: What Happened and Why?', *American Water Works Association*, 108.12 (2016), 22–34.; Halfway through her first semester, Tiffany found the conditions in her dormitory residence uninhabitable; the Flint water crisis was intensifying, as much of the city's water contaminated with lead, leaving Tiffany and her roommates having to bathe, brush their teeth and even wash their hands with bottled water.
[506] Since speaking with Tiffany, the City of Detroit has expanded their bus services so there is now a shorter and semi-direct route from the Grandmont neighbourhood to the suburb of Southfield where the university campus is located.

perpetuating segregation and inequality.[507] In the case of Detroit, the public transportation options available to residents are an example of these infrastructures as they either allow or limit connections with the city and the region. Just as we saw with the Brightmoor community, the Grandmont neighbourhood, despite being a stable area, is still, largely isolated from the larger region and the city as a whole because of the geographical limitations of the city's mobility infrastructures.

5.2.3 Vacant Housing the Foreclosure Crisis

As we have seen in the most extreme case of Brightmoor, vacancy has been an on-going issue for the city of Detroit. Despite Grandmont Rosedale being among several Detroit neighbourhoods that do not fit the urban wasteland stereotype commonly associated with the city, the area has still experienced the effects of vacancy and abandonment. Although the neighbourhood has struggled with these issues on some level for many decades, the national foreclosure crisis and economic recession which began in late 2007 hit this particular community quite hard. Goddeeris explains, 'The housing market declined sharply around the time of the recent financial crisis and is only now [2018] beginning to rebound. We had a spike in foreclosures along with everybody else in the 2007-2010 period. Values dropped dramatically when the market became almost all foreclosure sales and cash sales with few new mortgages. Sales prices below $50,000 became common.'[508] This spike in mortgage foreclosures not only led to a sharp drop in housing values, but an equally sharp rise in housing vacancy.[509] In 2012, throughout all five neighbourhoods, there were 628 vacant homes in the area - about 10.5% of the total housing stock (Figure 44).[510] In addition to vacancy rates, property taxes are also growing concern; the most recent data from 2016 shows that 984 of the 5,984 properties were tax delinquent and 979 properties subject to tax foreclosure.[511]

While not as widespread as Brightmoor, vacancy still presents an immediate threat to the neighbourhood. As the Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan highlights, 'Large numbers of vacant homes undermine the day-to-day quality of life of all area residents. These homes attract crime and vandalism, and if not quickly reoccupied, create blight in the community.'[512]

---

[507] Pullan, 'Spatial Discontinuities: Conflict Infrastructures in Contested Cities'.
[508] Tom Goddeeris.
[509] Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan*, p. 13.
[510] Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan*, p. 10.
[511] Margaret Dewar and others, p. 21.
[512] Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan*, p. 13.

However, despite the Grandmont neighbourhood, and the surrounding Rosedale Park, North Rosedale Park, Minock Park, and Grandmont #1 neighbourhoods, having the immediate potential to fall into the downward spiral of decline, they have remained afloat. While vacancy is present in the neighbourhood, these houses have not been allowed to deteriorate and swallowed up by the surrounding areas. The Grandmont Rosedale communities have experienced various challenges brought on by the processes of urban decline, but unlike Brightmoor, they have remained relatively stable throughout the last half century. This prompts further inquiry in order to understand why this community has been able to maintain the physical and social conditions of their neighbourhoods. Therefore we must ask ourselves, why hasn't this area declined as much as other neighbourhoods? Does this offer a potential solution for the city of Detroit as a whole.

5.3 A Civic Spirit: Task forces, block clubs and the stabilisation of the neighbourhood

What stands out about the Grandmont Rosedale communities, and what has allowed this neighbourhood to retain stability over the last half century, is that the residents are actively engaged in the maintenance of their neighbourhoods through the operational agenda of task forces, block clubs, neighbourhood associations and community development corporations. These types of organisations exist in many different environments, and in suburban environment nevertheless, however unique to the Grandmont Rosedale community, and other Detroit-based neighbourhood organisations in particular, is that these committees and task forces often step in to fulfil the roles normally considered the responsibility of the municipality. They focus on the stabilisation of the neighbourhood, therefore becoming a primary reason that the neighbourhood is able to avoid total decline and collapse.

5.3.1 Providing structure to the community: The Grandmont Community Association

The Grandmont Community Association (GCA) is one of the neighbourhood associations active within the Grandmont Rosedale Community. According to their website, the GCA, established very early on in 1927, was 'formed for the preservation of the physical appearance of the neighborhood; promotion of quality schools; civic education of the residents, and promotion of cooperation and understanding between all of the residents and community

businesses.'[513] However, since its initial inception, the GCA has evolved into an entity that also provides what would conventionally be municipal services to its residents.

A Board of Directors, made up of ten residents of the neighbourhood, governs the GCA. The board members are responsible for overseeing the functioning of the GCA and ensuring that the goals of the association are continuously met. Underneath the umbrella of the Grandmont Community Association are eighteen different committees - including for example, the beautification and garden committee, the code and violations committee, the vacant property task force and the safety and security committee. Figure 47 details the organisation of the GCA. In order to meet their goals, each committee is provided a budget from the funds gathered from the GCA membership dues. Each Grandmont resident is asked to lend community support through the payment of their dues, which as of 2018, is twenty-five dollars per year per household. In addition to each committee, the GCA is also comprised of street and block captain teams. Each residential block in the neighbourhood has their own block team and captain. The captain is responsible for the delivery of the monthly neighbourhood newsletter, the welcoming of new neighbours, the collection of dues for the association and to act as a liaison for residents unable to attend board meetings.

The formal organisation of the GCA is crucial for the sustainability of the community for three reasons: it marks out clearly defined physical boundaries, it provides a structure within the community to operate, and it outlines a distinct set of tasks for the community members to accomplish. Unlike the boundaries of Brightmoor which are defined arbitrarily and differ between different groups, the boundaries of Grandmont, as well as the other four neighbourhoods in the Grandmont Rosedale Community, are unmistakably defined. The clear definition of the neighbourhood's boundaries is significant in that it contributes to a clear sense of identity, while also providing the residents a distinct geographic area for which they are responsible. Absent are areas of land which go 'unclaimed', or considered neglected. The delineation of clear neighbourhood boundaries becomes important when organising particular services such as snow removal and security patrols, for it clearly demarcates which areas receive these services and which do not. Furthermore, the structure of the GCA, with the designation of board members, committee leaders, street and block captains not only ensures the appointment of particular responsibilities, but according to residents, also encourages citizen participation, neighbourhood leadership and a sense of pride in the community. Finally

[513] 'About Grandmont', *Grandmont Community 'Detroit's Home of Good Neighbors'*
<http://www.grandmontcommunity.org/about.html>.

defining the tasks of each committee establishes purpose for the residents but also makes sure that the neighbourhood succeeds in accomplishing their goals by crafting an agenda of real and doable work.

5.3.2 Operating on the principle of 'self-help'

From a wider perspective, the motivation behind establishing neighbourhood organisations varies based on context and location. Throughout the United States, they have historically held a largely social function; today however, they are commonly recognised as, Logan and Rabrenovich describe, as 'the vehicle through which neighbors learn about problems, formulate opinions, and seek to intervene in the political process to protect their local interest.'[514] In many cases, the neighbourhood association is often established as the vehicle for mobilization against Molotch's model of the city as a growth machine[515], where Logan and Rabrenovich describe, 'political control is attributed to a coalition of progrowth entrepreneurs (aiming for profit from rent intensification), against whom the interests of city residents (desiring price stability and security of their daily activities in the neighborhood) seldom prevail.'[516] Neighbourhood associations in this context tend to emerge in response to rapid growth and development – they operate as a political pushback against high-density residential development, commercial expansion, urban renewal projects or highway programs for example. In the case of Grandmont and the other four Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods, these associations initially developed as a way to preserve and enhance the residential quality of life. Today, however, these associations have been faced with the responsibility of confronting concerns not associated with rapid growth, as found in other cities in the United States, but rather Detroit's decline. Here, residents often mobilise through particular activities in order to physically and socially preserve and maintain the neighbourhood in a context of municipal disinvestment and rapid infrastructural decay.

The Grandmont neighbourhood established a Homeowners Association[517] as early as 1927, yet it did not develop into its present organisational structure with its current goals until

---

[514] John R. Logan and Gordana Rabrenovic, 'Neighborhood Associations: Their Issues, Their Allies, and Their Opponents', *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 1990, 68–94 (p. 69).
[515] Harvey Molotch, 'The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place', *American Journal of Sociology*, 82.2 (1976), 309–32.
[516] Logan and Rabrenovic, p. 69.
[517] The early establishment of neighbourhood organisations in Detroit was common, especially in middle class neighbourhoods. See Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*. It is also important to distinguish between neighbourhood associations and homeowners associations. As Homan identifies, 'A typical *homeowners' association* (HOA) concerns itself primarily with the maintenance of neighborhood facilities (for example, a community pool) or the

around the 1980s. At a time when the city was witnessing an upsurge in crime and continued depopulation and disinvestment, the neighbourhoods began to mobilise out of a need to address issues of decline in their community. As city services were withdrawn due to a lack of municipal funds, the neighbourhood associations began to fill gaps left by municipal divestiture. Tom Goddeeris, the former executive director of the GRDC, explains, 'GRDC and the underlying associations have long operated on a principle of "self-help". We did many things that would be considered normally the job of government – public safety, snow plowing, blight removal, park renovation, youth sports – in addition to housing and commercial revitalization. The city lacked the resources for many years to provide these services.'[518] As disinvestment from the municipality continued, the GCA took on the role of neighbourhood administrator as well as provider of city services; for example, snow removal service is provided by membership dues paid to the GCA, and as will be further described in the following sections, the GCA also provides security control and public park maintenance. It is not unique for a neighbourhood organisation to focus on providing what would otherwise be considered city services to their community, particularly in an urban setting. Distinct patterns have been identified between neighbourhood organisations in suburban environments compared to those found in central-city environments. What research has shown is that a much narrower range of public services is provided in the suburbs than is provided in central cities[519] and therefore, 'one might expect to find relatively little emphasis on issues of service and public infrastructure in suburban neighborhoods and higher levels of cooperation with local government compare to that in city neighbourhoods.'[520] However in the case of Grandmont, as well as the other Grandmont Rosedale communities, the emphasis on service and public infrastructure is almost an absolute necessity for the health and survival of the community.

As Talen argues, the notion of 'self-help' in the context of American environments is not new, but is part of a historic tradition of urban beautification efforts that began as far back as the municipal art and civic improvement movements of the mid-to-late 1800s, and carried through to the City Beautiful era and into the mid-20th century with urban "pioneering" and

---

preservation of the physical attractiveness of the neighborhood' where as neighbourhood organisation on the other hand is typically concerned with advocacy or low-budget, self help activities. Furthermore, it ranges from block-clubs to multi-issue organisations, and also many associations have membership dues, participation in a neighbourhood association is voluntary, unlike homeowners associations. See Mark S. Homan, *Promoting Community Change: Making It Happen in the Real World*, 5th ed (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning, 2011), pp. 435–36.

[518] Tom Goddeeris.

[519] T. R. Dye, 'City-Surburban Social Distance and Public Policy', *Social Forces*, 44.1 (1965), 100–106; Kevin R. Cox, *Conflict, Power and Politics in the City: A Geographic View*, McGraw-Hill Problems Series in Geography (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

[520] Logan and Rabrenovic, p. 72.

"homesteading" activities.[521] Today, this self-help attitude towards improving the urban environment is often recognised as 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) urban improvement, described as a process whereby 'community activists are taking city planning into their own hands.'[522] As Talen reinforces, 'the movement equates urbanism with the physical realm, asserting that small-scale intervention in material form—including the processes involved in generating physical change—has the power to significantly impact the everyday lives of urban residents.'[523] In the context of Grandmont, this sentiment holds true, however the residents also provide certain services that extend beyond the physical realm, addressing social patterns as well.

5.3.3. A self-sustaining community: The importance of 'Committees 'and 'Task Forces ' in the Grandmont Neighbourhood

Central to the organisation of the Grandmont Community Association are the neighbourhood's twenty-one committees. Each committee is comprised entirely of volunteers from the neighbourhood, and lead by a chairperson responsible for managing the group's activities. Some committees receive a budget from the GCA, while others do not. The committees vary in their responsibilities; some are accountable for organising social events, such as the annual art fair and community dinners, while others, including for example the Radio Patrol committee and the Ramsay Park committee, are responsible for the physical upkeep and the social order of the neighbourhood, tasks that would otherwise be the responsibility of the city itself.

5.3.3.1 Ramsay Park Committee

Just south of Grand River Avenue, between Longacre and Rutland Streets and next to Thomas Edison Elementary school is the Douglas Ramsay Memorial Park (Figures 48-49). The fenced in park contains a small playground, a baseball diamond, a bike trail, and a large open green space. Ramsay Park takes on a significant role in providing a public meeting space for the Grandmont community. In addition to serving its conventional function as a park, providing various recreational activities to the residents, Ramsay Park is the location of the annual Art

---

[521] Emily Talen, 'Do-It-Yourself Urbanism: A History', *Journal of Planning History*, 14.2 (2015), 135–48.
[522] *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities*, ed. by Jeffrey Hou (New York: Routledge, 2010).
[523] Talen, p. 135.

Fair, monthly jazz nights and other community social events. This area provides a place for the public to gather in an area with few other options.

Ramsay Park is one of over three hundred parks in the city, and one of the many today that are maintained by the residents of the community rather than the city itself. As the city witnessed continued demographic and economic decline over the latter half of the twentieth century, funding for the maintenance of public amenities slowly disappeared. The city's Parks and Recreation Department has largely foregone park maintenance all over the city due to budget cuts, allowing play equipment to rust and grass to grow wild in the summer.[524] To transform the city's parks an asset to the community rather than a potential threat, some communities, like Grandmont, have assumed the responsibility of maintaining the city parks themselves. The Ramsay Park committee, organised by, and administered under the structure of the GCA, is responsible for regularly maintaining the park, which includes mowing the lawn and landscaping the flowers, emptying the trash receptacles, and monitoring the condition of the playscape and baseball diamond. The committee also hosts an annual spring clean up in which they invite residents from the entire community to assist with the maintenance of the park.

The act of privately maintaining a public asset happening in Ramsay Park is not unique in Detroit. Many neighbourhoods throughout the city have either informally, or formally through Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan's 'Adopt-A-Park' Program,[525] taken on the responsibilities of maintaining city parks. Additionally, independent groups that are not geographically restricted to one neighbourhood such as the Detroit Mower Gang, a group of self-proclaimed 'renegade landscapers'[526] who travel to various parts of the city with their personal lawn mowers, mowing abandoned parks and playgrounds in Detroit, also assist with the upkeep of these public spaces. Though the maintenance of these spaces largely relies on the efforts of residents, there is a continued dependence on city for assistance with certain tasks that go beyond the capacity of the community. For example, in 2016, the city parks department replaced a sidewalk in Ramsay Park, and in 2017, stolen trash barrels were replaced. This partnership however, is relatively recent, emerging as a result of the 'Adopt-A-Park' program mentioned above. As this shows, the city has not completely divested from the park, but the

---

[524] Patrick Cooper-McCann, 'Rightsizing Detroit: Looking Back, Looking Forward' (unpublished Senior Honors Thesis, University of Michigan, 2010), p. 36.
[525] Adopt a Park is a program where community groups, churches, and businesses partner with the City of Detroit to help maintain city parks by cutting the grass and keeping the park clean. See 'Adopt-A-Park', *City of Detroit*, 2018 < https://detroitmi.gov/departments/parks-recreation/adopt-park>.
[526] 'MowerGang.Com', *The Detroit Mower Gang*, 2016 <http://www.mowergang.com/index.html>.

relationship and responsibilities of the city and the residents has been altered; as the city relinquishes its control over the public space, the residents assume authority.

5.3.3.2 Grandmont Radio Patrol #4

Established in the fall of 1967 after the civil unrest earlier that year, the Grandmont Radio Patrol #4 was formed to maintain civil obedience and deter crime in the neighbourhood. Well over one hundred residents actively participated in the patrol during the first decade of its existence, however over time participation has weakened due to people moving out of the area, passing away, or having other interests and obligations. Today around forty residents, along with individuals who live outside of the Grandmont neighbourhood, work with the patrol. The Grandmont #4 Patrol is the most active patrol in Detroit[527] - between October 2015 and September 2016, the volunteer citizens patrolled over 2,500 hours and drove over 4,400 miles all within the forty-two-block boundary of the neighbourhood.[528]

At the Annual Business Dinner, residents expressed how crucial the presence of the patrol is for the survival of their neighbourhood. In the year leading up to the bankruptcy filing, the budget of the police department's was reduced by $75 million, representing eighteen percent of the total budget, which forced the department to dismiss 380 officers.[529] This precipitated a slow decline in the number of officers employed by the city; the number of police officer ranks fell from 1,986 in 2012 to 1,590 in 2016 - a twenty percent drop in the span of one year.[530] While these numbers have been slowly increasing since 2016, the department remains short staffed.[531]As a result, residents have witnessed a decrease in the frequency of police patrol throughout their neighbourhoods – a sentiment expressed by residents of both Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale during interviews. To fill this void left behind as a result of municipal disinvestment, the Grandmont volunteer radio patrol as well as those operating in other parts of the city, provides security for the neighbourhood. Some volunteers drive clearly marked vehicles that are equipped with a two-way radio communication with the police base station, while others simply walk. Their responsibility is to *report* crimes only -

---

[527] Though a full list of radio patrols is unavailable, the Detroit Metro Times reports that there are around twenty five volunteer radio patrol groups across the city coordinate with police to scout their neighbourhoods looking for suspicious behaviour and crime. See Gus Burns, 'Detroit Resident-Run Radio Patrols Assist Understaffed Police Force', *MLive* (Detroit, Michigan, 9 July 2013) <http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2013/07/detroit_residents_start_radio.html>.
[528] This information was gathered from a flyer provided by the patrol committee at the Grandmont Annual Business Dinner meeting.
[529] George Hunter, 'Detroit Police Overtime Hours, Costs Soar', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, Michigan, 13 June 2017) <https://eu.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2017/06/13/police-overtime/102798536/>.
[530] Hunter.
[531] As of 2017, it is estimated that around 1,700 officers are employed in the City of Detroit. See Hunter.

not pursue them. Though these groups operate voluntarily, they main a close relationship with the Detroit Police Department; in addition to a liaison appointed for each patrol group that maintains open communication with the Police Department (in the case of Grandmont this individual is the chairperson of the radio patrol committee), the Department provides the training for the residents, supplies the CB radios and other necessities such as oscillating lights and door signs, and in some cases, reimburses the residents for miles driven.[532] Challenges facing the neighbourhood include vacant homes and squatters, daytime home invasions, scrappers and drug sales. The concept of the radio patrol is essential to not only the Grandmont neighbourhood but to all five of the Grandmont Rosedale communities. While studies have exemplified the difficulties in statistically demonstrating the outcome of crime reduction as a result of these patrols as well as demonstrating dependable systematic benefits that arise from these types of neighbourhood watches,[533] the residents of the community contend that the presence of volunteers in this capacity has had a positive impact on the reduction of illegal activity.

The existence of the radio patrol also provides an important intangible aspect - active citizen participation and community building. Councilmember Tate cites the example of 'Devil's Night', an unorthodox and unfortunate 'tradition' in the city of Detroit that began in 1983. As author Ze'ev Chafets describes, '...in 1983, for reasons no one understands, America's sixth largest city suddenly erupted into flame. Houses, abandoned buildings, even unused factories burned to the ground in an orgy of arson that lasted for seventy-two hours. When it was over the papers reported more than eight hundred fires. Smoke hung over the city for days.'[534] The burning of houses eventually turned into an annual tradition and by 1986, 'Devil's Night had become a prelude to Halloween in Detroit the way that Mardi Gras precedes Lent in New Orleans'.[535] One can interpret Devil's Night as representation of the extent to which the city lost control. 'It was a diversion from anything that is normal' describes Councilmember Tate in a phone interview, 'I mean who burns their city?'. In 1995, then-mayor Dennis Archer along with Detroit city officials organized 'Angel's Night' to combat the continued actions of arson. Tate describes, 'the government sent eyes in the community', enlisting as many as 50,000 volunteers to gather and patrol their neighbourhoods, resulting in a dramatic decrease

---

[532] Burns.
[533] Martin Greenberg, *Citizens Defending America: From Colonial Times to the Age of Terrorism* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), p. 11.
[534] Martin Greenberg, *Citizens Defending America: From Colonial Times to the Age of Terrorism* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), p. 11.
[535] Chafets, *Devil's Night: And Other True Tales of Detroit*, p. 4.

in arson crimes. Not only did the actions of the community members reduce the number of crimes on the evening, but 'Angels night became a community building effort. Residents were able to defeat things that seem undefeatable. And we just celebrate', explains Tate. The gathering of the volunteers to prevent these crimes 'became a symbol and a beacon of strength of the community' embodying the same civic spirit evident in Grandmont's radio patrol today.

Julie, an older resident in the community in her sixties, is a volunteer for the radio patrol, walking up to four miles per day patrolling the Grandmont community. Julie notes the dual purpose the radio patrol holds for her: the importance of keeping her neighbourhood safe, in addition to getting to know her neighbours as it fosters a sense of community and security. The volunteers, whether driving on the road or walking on the sidewalks, are effective at carrying out Jacobs' concept of 'eye's on the street',[536] providing an informal surveillance of the urban environment, deterring crime through observation, and contributing to an atmosphere of safety. While the efforts of those including Julie, and the other members of the radio patrol team, are vital for the ensured safety of the community, at the same time, the presence, and even the success of the radio patrol raises important questions regarding what a condition of urban decline means for the relationship between the city and its citizens and the role that each group plays. While the radio patrol is heralded as a community asset, we must acknowledge that it exists primarily because the police department is unable to provide adequate city services. Today, because of the reduction in the amount of police officers, a city as large as Detroit in terms of land mass is absolutely dependent upon the collaboration between the Detroit Police Department and its residents. Once again we are witnessing how a neighbourhood mobilises to fill a gap left by the city; this not only exemplifies the way in which decline transforms the environment, but it shows how the new conditions created require the negotiation and implementation of new protocols and new responsibilities. As this example represents, the condition of decline created in the city transforms the way that people live in the urban environment. Residents are called upon to ensure the safety of their neighbourhood because the city is unable to do so. Yet this situation should be cause for debate. The patrol in Grandmont seems to work well due to types of crimes in the area (burglary, drug deals, scrappers), the amount of volunteers, the area's density and its manageable size. But one must ask, would this model prove successful in other areas of the city such as Brightmoor, for example, where there is little density and the types of crime

---

[536] See Jacobs, p. 35.

much more severe. Finally, the radio patrol raises the issue of the trade-off between public 'professional' protection and citizen 'volunteer' protection.[537] What is lost by employing citizens as the primary mode of policing?

The Ramsay Park Committee and the Grandmont Radio Patrol, in addition to the other committees and task forces under the umbrella of the GCA, provide an organised structure which ensures the physical and social sustainability of the neighbourhood. The goals of these two committees in particular coincide with the gaps left behind from years of municipal disengagement, and therefore provide services to the community that would otherwise be unavailable, making this a relatively successful model for the area. Former GCA president, Mark Janush describes that this system 'works well' for the neighbourhood and that it improves the reputation of the community.

5.3.4 The Re-negotiation of Roles and Responsibilities

Relying upon task forces and committees to assume the responsibilities that would conventionally be an obligation of the city, once again highlights how processes of decline actively transform the urban landscape. In Brightmoor, this transformation was most visible through the physical deterioration of the area, where processes of decline produced an urban landscape with the capacity to disrupt the traditional use of space. The altered landscapes subsequently challenge residents to re-think their relationship to the particular areas and systems around them. In Grandmont we see the transformation of the city as a result of decline being realised not only in the broken mobility and city infrastructures, but also in how residents mobilise and operate in their community. Processes of decline cause a shift in the way the neighbourhood is managed and operated, calling question the traditional roles of the city and its residents.

The question that must be asked then in the context of Detroit, considering the specific role that is taken on by the GCA and its sub-committees, is how the GCA as well as other neighbourhood associations fit into the local balance of city politics. As Taub and Surgeon argue, neighbourhood associations are often created or supported by government agencies that need them as channels of communications, sources of legitimation, vehicles of social control,

---

[537] Greenberg, p. 18.

and a means to organize and direct resources.[538] However, in the case of Detroit this is far from the case. The GCA, and other neighbourhood associations around the city, were primarily established by the citizens themselves in order to address needs in the community that often stemmed from a lack of city involvement.

Unlike other American cities where the municipality often works directly with neighbourhood associations to create plans, identify opportunities for development or deal with traffic planning issues for example, the city of Detroit, for many decades, has remained largely detached from individual neighbourhood organisations. However, recently, this has begun to change. In 2013, with the creation of the 'council by district' system, Detroit voters currently elect City Council members by geographic districts. The entire Grandmont Rosedale Community, as well as the neighbouring area of Brightmoor are located within District One, represented by Councilmember James Tate. Tate describes in a phone interview, that it is his job to act as a liaison, connecting the residents and the city government, and facilitate the process of this communication. In order to gather the concerns of the residents, Tate holds fortnightly meetings at a local coffee shop to discuss various issues specific to District One as well as inform residents of happenings on the city-level, as well as frequents public places such as grocery stores and recreation centres as a way to target others who are less engaged. In addition, one of his main ways of engaging with the community is by attending neighbourhood association meetings. In these meetings, Tate acts as the connection between the city administration and the neighbourhood association. Otherwise, the city is rarely directly involved in the governance of the neighbourhoods, furthering the principle of self-help driving the neighbourhood associations. Therefore, these practices in which the residents engage have become a way of life, transforming the very character of the city. Bob, a former resident of Rosedale Park, explains that the actions of the residents have simply become a way of life, carried out as a means of survival - 'it's what we've always done' he explains. Residents, through the organisation of these committees and task forces, become the caretakers of Grandmont and seem comfortable in their roles as such, calling into question the relationship between the city and its citizens. What does the city provide for its residents if not the most basic city services?

---

[538] Richard Taub and others, 'Urban Voluntary Associations, Locality Based and Externally Induced', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83.3 (1977), 425–42.

5.4 The stabilisation of the neighbourhood: an alternative to 'growth'?

Grandmont Rosedale is a particularly useful neighbourhood in studying the concept of urban decline for it provides us with an example of a community that has experienced challenges brought on by processes of urban decline, yet has remained relatively stable throughout decades of disinvestment and depopulation. As we have seen, the self-organisation of the community, in addition to its infrastructure, including the character of the housing stock as well as its location around a commercial corridor, have played significant roles in maintaining the area's stability as compared to other neighbourhoods such as Brightmoor. In a crucial moment in Detroit's history where the city is especially focused on 'regeneration' and 'growth', perhaps then Grandmont Rosedale can provide us with an alternative way of understanding how the city functions so that the ways in which we engage with issues presented by decline can be much more impactful.

5.4.1 Successfully engaging with urban decline

It is not just the presence of the task forces and community organisations that have kept the Grandmont Rosedale community afloat, but rather the particular challenges that they seek to address. The task forces and committees tend to engage with problems at the root of urban decline, rather than addressing the consequences of decline. Take for example the issue of vacant property - a challenge being faced by both the Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods. In Brightmoor, the issue of vacancy seems to only be given attention when the property is beyond reclamation. Houses are left abandoned and often times impact the occupancy of the surrounding homes; this perpetuates a cycle of decline in which areas suffering from vacancy, blight and crime continue to expand. The city has recently dealt with this issue by removing these structures as part of their blight demolition initiative; this eliminates of the problem of decay, but at the same produces empty and unused land. While urban gardening has begun to flourish in Brightmoor, making use of areas of this land, many areas continue to be neglected. In Grandmont Rosedale however, the presence of the Vacant Property Task Force mobilises to combat the issue of vacancy before it leads to extensive deterioration and becomes so widespread. By maintaining lawns, immediately boarding up houses, and in some cases, renovating the properties so they can be placed back on the market, the task forces reduces the detrimental potential of vacant properties.

If we return to Galster's imagining of Detroit as a bathtub,[539] introduced in the previous chapter, we can see how these particular task forces are slowly working to plug the hole at the bottom of the tub. While not engaging directly with some large issues such as poverty and unemployment, they do engage with crime, civic participation, and access to service and amenities which each enhance the quality of life in the city. Furthermore, these initiatives are not as fragmented as we are seeing in Brightmoor. Unlike the isolated urban farm, or event hosted at the Brightmoor Artisans Collective, the efforts by the GRDC as well as the individual neighbourhood community associations are well organised and form collective responses to larger issues.

5.4.2 Stabilisation versus growth

Another key point to take away from the Grandmont Rosedale community is that there appears to be a greater focus on 'stabilising' the neighbourhood, rather than 'growing' the neighbourhood.[540] This is not to say that the neighbourhood does not have intentions of growing or improving their current condition - quite the contrary. In addition to goals set forth by the GRDC, including stabilising the housing market and maintaining the community's status as a 'Neighborhood of Choice',[541] the community has set intentions for commercial revitalization, increased youth development, community engagement, and lower crime rates. However, the actions taking place in the community point to a precedence being placed on the daily routines and neighbourhood concerns, in line with ideas of 'everyday urbanism'[542] rather than attracting outside investment and undertaking large scale development projects.

This is an important distinction to make for this model contrasts with those taking place in other areas of Detroit such as the Downtown and also contrasts with narratives of decline more broadly. As we have seen throughout this research, the ideas of growth and progress have served as the underlying foundation of American cities, establishing the perception that growth must follow any period of decline - that there is no alternative. As established in chapter two, it is for this reason that the idea of decline becomes so problematic - for it assumes that the only way for a city to sustain itself is to follow a trajectory of progress. In this way, decline is viewed as part of the cycle of growth-decline-recovery. However,

---

[539] Doucet, 'Detroit's Gentrification Won't Give Poor Citizens Reliable Public Services'.
[540] Here, growth refers to the approach typically adopted by the government, city planners, and investors that is driven by growth politics and a traditional neoliberal rhetoric of government austerity and market based provisioning. See: Peck; Kinder.
[541] Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan*, p. 12.
[542] *Everyday Urbanism: Featuring John Chase*, ed. by John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski (New York, N.Y: Monacelli Press, 1999).

Grandmont Rosedale presents us with an alternative scenario for understanding cities in decline. It demonstrates a model that prioritises stabilisation, placing the needs of the community's residents in front of economic development or enhancing the image of the city. In this way, we can begin to theorize processes of decline differently by focusing on making urban spaces liveable without the promise of growth. As Bright et al remind us, 'During periods of decline, policy-makers and urban planners need to understand how to govern without reliance on directive, supportive "growth coalitions" in the conventional sense. This means learning how to cope with abandonment and empty space, how to sustain infrastructure and service logistics on a shrinking tax base, how to maintain public education with declining state funding, and how to reframe urban citizenship rights in ways that make possible the kinds of changes necessitated by decline.'[543] We can look to the Grandmont Rosedale communities as a way to observe how stakeholders at various levels are generating solutions and interventions that attempt to grapple with challenges of distress and turmoil.

5.5 Grandmont Rosedale and Brightmoor: The Contradictions of Urban Decline

As this chapter has illustrated, the situation in Grandmont Rosedale differs greatly from that of Brightmoor. It presents us with an example of decline that goes against the widely accepted image of the city as one in total collapse, thereby highlighting the importance of studying decline as it is manifest in different areas of the city. Grandmont Rosedale and Brightmoor, in many ways contradict one another, differing in social and spatial character; yet they have each been affected by processes of urban decline, revealing the multiplicity of challenges and opportunities that have appeared as a result. Looking comparatively at the everyday lived experience of the city in the distinctive, yet complimentary neighbourhoods, opens up a new perspective for approaching the study of decline that allows us to recognize the diverse ways in which decline manifests in the city, as well as broadens our understanding of decline as a urban phenomenon.

5.5.1 Transience/Permanence

The two neighbourhoods at the nexus of this research are fertile ground for discussing the different ways in which decline effects the city for they represent almost completely opposite

---

[543] 'Learning from Detroit: Turbulent Urbanism in the 21st Century A Proposal for a Michigan Meeting (Submitted January 11, 2013)', 2013, p. 6.

situations in Detroit today. On the one hand, we have a neighbourhood which exhibits all of the characteristics that one would expect to find in a situation of severe decline – decay, abandonment, poverty, lack of infrastructure – while on the other, we see a neighbourhood which has successfully been able to address the challenges with which it has been presented, maintaining relative stability and success. It is because these two neighbourhoods differ greatly today in their spatial and social character that we are able to gain a greater understanding of decline and how it affects various areas of the city.

What is particularly useful in considering these two neighbourhoods together is that while they currently represent contrasting situations historically, they can be interpreted as ostensibly similar. First, both were planned subdivisions with similar spatial layouts. Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale were each platted according to a grid like pattern to the northwest of the then rapidly growing city. The plots in Grandmont Rosedale were on average, slightly larger than those in Brightmoor, but the sizes of the two were roughly comparable. Second, the neighbourhoods were developed simultaneously and annexed into the city in the same year, 1926, meaning that each community received City of Detroit services, such as water and sewage infrastructures, around the same time. This is significant for it exemplifies that one neighbourhood was not more established than the other in terms of its municipal infrastructure; both grew and developed simultaneously. Third, both neighbourhoods are adjacent to one another. This is important for it means that one neighbourhood was not closer to urban resources than the other, including the commercial Downtown or the industrial factories where most jobs were located. Fourth, both neighbourhoods were initially only open to white residents. Due to the culture of racial segregation during the first half of the twentieth century, black neighbourhoods were traditionally of lower income, housing was constructed more poorly, using less reliable materials and techniques and were often ignored by the city with regards to providing infrastructure, often times leading to the formation of slums which heavily experienced decay and blight.[544] This was not the case for either Brightmoor or Grandmont Rosedale. Finally, a commercial corridor anchored both neighbourhoods ensuring that the communities had access to various urban amenities including grocery stores, banks, libraries, and medical facilities.

---

[544] See Rothstein; G Ratner, 'Inter-Neighborhood Denials of Equal Protection in the Provision of Municipal Services.', *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 4 (1968), 1–64; Loïc Wacquant, 'Marginality, Ethnicity and Penality in the Neo-Liberal City: An Analytic Cartography', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37.10 (2014), 1687–1711 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.931991>.

Yet, while these two neighbourhoods share many similarities in their historical development, each responded differently to the issues brought on by decline. Brightmoor's physical fabric deteriorated, it became an area prone to poverty and crime, and was slowly isolated from the rest of the city. Grandmont Rosedale, on the other hand, retained its physical integrity, and responded to challenges by self-organising and maintaining a sense of stability. Therefore, we have to ask, what are their distinguishing factors? What allowed for one neighbourhood to decline rapidly and what halted the decline of the other? I argue that one answer can be found in the intention behind each neighbourhood. As reflected in the materiality of each area, Brightmoor was constructed as a transient community, whereas Grandmont Rosedale was established with more permanent intention. This would affect the trajectory of each neighbourhood and influence the ways in which decline transformed the areas.

As chapter four highlighted, B.E. Taylor developed Brightmoor with the intention that the neighbourhood would be improved and regenerated over time. However as discussed, this plan never materialised. Taylor sold the subdivision lots and the houses with the hope that future development would occur, yet it never did. As a result, the neighbourhood was developed without zoning restrictions and building codes, lacked basic infrastructure, and the houses were constructed and built of poor material. Because the housing stock and infrastructures were never improved or replaced, Brightmoor suffered from extreme physical decay.

As a result of the way in which it was developed, the community of Brightmoor historically has and continues to attract a transient population,[545] and this has severe consequences for the neighbourhood. As opposed to other neighbourhoods in the city, which have a more permanent and invested community, Brightmoor suffers from an above average population turnover, less resources, weaker social and service organisation, less access to information and greater social dislocations through the concentration of particular issues.[546] This perpetuates problems of decline and disorder, casting the area as a space riddled with poverty, high crime crates, and low property values. Unfortunately, one can also argue that this has also resulted in the neighbourhood being seen from the perspective of the city as disposable – as evidenced by the lack of public services to the area today or any further investment.

---

[545] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 14.
[546] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, p. 14.

Grandmont Rosedale, on the other hand, demonstrates a contrasting situation. Rather than exhibiting the characteristics of a transient neighbourhood, Grandmont Rosedale was built with permanent intention. Houses were constructed of more durable materials, were equipped with necessary utilities and were subject to specific deed restrictions ensuring that the houses were built of a particular quality. The houses in Grandmont Rosedale were not as prone to natural deterioration as those in Brightmoor. Yet the materiality alone does not account for the success of the neighbourhood today.[547] What separates Grandmont Rosedale from other neighbourhoods is that the decline of the city has actually elicited a resident response and collective community action in confronting and addressing the challenges brought on by the transformation of Detroit.

An issue of the Detroit Free Press from 1981, provides insight into the way in which this response emerged. The article discusses Rosedale Park, one of the five neighbourhoods which make up the Grandmont Rosedale community, and the concerns of decline, notably severe population loss, which were, at the time, greatly impacting the city. Author Dennis Holder writes,

> *Those who stayed say Rosedale Park emerged with a sense of unity and purpose it had not known before. "Until a few years ago," says Charlotte Patnaude, "we had no block captains and there was very little fraternizing in the neighborhood. People who lived next door to each other hardly even nodded as they passed in the morning. We had a nice white neighborhood, and we were all isolated. As the neighborhood became integrated, the association realized it would be necessary to get people together to hold down white flight. That's when the block clubs got organized, and we began to take on projects like the traffic islands. We got to know each other, and everyone realized that we all wanted this to be [548]a nice place to live. It really worked. We saved the neighborhood, and we found out how much more fun it can be if you all know each other and look out for each other. In a way, integration saved Rosedale Park.[549]*

---

[547] We can look to other neighbourhoods in Detroit to see this is the case. Take for example, Brush Park, once home to stately Victorian mansions which too have become victim to decay. See 'Brush Park Historic District | Detroit Historical Society' <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/brush-park-historic-district>.

[549] Dennis Holder, 'The Block', *The Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, Michigan, 28 June 1981).

This sentiment expressed by Ms. Patnaude in Holder's article is extraordinarily revealing in that it demonstrates an alternative perspective of decline. Whereas many previous studies have focused their attention on analysing neighbourhoods like Brightmoor where decline has drastically impacted the physical and social landscapes in a negative way, this highlights another way in which decline has transformed the city. It shows how decline has actually created the conditions for a new way of collective organisation to emerge, which has actually had a positive impact on the community.

The collective organisation of the neighbourhood has resulted in the Grandmont Rosedale community becoming more formalised and permanent over time. This has resulted in the continued physical upkeep of the area, specifically the retention of many of its public amenities such as the businesses along the main corridor of Grand River Avenue, parks, libraries, and churches for example. The mere existence of these spaces also contributes to the stability of the neighbourhood. These public spaces, as we have seen, act in a civic capacity, allowing the opportunity for individuals to participate in communal activity.[550] The churches, parks and businesses become the spaces for the residents of the community to meet, to interact and to allow for the continued communication, community building and collective organization which are integral to maintaining the stability and continuity of the neighbourhood today. Furthermore, we begin to see that the sustained maintenance of the community develops additional opportunities for continued investment. The new bus line added in 2017, which connects Grandmont Rosedale residents directly to the Downtown,[551] for example indicates that the area's relative stability makes it the recipient of increased attention from the city. This is something that certain areas of the city suffering greater decay, such as Brightmoor, are not witnessing.

5.5.2 Decline as loss, decline as change

Looking at the two neighbourhoods in tandem, and observing the patterns and practices which have emerged in each also forces us to reconsider the way in which decline is understood in the context of Detroit. The neighbourhood of Brightmoor provided a good empirical beginning for this research for it embodied the accepted image of decline – decay, abandonment, economic strife, crime, depopulation, and deterioration. Brightmoor is also

---

[550] S. Carr and others, *Public Space*, Cambridge Series on Environment (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 344.
[551] 'New DDOT Service Expansion Starts Today; 650 Weekly Trips Added'.

often the focus of scholarly literature on city, as the level of decay has lent the neighbourhood to be a canvas on which future images and ideas of the city can be projected.[552] In many ways, Brightmoor has come to embody the notion of decline because it is very clearly premised on the idea of *loss*, reflecting the way in which decline is often conceptualised. As Herscher reminds us, 'Almost all narratives of this decline are premised on *loss*...[loss] of urban population, of urban territory, of urban infrastructure, of urban order, of urbanity itself. The postulation of loss yields, as its product vacancy, absence, emptiness, shrinkage or ruin'.[553] Herscher suggests that perhaps the reason we see the conditions of Detroit in terms of loss is because we are viewing the notion of decline through the lens of conventional urbanism,[554] which as we have seen from chapter two is structured economically and premised on the notion of progress and positivism to frame the nature of decline as something undesirable and unnatural. This is the reason why Brightmoor has become so representative of decline; the decay and deterioration is quite literally the opposite of progress and growth.

In Grandmont Rosedale on the other hand, decay and deterioration have not engulfed the neighbourhood. Decline in Grandmont Rosedale, has instead, ignited collective responses in order to tackle problems of social and physical deterioration. The way in which the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhood functions, where neighbourhood associations, task forces and block clubs have assumed the undertakings that were once the responsibility of the city, reflects the ways in which processes of decline have transformed urban praxis, altering the social patterns of the city. Decline in the neighbourhood is not so much premised on the idea of *loss*, but rather one of *change*. If we move away from this traditional lens of urbanism in which progress and growth form the foundation of urbanization, we can begin to see how this change not only creates what we have interpreted as challenges, but opportunities as well. It opens up new ways to look at the city and new ways to consider urban decline.

What is revealed through the cases of Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale problematizes existing conceptualisations of urban decline by revealing new patterns and practices that have emerged in the city as a result, challenging our understanding of how decline manifests in an urban environment. These two case studies illustrate the need to the phenomenon of urban decline as an object of study in its own right, for as the case of Detroit and the two

---

[552] Dewar and Linn; Doherty and others; Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit*.
[553] Andrew Herscher, 'The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit: Properties in/of/for Crisis', *Scapegoat: Architecture, Landscape, Political Economy*, 2013, 18–19 (p. 18).
[554] Herscher, 'The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit: Properties in/of/for Crisis', p. 18.

neighbourhoods of Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale represent, the existing models for understanding decline inadequately capture all that the phenomenon embodies.
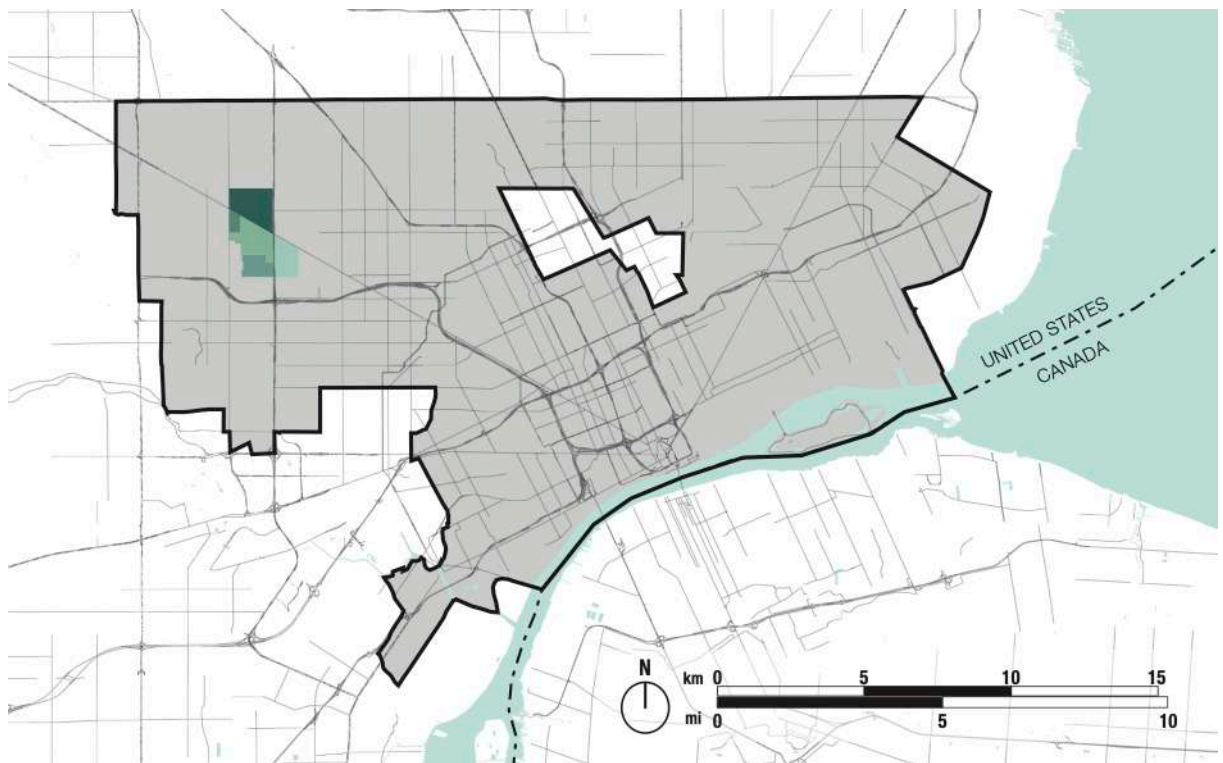
Figure 38 Map of the city of Detroit highlighting the location of the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods

Figure 39 Map of the five neighbourhoods making up the Grandmont Rosedale community

Figure 40 Types of homes found in North Rosedale Park
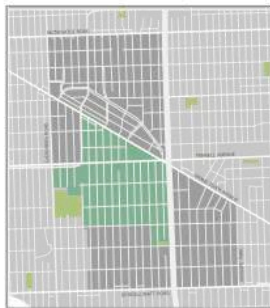
Figure 41 Types of homes found in Rosedale Park
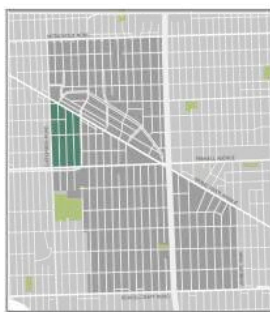
Figure 42 Types of homes found in Minock Park

Figure 43 Types of homes found in Grandmont #1

Figure 44 Types of homes found in Grandmont

Figure 45 DDOT Bus Routes (Source: City of Detroit Department of Public Transportation)

Figure 46 Vacant structures in Grandmont Rosedale (Source: Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan)

TASK FORCES & COMMITTEES

The GCA is made up of a series of committees which are responsible for carrying out the needs of the community.

Current committees include:
- Art Fair
- Beautification
- By- Laws
- Codes
- Environmental
- Finance
- Grandmonitor
- Nominations
- Radio Patrol
- Ramsay Park
- Safety/Security
- Scholarship
- Social Planning
- Street & Block Captains
- Vacant Property Task Force

MEMBERSHIP DUES

$25 per household is collected each year for membership dues. Membership dues help to pay for services such as snow removal as well as go towards funding various activities of the task forces and committees.

There are a total of ten Board Members of the GCA, each serving a term of two years. The Board Members ensure that the GCA runs efficiently and is responsible for organising the committees and task forces.

BOARD MEMBERS

GRANDMONT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

MEETINGS

The Grandmont neighbourhood is comprised of seven streets with five blocks per street. A block captain is responsible for his or her block. They collect dues and pass out the Grandmonitor newsletter. Each street captain is responsible for five block captains.

One street highlighting one block

One single block in Grandmont

STREET AND BLOCK CAPTAINS

Meetings are crucial for the sustainability of the GCA. Annual meetings take place in April of every year. Monthly meetings take place on the first Saturday of the month. All events are attended by the GCA Board Members, the chairperson(s) of each committee, residents of the neighbourhood, and the District 1 Manager.

Figure 47 Organisational structure of the Grandmont Community Association

Figure 48 Douglas Ramsay Memorial Park, April 2018

Figure 49 Douglas Ramsay Memorial Park, April 2018

6. Conclusion: The dynamic nature of urban decline

Urban decline has long been a feature of Detroit, shaping the way in which the city is defined and imagined. Yet as this research has shown from the close examination of Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale, existing conceptualisations of the phenomenon are currently limited and do not adequately capture the changes in which the city has faced over the latter half of the twentieth century. This final chapter explores some conclusions and broader implications of this research by revisiting the questions that this dissertation has initially set out to explore – what is urban decline, how does it manifest, and what can we learn about the city through this process? What emerges is a need to reconsider traditional conceptualisations of the phenomenon which have the potential to lead to a greater understanding of how it affects the city and the people within it.

6.1 Observing fragmentation through perspectives of the everyday

This research employed a particular methodology that allowed for a closer reading of how urban decline spatially and socially influences the city. It was only by focusing on the everyday lived experience of two distinct neighbourhoods that this research was able to understand the dynamic nature of urban decline. Existing studies have often interpreted the phenomenon primarily as a fluctuation of measures of growth and prosperity, largely limiting their basis for interpretation to economic and demographic interactions.[555] These readings provide a foundation for observing urban change over time, however, an understanding of how these changes affect the immense diversity of human activity and their ability to

---

[555] Friedrichs; Glaeser and Gyourko; Bradbury, Downs, and Small.

(re)shape socio-spatial patterns remains elusive. All too frequently, the study of urban decline becomes separated from the lived experience of the city. In the case of Detroit in particular, scholars have traditionally studied the city from the macro-scale, and as such the local dynamics of individual neighbourhoods, which are integral in contextualising and historicising the city's transformation, have largely been overlooked. Studying the city in this way, focusing on regional and city economic, demographic, social and political dynamics, allows for a greater recognition of fluctuations in population, economies, industries and housing stock among other factors, making it much easier to identify trends of growth or decline. Yet, while this macro level approach of studying the city allows for a clear narrative of growth and decline, it seldom recognises the complexity of how these changes have differentially affected the distinct areas within the city itself. Therefore, by focusing on the neighbourhoods themselves, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the extensive, but fragmented literature on Detroit's decline by shifting the scale by which we study the city, using the neighbourhood as a unit of analysis to understand the lived experience of decline, contributing to a wider discussion about urban decline and Detroit's transformation more broadly.

In deciding where to begin this study on urban decline in Detroit, Brightmoor provided a good empirical beginning. Spatially, it is one of the most devastated areas of the city; vacancy is widespread, illegal dumping is extensive, and the physical landscape has become defined by decay and deterioration. Quantifiable data also exposes the numerous challenges that the neighbourhood faces including high rates of poverty, crime and unemployment, low educational attainment and literacy levels, and issues surrounding access to adequate medical care and other social services.[556] In many ways the spatial and social character of Brightmoor is characteristic of how decline in Detroit is typically imagined. Grandmont Rosedale on the other hand, stands out in comparison. Despite the two neighbourhoods bordering one another, Grandmont Rosedale has actually experienced modest success throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. The community has been able to maintain a sense of autonomy through acts of self-mobilisation in order to address the challenges brought on by decline. As a result, the further physical decay of their neighbourhood has been slowed down, avoiding situations of abandonment and deterioration that have come to define other parts of Detroit and they have been able to provide particular services that the city has withdrawn.

---

[556] Data Driven Detroit, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*.

What truly makes Grandmont Rosedale stand out as a contradiction to the conceptualisation of decline in Detroit, however, is the racial makeup of the neighbourhood. Contrary to many narratives which paint a portrait of two disparate Detroits, 'one white the other black, one privileged the other deprived',[557] or a city where 'struggling and frustrated black residents [are] trapped in neighbourhoods that are crumbling around them',[558] Grandmont Rosedale is an example of a majority black – over ninety percent of its total population[559] - community who has found relative success in the midst of Detroit's decline. Not only does this challenge existing perceptions of decline in Detroit, but it reveals a very different conceptualisation of the city. The case of Grandmont Rosedale forces us to reconsider the various ways in which processes of urban decline affect the city and invites us to recognise the individual situations and circumstances found throughout Detroit more carefully.

The chosen methodology focusing on the close, on-the-ground, examination of two very different neighbourhoods in the city uncovered patterns that were expected, such as those conditions found in Brightmoor, but also patterns that were unexpected, expanding our understanding of how decline influences the spatial and social character of the city. As such, this dissertation illustrates how beneath the statistics and the imagined geography of the city, traditionally forming the basis of understanding Detroit as one monolithic entity that has uniformly experienced the conditions associated with urban decline, is instead a city which is in fact fragmented and extremely diverse. Though the fragmented nature of the city is not new, it has been exacerbated and made more visible by processes of urban decline as different neighbourhoods have responded in different ways.[560] As the examples of Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale have illustrated, decline is uniquely manifest in each area, differentially transforming social and spatial fabrics, eliciting a diverse range of responses, and inviting new ways of collective organisation. Analysing two different neighbourhoods which have each experienced decline in different ways reveals the complexity and variation of the way decline is exhibited throughout the city. The narratives exposed in this dissertation therefore contradict directly with existing conceptualisations of the phenomenon which tend to

---

[557] Reese and others, p. 367.
[558] Finley.
[559] Data Driven Detroit, *2012 Data Profile Grandmont Rosedale*, p. 10.
[560] Many historians have engaged with this past to illustrate how Detroit has always been a fragmented city. Zunz for example, through an analysis of the Detroit's geography between 1880-1920, has shown how the urban environment transformed into an agglomeration of different neighbourhoods divided by class, ethnicity and race, while Sugrue and Thomas among others, have focused more specifically on the racial dynamics of urban fragmentation. The fragmented nature of the city has always existed, but it has just been exacerbated and made more visible by processes of urban decline as different neighbourhoods have responded in different ways. (Cf. Oliver Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Darden.)

generalise experiences of decline along economic, demographic and racial measures. Using the scale of the neighbourhood to explore experiences of decline more widely opens up wider debate around the ways in which the phenomenon influences cities.

6.2 Decline as urban transformation

The close examination of the two neighbourhoods of Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale and the ways in which they have been affected by, and reacted to, processes of urban decline, have also prompted new understandings of how residents experience urban decline. Existing conceptualisations of decline have often focused on understanding the concept as a fluctuation of growth and prosperity. Yet as we have witnessed in both neighbourhoods, processes of decline, including but not limited to depopulation, deindustrialisation and economic strife, exert a type of change in the city that actively alters the physical landscape, in turn unsettling the normal rhythm of urban praxis. The neighbourhoods change in both form and function, illustrating how decline is a process that actively dismantles and disassembles existing spatial and social networks and infrastructures, at times, creating new ones – suggesting that decline is more than a measure of growth, and should instead be regarded as a type of urban transformation.

Here I will refer to two brief examples that clearly illustrate this idea. First, we have seen how urban decline alters the traditional form and function of urban space. As chapter four has illustrated of the situation in Brightmoor, processes of decline have contributed to the condition of widespread vacancy and abandonment. Residential lots throughout the neighbourhood have been left deteriorated and decayed, houses have collapsed, and landscapes have been ill maintained. In some areas of the neighbourhood, demolition efforts have created large areas of emptiness and ambiguity; it is no longer clear where one lot begins and another ends, sidewalks and driveways have been consumed by overgrown flora and the traditional order of the residential urban neighbourhood has completely disappeared. Moreover, this land has lost its value in the traditional capitalist real estate market. Property values are extremely low, dissuading any type of new development. Yet, at the same time, the landscape has become the site for new and creative ways of imagining alternative urban possibilities. For example, the abundance of vacant land has made the Brightmoor neighbourhood an attractive location for practices of urban agriculture.[561] The establishment

---

[561] Urban agriculture can be defined as the 'growing, processing and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities'. See Martin Bailkey and Joe Nasr, 'From Brownfields to Greenfields: Producing Food in North American Cities', *Community Food Security News*, 1999, p. 6.

of gardens, pocket farms and even bee farms, have not only offered the opportunity for a more socially inclusive and sustainable urban development model[562] but these practices have created more productive landscapes.[563] We have seen in the neighbourhood of Brightmoor, how the traditional form and function of space has been transformed as a result of urban decline.

Decline can also be understood as an urban transformation by recognising the ways in which processes of decline create particular conditions that force the renegotiation of the roles of the resident and the city administration. In chapter five, we were introduced to the Grandmont Community Association, a neighbourhood organisation formed in response to municipal disinvestment, the withdrawal of city services and challenges such as vacant property that have emerged as a result of decline. In this community we have seen how the residents have become the caretakers of the neighbourhood, assuming many roles and responsibilities that would typically be considered the obligation of the city – maintaining their parks and other public spaces, forming a radio patrol that monitors the safety and security of the neighbourhood, and focusing on remedying particular issues including vacant housing and abandoned properties. Residents have begun to organise collectively, forming new ways of approaching problems in order to navigate a different urban terrain. The neighbourhood no longer functions according to the hegemonic structure of the city.

The transformation of the city as a result of decline yields obvious challenges, but at the same times opens up an opportunity to prompt new understandings of the city's spatial and social possibilities. Scholars have long recognised the possibilities that arise out of situations of crisis. For example, Sola-Morales 'notion of 'terrain vague 'implies this thinking. 'The relationship between the absence of use, of activity, and the sense of freedom, of expectancy, is fundamental to understanding the evocative potential of the city's terrain vague', he explains, 'Void, absence, yet also promise, the space of the possible, of expectation.In the [564'] context of Detroit, this notion of opportunity that arises out of decline has become especially prevalent.[565] Yet many interpretations of what 'opportunity 'entails work within the existing framework of urbanism that is conceptualised through the lens of economic prosperity or

---

[562] Betsy Donald and Alison Blay-Palmer, 'The Urban Creative-Food Economy: Producing Food for the Urban Elite or Social Inclusion Opportunity?', *Environment and Planning A*, 38.10 (2006), 1901–20.

[563] *Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes: Designing Urban Agriculture for Sustainable Cities*, ed. by André Viljoen, Katrin Bohn, and Joe Howe (Amsterdam: Architectural Press [u.a.], 2005).

[564] Ignasi de Sola-Morales Rubio, 'Terrain Vague', in *Anyplace*, ed. by Cynthia C. Davidson (New York, N.Y. : Cambridge, Mass: Anyone Corp. ; MIT Press, 1995), pp. 118–23.

[565] Peter Eisinger, 'Is Detroit Dead?', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 36.1 (2014), 1–12 (p. 8).

depression and that assumes the city as a place of progress and development. This, in turn, repeats patterns that position decline as a narrative of loss based on the normative assumptions of what a city should be.

If we move away from this traditional lens of urbanism in which progress and growth form the foundation of urbanization as the previous chapter suggests, we can begin to see how decline also invites the opportunity to rethink conventional ways of viewing the city that are not premised on the idea of growth in the most traditional terms.[566] We can begin to think about answers to questions regarding what the future of the city becomes, speculating about alternative solutions that exist outside of the structure of conventional urbanism.

Grandmont Rosedale for example presents an opportunity to re-think the future of the city in a way that does not place precedence on the idea of growth in traditional economic or demographic measures. The study of the Grandmont Rosedale neighbourhoods and the organisational structure of how they operate together is not only useful in understanding how the neighbourhood has successfully managed to stabilise itself through years of decline, but it also presents a possible solution to envisioning a much more manageable city. For example, the independence of Grandmont Rosedale suggests that perhaps Detroit could transform into a lesser metropolitan unit that would see the city broken down into smaller autonomous satellite towns, similar to boroughs, each with an organisational structure related to that of Grandmont Rosedale. The towns would be operated under a central authority through the administration of the city of Detroit, which would be responsible for the maintenance and governance of the smaller sized area. The existing district system employed by Detroit's city council would enable an easy transition into this structure; Councilmember Tate of District One explains in a phone interview, 'The district system allows the neighbourhoods to have a perception of a voice. You get lost in 140 miles. But the 18.8 miles of District One is a lot more manageable in terms of the psyche. 'Therefore not only has this system created areas of the city which are looked after and cared for by a councilmember, but it allows for residents of each area of the city to be much more engaged with their communities. The Grandmont Community Association model has also highlighted the importance of clearly defined neighbourhood boundaries; not only do they contribute to a sense of community and identity but, they present a working model to facilitate the deployment of public services and maintenance.[567] If a future model of urban organisation involves the creation of smaller more manageable areas of

---

[566] Molotch.
[567] Ronald E Wilson.

the city, which are clearly defined, perhaps Detroit and its satellite towns will be much more equipped to handle the provision of public services to all areas of the city. Of course this model comes with its challenges and concerns. First one must consider the financial structure of such an organisational arrangement. How would capital be distributed between each village? Would residents pay an additional tax specifically for the maintenance of their own village? Furthermore depending on how boundaries are drawn, this scenario could actually contribute towards inequality. If one village is comprised of a wealthier community, would they have greater access to resources? Because of the depth of Detroit's decline and the already present and persistent issues of racial and economic inequality and division, these issues would have to be seriously considered.

As we have seen in both neighbourhoods, processes of decline have not only influenced the demographic, economic and socio-spatial make up of the city, but they have shaped new urban conditions which have simultaneously opened up various challenges and opportunities, presenting an opportunity to re-think the city and its future. Decline not only alters the spatial and social character of the city, but it changes how the city functions, making it a much more complex phenomenon then previous literature has suggested. Urban decline should therefore be considered for its ability to transform the city, dismantling and disassembling existing spatial and social networks and infrastructures, but also creating new ones. These new networks change both the form and function of space as well as influence the collective and individual experiences of the city. Consequently, this idea challenges the notion that decline is simply the opposite of growth, forcing us to think about the phenomenon through a new lens which considers how these processes affect everyday life in the city.

6.3 Disrupting the cycle of boom to bust

Processes of decline have given rise to new forms of social and spatial patterns, which require the renegotiation of the traditional form and function of neighbourhoods. These adjustments in the structure, social make up, and character of the city are clues pointing to a fundamental change in the urban process. In order to understand these changes and learn how to potentially address them, we must also adjust the way in which we view decline. Therefore, when conceptualising urban decline, we may wish to reconsider our fundamental assumption about urban change, avoiding the belief that cities must inevitably grow, and instead consider what the new patterns and practices which have emerged can tell us about the city.

Urban decline has traditionally been viewed through a lens of 'boom to bust to boom 'in which the city experiences an alternation of periods of prosperity and depression, progressing from one stage to another in a single, sequential, series of steps. This method of thinking about the city is derived from the writings of the influential Chicago School who began to interpret the trajectory of the city through evolutionary analogies of urban change, where the city was viewed as in a constant state of flux, cycling through different developmental stages. In their seminal text, *The City*, urban sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess argue 'The human community tends to develop in a cyclic fashion.[568]' The Chicago School's model of urban change suggests that urban transformations are dictated by fluctuations in population and resources. Park and Burgess maintain that the community tends to remain in a state of balance until a new element is introduced which disturbs the status quo.[569]' Whatever the innovation may be that disturbs the equilibrium of the community, there is a tendency toward a new cycle of adjustment. This may act in either a positive of negative manner', they continue.[570]

The influential Chicago School set the foundation for viewing urban change, especially in the American context, as a cyclical pattern of growth and decline. These 'Ecological metaphors ' as Wahl-Jorgensen explains, 'were useful for their project precisely because they enabled a grounded description of such processes, taking into account the complex relationships shaping social change and stability in urban communities.in this way also set Viewing the city [571]' precedent for explaining trends associated with urban decline, such as increased crime, homelessness, and declining property values for example, as natural parts of the urban cycle of change. Not only were these inevitable outcomes of the growth of cities, but they became the necessary precursors to subsequent periods of growth,[572] serving 'as a release to the community, making for another cycle of growth and differentiation'.[573] Hence a boom-bust-boom interpretation of urban change emerges.

Through this perspective, decline occurs when the city transitions from a period of prosperity to a period of depression by undergoing what have traditionally been interpreted as

---

[568] Park and others, p. 68.
[569] Park and others, p. 68.
[570] Park and others, p. 68.
[571] Wahl-Jorgensen, p. 10.
[572] Wirth's observation of the decaying West Side, would be explained by Reckless's elaboration of Burgess 'zone theory into a model of "twilight neighborhoods" where a cyclic declination of resident population and inclination of vice activity eventually lead to its reclamation as a business district. See James Short, *The Social Fabric of the Metropolis: Contributions of the Chicago School of Urban Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 249.
[573] Park and others, p. 68.

'undesirable changes 'including job loss, growing unemployment, social exclusion, physical decay and worsening living conditions.[574] These changes are considered undesirable for they create a perceived threat to what Tuan notes as the symbolism of the city as a visible symbol of order and harmony, a stable society.[575] Decline conveys the impression that the city government has lost control – an idea that contradicts directly with the ordered image of the city, but also with the belief in progress, both material and intellectual, that as discussed in chapter two, remains integral to the American system of beliefs today. As Herscher explains, 'These understandings presume the city as a site of development and progress, a site defined by the capitalist economy that drives and profits from growth. The contraction of such a site, therefore, provokes corrective urbanisms that are designed to fix, solve or improve a city in decline.-bust-This conceptualisation of decline sets the foundations for a belief in a boom [576]' boom model of understanding the city in which growth, development and regeneration are seen as the desired, if not the expected, outcome of urban decline. Though urban scholars have challenged the interpretation of cities as organic phenomena,[577] this way of comprehending urban change appears to remain the dominant way of conceptualising the city, and its future, especially in the case of Detroit.

The belief in this boom-bust-boom cycle features prominently throughout Detroit's history. In 1805, following a fire that destroyed the city, Detroit's new motto was penned - 'Speramus meliora; resurgent cineribus' – 'We hope for better things; it will arise from the ashes'.[578] Referencing the resurrection of the mythical phoenix, this motto emphasises the cyclical rebirth of the city and the transition from a period of decline to that of growth. As we saw in chapter three, this belief in the cycle of urban change repeated itself in the 1970s with the massive construction boom that appeared following the outmigration of residents and decentralisation of the automotive industry in the decade prior. Referencing the development of Renaissance Center, one of the buildings constructed as a catalyst for development, Henry Ford II proclaimed, 'I am convinced, and I know many other people are as well, that this will be a catalyst for the renaissance of Detroit. The renaissance has already started, but this will

[574] Franklin Medhurst and J. Parry Lewis, *Urban Decay: An Analysis and a Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 2.
[575] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 7. print (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2011).
[576] Andrew Herscher, 'The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit', *Places Journal*, 2012
[577] *Governing Cities in a Global Era: Urban Innovation, Competition, and Democratic Reform*, ed. by Robin Hambleton and Jill Simone Gross, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Dick Simpson and Tom M. Kelly, 'The New Chicago School of Urbanism and the New Daley Machine', *Urban Affairs Review*, 44.2 (2008), 218–38 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087408320237>.
[578] Ardelia Lee, 'What Does Detroit's Motto Mean, Anyway? And Is It Still Relevant Today?', *Daily Detroit*, 18 August 2016 <http://www.dailydetroit.com/2016/08/18/detroits-motto-mean-anyway-still-relevant-today/>.l

be another great step forward'.[579] The Renaissance Center failed to catalyse growth, however, and the processes associated with Detroit's decline continued. In 2010, narratives of regeneration once again began to define the city. The year saw the publication of 'The Detroit Works Project', a wide-reaching effort by the City of Detroit, the Bing Administration, and local foundations to create a long term plan for the city as well as the relocation of Dan Gilbert's mortgage lending company Quicken Loans to the Downtown area, initially bringing in 1,700 employees, but growing to over 12,000 over the next five years. Despite the city reaching its lowest population level in 100 years,[580] these efforts of increased investment and attention began to reignite the belief in the growth of the city.

Today, there is widespread consensus among local elites, the city government and residents, that the city is once again undergoing a process of regeneration. In an op-ed piece for USA Today, Michigan senators Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin proclaim, 'Detroit's comeback has already begun, it will continue, and this great city will come roaring back.The [581]' landscape of Detroit which has been left unattended for many years, has been used as 'the vehicle through which to present a narrative of opportunity.There has also been an [582]' increased effort by the city to improve the city's physical infrastructure and public services. Furthermore, the administration has adopted an aggressive form of redevelopment by prioritising a growth agenda backing urban growth coalitions to re-imagine the city in support of economic growth and commercial interest and adopting policies which aim to increase tax incentives for new developments.[583] There is perhaps no greater example of this than the city's support to fund Gilbert's $2.2 billion Hudson's site project, to which the city granted $618 million in tax subsidies,[584] a considerable tax package considering the financial state of the city and the above average poverty rate of its citizens. Not only is this project symbolic in

[579] Dave Bartkowiak Jr., 'From the Vault: 1973 Special on Detroit Renaissance Center', *Click on Detroit*, 2016 <https://www.clickondetroit.com/features/rencen-1973>.

[580] Peter Weber, 'The Rise and Fall of Detroit: A Timeline', *The Week*, 2013 <http://theweek.com/articles/461968/rise-fall-detroit-timeline>.

[581] Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin, 'Stabenow/Levin: Detroit Comeback Already Has Begun', *USA Today*, 5 August 2013 <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/08/05/debbie-stabenow-and-carl-levin-on-detroit/2619119/>.

[582] Siobhan Gregory, 'Detroit Is a Blank Slate: Metaphors in the Journalistic Discourse of Art and Entrepreneurship in the City of Detroit', p. 218

[583] Historically, the city adopted a similar position as well. Following the initial signs of population and economic decline in the 1970s, the city of Detroit invested in many large projects such as the Renaissance Center, the Millender Center, Trappers Alley, the People Mover and The Joe Louis Area were once seen as projects that would stimulate growth and regeneration in the city.

[584] Louis Aguilar, 'Gilbert Seals $618M Tax Incentive Package for 4 Detroit Projects', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, Michigan, 23 May 2018) <https://eu.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/05/22/tax-breaks-dan-gilbert-downtown-detroit-hudson-book-monroe-development/629505002/>.

that it plans to transform the former site of the famous Hudson's Department Store[585] into the state's tallest skyscraper, but it shows the extent to which the city administration supports these types of large scale redevelopment projects. Scholars have also begun to theorise about what the city might look like in the future. Dewar and Thomas,[586] Gallagher[587] and Doucet[588] each speculate about potential land use solutions and highlight community initiatives as they focus on the potential Detroit to 'regrow 'and 'regenerate 'into a new city.

These economic investments and renewed interest in envisioning the future of the city has generated a narrative of 'comeback 'and 'regeneration', which has once again reinforced the prominence in the belief of the cyclical nature of cities. However, based on what we have seen in the neighbourhoods of Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale, we need to be careful to accept the belief in this narrative, especially in the context of Detroit.

The first problem with maintaining a belief in this cycle is that at its core, this argument remains a matter of demographic and economic measure. Quantifiable measures are useful indicators of particular changes and are necessary in order to understand urban change. However, the economic investment taking place in the city does not necessarily mean growth. Perhaps it indicates a certain *type* of growth, for example that which is discussed by Harvey and Molotch,[589] but it does not inevitably mean a growth which addresses the current socio-spatial concerns being faced by neighbourhoods like Brightmoor and Grandmont Rosedale. As we have witnessed from the Brightmoor and Grandmont neighbourhoods, the challenges of the city do not simply disappear with the return of economic investment. Grandmont Rosedale provides us with a clear example. In the last four years, neighbourhood has been recipient of a new direct bus line that travels to the Downtown area, has received new businesses on the main commercial corridor of Grand River as a result of the Motor City Match program, and has been the target for a new neighbourhood framework strategy through the City of Detroit planning department. Despite these investments however, the neighbourhood continues to rely on self-mobilisation in order to provide volunteer safety

---

[585] The Hudson's Department Store, opened in 1911, was at the time, the second largest department store in the United States, second only to Macy's in New York City. The building became a symbol of Detroit, boasting modern amenities unparalleled to any other department store. The store closed in 1983 as the city's decline in population, reputation and wealth continued and was eventually imploded on October 24, 1998. See 'Hudson's | Detroit Historical Society' <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/hudsons>.
[586] *Dewar and Thomas.*
[587] Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit*.
[588] Doucet, 'Why Detroit Matters - Lessons and Visions'.
[589] For Harvey and Molotch, growth is defined as 'a constantly rising urban-area population-a symptom of a pattern ordinarily comprising an initial expansion of basic industries followed by an expanded labor force, a rising scale of retail and wholesale commerce, more far-flung and increasingly intensive land development, higher population density, and increased levels of financial activity.' Molotch, p. 310.

patrols, voluntarily maintain its vacant properties and operate through the autonomous structure of the neighbourhood association.

Another concern with viewing urban decline through this lens of boom to bust is that growth narratives overshadow the deeper challenges at the root of the city's decline. The present focus on Detroit's growth has temporarily dispersed the idea of decline so that the corresponding result is a belief in the 'comeback 'of the city. By celebrating the *perception* that the city is managing to do well, we may miss an opportunity to enhance the potential to address Detroit's more fundamental challenges. This could lead to a situation in where growth occurs, but under the pretences of continued social and racial segregation and inequality as we are seeing happening in the Downtown area.[590]

Finally this belief in the boom to bust to boom narrative has the potential to disregard alternative ways of imagining the city – one that does not necessarily involve inevitable 'growth'. The expectation that the city will continue in a cyclical trajectory confines us to thinking within the constraints of conventional forms of urbanism. What makes the decline of Detroit particularly unique and interesting however, is that the current situation is revealing new patterns that are not typically expected in conditions of decline. Detroit offers an opportunity for more fine-grained research into the dynamics of decline and perhaps allows for alternative ways of imagining the city.

6.4 The importance of studying Detroit

While Detroit has particular attributes and qualities that set it apart from other American cities, the city is not unique in its challenges. The forces which have shaped, and continue to shape Detroit, influence many cities in the United States, as well as regions around the world, whose economies once relied on large-scale manufacturing. Detroit's unique character however lies in its scale of decline, as well as in its constant renegotiation of its spatial landscape. As Detroit continues to confront its challenges, the importance of understanding the dynamics of the city's decline will become increasingly relevant.

---

[590] Gary Sands and Laura A. Reese, 'Detroit's Recovery: The Glass Is Half-Full at Most', *The Conversation*, 2017 <http://theconversation.com/detroits-recovery-the-glass-is-half-full-at-most-69752> [accessed 3 November 2017]; I. Vojnovic and others, 'Great Expectations: Two Tales of a City', in *The Sustainable City XI*, WIT Transcations on Ecology and The Environment (presented at the 11th International Conference on Urban Regeneration and Sustainability, WIT Press, 2016), CCIV, 749–61 <http://library.witpress.com/viewpaper.asp?pcode=SC16-062-1>; Reese and others; Doucet and Smit; Joshua M. Akers, 'Making Markets: Think Tank Legislation and Private Property in Detroit', *Urban Geography*, 34.8 (2013), 1070–95.

Today, Detroit is at a crossroad – it is once again witnessing a surge of investment that has the potential to address various challenges brought on by the city's decades long decline. There is an opportunity to improve the city's economic wellbeing, but equally, there is an opportunity to address issues of inequality, racism and poor infrastructure that have plagued the city for many years. The types of regeneration activities driven by political and business elites that we have seen so far in Detroit are all too often focused on creating an image of a new, vibrant, growing city, and unfortunately do little to address the needs of many of Detroit's residents, especially those marginalised communities. If the deeper issues of decline, including issues of inaccessibility, inequality and spatial fragmentation, are not recognised then the city is likely to miss opportunities to re-establish vital connections and spaces which can contribute to a more vibrant and equitable city. What becomes critical for Detroit as it continues to navigate its way out of bankruptcy is for the city to take into consideration the complexities and nuances attached to the experiences of urban decline. Recognising that the city's decline is not simply an inverse of its growth, but rather a much more dynamic phenomenon, is the first step in imagining an alternative urban future.

Bibliography

'About Grandmont', *Grandmont Community 'Detroit's Home of Good Neighbors'* <http://www.grandmontcommunity.org/about.html>

Adams, Lee, Anne Choike, Erin Evenhouse, Xiqing Lin, Benjamin Newman, Maeva Silveira, and others, 'From Vacant to Viable: Strategies for Addressing Commercial Corridors in Detroit', 2010 <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/110951/from_vacant_to_viable2010.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

'Adopt-A-Park', *City of Detroit*, 2018 < https://detroitmi.gov/departments/parks-recreation/adopt-park>

Agnew, John, 'Space: Place', in *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography's Binaries*, Society and Space Series (London: SAGE Publications, 2005)

Aguilar, Louis, 'Gilbert Seals $618M Tax Incentive Package for 4 Detroit Projects', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, Michigan, 23 May 2018) <https://eu.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/05/22/tax-breaks-dan-gilbert-downtown-detroit-hudson-book-monroe-development/629505002/>

———, 'Putting a Price Tag on Properties Linked to Gilbert', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, Michigan, 29 April 2016) <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/2016/04/28/dan-gilbert-bedrock-downtown-detroit-buildings/83681698/> [accessed 28 September 2018]

Ahlbrandt, Roger S., and James V. Cunningham. *A New Public Policy for Neighborhood Preservation: Foreword by Geno C. Baroni*. (New York, NY: Praeger, 1979)

Akers, Joshua M., 'Making Markets: Think Tank Legislation and Private Property in Detroit', *Urban Geography*, 34 (2013), 1070–95

Allen, Robert. "Gilbert on Controversial Downtown Sign: 'We Screwed up Badly'." *Detroit Free Press*, December 14, 2019. https://eu.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2017/07/24/gilbert-downtown-detroit-sign/503929001/.

Amin, Ash. *Post-Fordism: A Reader*. Blackwell Publishers, 1994.

———, "Regions Unbound: Towards a New Politics of Place." *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 86, no. 1 (2004): 33-44.

———, *Collective Culture and Urban Public Space*, Inclusive Cities: Challenges of Urban Diversity (Woodrow Wilson International the Center for Scholars, 2006) <http://www.publicspace.org/en/text-library/eng/b003-collective-culture-and-urban-public-space> [accessed 6 April 2018]

———, 'The Good City', *Urban Studies*, 43 (2006), 1009–23

Amin, Ash, and Stephen Graham, 'The Ordinary City', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22 (1997), 411–29

Amin, Ash, and Nigel Thrift, 'Cultural-Economy and Cities', *Progress in Human Geography*, 31 (2007), 143–61

Apel, Dora, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015)

Arnold, Sarah, 'Urban Decay Photography and Film: Fetishism and the Apocalyptic Imagination', *Journal of Urban History*, 41 (2015), 326–39

Austin, Dan, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City's Majestic Ruins* (The History Press, 2013)

Avdoulos, Eve, 'The Pop-Up City in a Time of Crisis: Experimental Strategies for Rebuilding Detroit', in *Moving Cities - Contested Views on Urban Life* (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2017), pp. 205–23

Baer, William, 'On the Death of Cities', *The Public Interest*, 1976, 3–19

Bagchi-Sen, Sharmistha, Jason Knight, and Amy E. Frazier. *Shrinking Cities. Understanding Urban Decline in the United States.* (Basingstoke: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2016)

Bailey, Lindsey, 'Population in Cities: The Impacts of Increased Urbanization', *Population in Cities*, 2014

Bailkey, Martin, and Joe Nasr, 'From Brownfields to Greenfields: Producing Food in North American Cities', *Community Food Security News*, 1999

Bak, Richard, *Detroitland: A Collection of Movers, Shakers, Lost Souls, and History Makers from Detroit's Past* (Detroit: Painted Turtle, 2011)

Bartkowiak Jr., Dave, 'From the Vault: 1973 Special on Detroit Renaissance Center', *Click on Detroit*, 2016 <https://www.clickondetroit.com/features/rencen-1973>

Base, Miroslav, *The Development of Detroit 1701-1920: A Planning History* (Detroit, 1970)

Bassett, Keith, and John Rennie. Short. *Housing and Residential Structure: Alternative Approaches*. London: Routledge & Kegan, 1980.

Bates, Beth, Timothy Bates, and Grace Boggs, 'Where Are the People? Review Essay on Thomas Sugrue's The Origins of the Urban Crisis', *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 27 (2000), 13–26

Beauregard, Robert A., *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of US Cities*, 1st Ed. (Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1993)

———, *Voices of Decline: The Postwar Fate of U.S. Cities*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2003)

Binelli, Mark, *Detroit City Is the Place to Be: The Afterlife of an American Metropolis* (Picador USA, 2013)

Boggs, James. *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader*. Edited by Stephen M Ward. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2011.

Boileau, Lowell. "Detroit 360." Detroit YES, 2005. https://www.detroityes.com/360/.

Bomey, N., *Detroit Resurrected: To Bankruptcy and Back* (W. W. Norton, 2016)

Bontje, Marco, 'Facing the Challenge of Shrinking Cities in East Germany: The Case of Leipzig', *GeoJournal*, 61 (2004), 13–21

Bourdain, Anthony 'Detroit', *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown* (CNN, 2013)

Boyle, Kevin, 'The Ruins of Detroit: Exploring the Urban Crisis in the Motor City', *Michigan Historical Review*, 27 (2001), 109–127

Bradbury, Katharine L., Anthony Downs, and Kenneth A. Small, *Urban Decline and the Future of American Cities* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1982)

'Brush Park Historic District | Detroit Historical Society' <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/brush-park-historic-district>

Burgess, E. "The growth of the city." In The City, eds R. Park , E Burgess , R. McKenzie. (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1925)

Burns, Gus, 'Detroit Resident-Run Radio Patrols Assist Understaffed Police Force', *MLive* (Detroit, Michigan, 9 July 2013) <http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2013/07/detroit_residents_start_radio.html>

Calderón, César, and Luis Servén, *Infrastructure, Growth, and Inequality: An Overview* (World Bank Group, September 2014)

Camp Dresser & McKee, *Wastewater Master Plan: Critical Facilities and Flow Management* (Detroit, Michigan: Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, 2003) < http://docplayer.net/14075359-Critical-facilities-and-flow-management.html>

Campkin, Ben, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*, International Library of Human Geography, 19 (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013)

Capeci, Dominic J., and Martha Wilkerson, 'The Detroit Rioters of 1943: A Reinterpretation', *The Michigan Historical Review*, 16 (1990), 49

Carey, John W, *Brightmoor: A Community In Action* (Detroit, 1940)

Carr, S., M. Francis, L.G. Rivlin, and A.M. Stone, *Public Space*, Cambridge Series on Environment (Cambridge University Press, 1992)

Center for Community Progress, *Open Space in Detroit* (Center for Community Progress, October 2015) <https://detroitfuturecity.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/151022_CommunityProgress_TASP_DFC_Report.pdf>

Chafets, Ze'ev, *Devil's Night: And Other True Tales of Detroit* (Vintage Books, 1991)

Chase, John, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski, eds., *Everyday Urbanism: Featuring John Chase* (New York, N.Y: Monacelli Press, 1999)

Cheshire, Paul, Gianni Carbonaro, and Dennis Hay, 'Problems of Urban Decline and Growth in EEC Countries: Or Measuring Degrees of Elephantness', *Urban Studies*, 23 (1986), 131–49

Cheshire, P.C., and D.G. Hay, *Urban Problems in Western Europe: An Economic Analysis*, Routledge Library Editions: Urban Studies (Taylor & Francis, 2017)

Clark, D., *Urban Decline (Routledge Revivals)*, Routledge Revivals (Taylor & Francis, 2013)

Clarke, A, 'The Belief in Progress in Twentieth-Century America', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19 (1958), 197–224

Commission, City Plan, *A Building Zone Plan for Detroit* (Detroit, 1919)

Community Development Advocates of Detroit, *Brightmoor Restore the 'Moor Report*, 2014. https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0CvFLlGAtWMZThTMWFRa21FY1U/view/

Conflict in Cities and the Contested State, *Coping with Conflict: Dealing with Everyday Life in Divided Cities* (University of Cambridge, 2012)

———, *Urban Regeneration in Contested Cities* (University of Cambridge, 2012)

Cooper-McCann, Patrick, 'Rightsizing Detroit: Looking Back, Looking Forward' (unpublished Senior Honors Thesis, University of Michigan, 2010)

Cox, Kevin R., *Conflict, Power and Politics in the City: A Geographic View*, McGraw-Hill Problems Series in Geography (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973)

Crichlow, Warren, 'Stan Douglas and the Aesthetic Critique of Urban Decline', *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 3 (2003), 8–21

Culham, Devin. "This Map Shows All of the Detroit Buildings Owned by Dan Gilbert." *Detroit Metro Times*, August 20, 2018. https://www.metrotimes.com/news-hits/archives/2018/08/20/this-map-shows-all-of-the-detroit-buildings-owned-by-dan-gilbert.

Cwiek, Sarah, *The Middle Class Took Off 100 Years Ago...Thanks To Henry Ford?*, NPR: All Things Considered <http://www.npr.org/2014/01/27/267145552/the-middle-class-took-off-100-years-ago-thanks-to-henry-ford>

Darden, Joe T., *Detroit, Race and Uneven Development*, Comparative American Cities (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987)

Darden, Joe T., and Sameh M. Kamel, 'Black Residential Segregation in the City and Suburbs of Detroit: Does Socioeconomic Status Matter?', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 22 (2000), 1–13

Data Driven Detroit, *2012 Data Profile Grandmont Rosedale* (Detroit, Michigan, 2012)

———, *Brightmoor Community Needs Assessment*, 2012

Davidson, Cynthia. 'The Architectural Imagination', *Log 37: The Architectural Imagination Catalog*, 2016, p. 25

Davoudi, Simin, 'The Legacy of Positivism and the Emergence of Interpretive Tradition in Spatial Planning', *Regional Studies*, 46 (2012), 429–41

Davoudi, Simin, and Ian Strange, 'Space and Place in the Twentieth Century Planning: An Analytical Framework and an Historical Review', in *Conceptions of Space and Place in Strategic Spatial Planning*, ed. by Simin Davoudi and Ian Strange, The RTPI Library Series, 17 (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 7–42

Dear, M., *From Chicago to L.A.: Making Sense of Urban Theory* (SAGE Publications, 2001)

Dear, Michael, 'Los Angeles and the Chicago School: Invitation to a Debate', *City and Community*, 1 (2002), 5–32

'Decline', *Oxford English Dictionary*

Deng, Lan, Eric Seymour, Margaret Dewar, and June Manning Thomas, 'Saving Strong Neighborhoods From the Destruction of Mortgage Foreclosures: The Impact of Community-Based Efforts in Detroit, Michigan', *Housing Policy Debate*, 28 (2018), 153–79

Dennis, Eric Paul, 'Reconsideration of the Rise and Fall of Detroit Through the Lens of NonPlace', *Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design*, 2011, 41–48

Dennis, Richard, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840-1930*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography, 40 (Cambridge ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Desiderio, Francis, '"A Catalyst for Downtown": Detroit's Renaissance Center', *Michigan Historical Review*, 35 (2009), 83–112

DeSilvey, Caitlin, and Tim Edensor, 'Reckoning with Ruins', *Progress in Human Geography*, 37 (2013), 465–85

Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, *Detroit Commercial Corridor Strategy* (Detroit, Michigan, February 2018) <http://www.degc.org/wp-content/uploads/180206_Detroit_Executive-Summary4.1.pdf>

"Detroit Resists: Digital Occupation of the U.S. Pavilion," May 25, 2016. https://issuu.com/detroitresists/docs/detroit_resists_catalogue.

Dewar, Margaret E., and Robert Linn, 'Remaking Brightmoor', in *Mapping Detroit: Land, Community, and Shaping a City*, ed. by June Manning Thomas and Henco Bekkering, Great Lakes Books (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015), pp. 143–66

Dewar, Margaret E., and June Manning Thomas, eds., *The City After Abandonment*, The City in the Twenty-First Century, 1. ed (Philadelphia, Pa: Penn, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2013)

Dewar, Margaret E., Matthew Weber, Eric Seymour, Meagan Elliot, and Patrick Cooper-McCann, 'Learning from Detroit: How Research on a Declining City Enriches Urban

Studies', in *Reinventing Detroit: The Politics of Possibility*, ed. by Michael P. Smith and L. Owen Kirkpatrick, Comparative Urban and Community Research, volume 11 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2015)

Dewar, Margaret, Chelsea Neblett, Ian Beniston, and Joe Napier, 'Doing a Lot with Little: Community-Based Stabilization Efforts' (presented at the Reclaiming Vacant Properties, Baltimore, Maryland, 2016)

Doherty, Kimiko, Lisa Morris, Tim Parham, Sarah Powers, Erin Schumacher, and Bonnie Wessler, *A Land Use Plan for Brightmoor* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, April 2008) <https://taubmancollege.umich.edu/pdfs/student_work/planning/a_land_use_plan_for _brightmoor.pdf>

Donald, Betsy, and Alison Blay-Palmer, 'The Urban Creative-Food Economy: Producing Food for the Urban Elite or Social Inclusion Opportunity?', *Environment and Planning A*, 38 (2006), 1901–20

Doucet, Brian, 'Detroit's Gentrification Won't Give Poor Citizens Reliable Public Services', *The Guardian*, 17 February 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/feb/17/detroit-gentrification-poverty-public-services-race-divide>

———, 'Why Detroit Matters - Lessons and Visions', *Town & Country Planning*, 2017, 97–105

Doucet, Brian, and Edske Smit, 'Building an Urban "Renaissance": Fragmented Services and the Production of Inequality in Greater Downtown Detroit', *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 31 (2016), 635–57

Downs, Anthony. 'Some Realities about Sprawl and Urban Decline.' *Housing Policy Debate*, 10(4) (1999): 955–74.

'DPD: All Crime Incidents, December 6, 2016 - Present | Detroit Open Data Portal' <https://data.detroitmi.gov/Public-Safety/DPD-All-Crime-Incidents-December-6-2016-Present/6gdg-y3kf/data> [accessed 28 September 2018]

Durst, Noah J., and Jake Wegmann, 'Informal Housing in the United States: Informal Housing In The United States', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 41 (2017), 282–97

Dye, T. R., 'City-Suburban Social Distance and Public Policy', *Social Forces*, 44 (1965), 100–106

Edwards, Mary M, 'Understanding the Complexities of Annexation', *Journal of Planning Literature*, 23 (2008), 119–35

Eide, Stephen, '"Detroit Resurrected," by Nathan Bomey', *The New York Times*, 29 April 2016, section Book Review <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/01/books/review/detroit-resurrected-by-nathan-bomey.html> [accessed 18 February 2018]

Eisinger, Peter, 'Is Detroit Dead?', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 36 (2014), 1–12

Elliott, Meagan, 'Imagined Boundaries: Discordant Narratives of Place and Displacement in Contemporary Detroit' (University of Michigan, 2018)

Emerson, R.M., R.I. Fretz, and L.L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing (University of Chicago Press, 1995)

Everyday Urbanism: Margaret Crawford vs. Michael Speaks, Everyday Urbanism. New Urbanism. Post Urbanism & ReUrbanism (The University of Michigan, 2004) <https://taubmancollege.umich.edu/sites/default/files/files/MAP%20books/mud1.pdf>

Fairlie, John A, 'Home Rule in Michigan', *The American Political Science Review*, 4 (1910), 119–23.

Farley, Reynolds, *Detroit Divided* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000)

———, 'The Bankruptcy of Detroit: What Role Did Race Play?', *City & Community*, 14 (2015), 118–37

Farley, Reynolds, Charlotte Steeh, Maria Krysan, Tara Jackson, and Keith Reeves, 'Stereotypes and Segregation: Neighborhoods in the Detroit Area', *American Journal of Sociology*, 100 (1994), 750–80

Featherstone, Mike, 'Automobilities: An Introduction', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21 (2004), 1–24 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404046058>

Feeney, D., *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*, Joan Palevsky Imprint in Classical Literature (University of California Press, 2008)

Fernández Águeda, Beatriz, *Shaping the Futures for Industrial Cities in Decay: Urban Planning and Memory Retrieval* <http://oa.upm.es/5978/1/FernandezAgueda_ponencia_2010_02.pdf>

Finley, Nolan, 'Finley: Where Are the Black People?', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, 14 December 2014) <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/opinion/columnists/nolan-finley/2014/12/14/black-people/20322377/>

Fishman, Robert, 'Detroit and the Acceleration of History', *Log 37: The Architectural Imagination Catalog*, 2016

———, 'Detroit: Linear City', in *Mapping Detroit: Land, Community, and Shaping a City*, ed. by June Manning Thomas and Henco Bekkering, Great Lakes Books (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015), pp. 77–100

———, 'The American Metropolis at Century's End: Past and Future Influences', *Housing Policy Debate*, 11 (2000), 199–213

———, "American Suburbs/English Suburbs: A Transatlantic Comparison." Journal of Urban History 13, no. 3 (May 1987): 237–51.

Fleming, Leonard, 'SMART Urged to Change Boarding Policy in Detroit', *Detroit News*, 11 January 2015 <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/wayne-county/2015/01/10/smart-urged-change-boarding-policy-detroit/21570061/> [accessed 18 February 2018]

Flintoff, Ashley, Andrew Peters, and Michael Smith, *Brightmoor Unearthed: A Neighborhood Analysis*, 2011

Florida, Richard, *Cities and the Creative Class* (Routledge, 2005)

Fm, wdet 101.9, 'Why Do Hamtramck and Highland Park Exist inside the City of Detroit?', *Curiosi-D*, 2014

Fol, Sylvie, 'Urban Shrinkage and Socio-Spatial Disparities: Are the Remedies Worse than the Disease?', *Built Environment*, 38 (2012), 259–75

Fol, Sylvie, and Emmanuèle Cunningham-Sabot, 'Urban Decline and Shrinking Cities: A Critical Assessment of Approaches to Urban Shrinkage', *Annales de géographie*, 674 (2010), 359–83

Foreman, Dave, *Rewilding North America: A Vision For Conservation In The 21st Century* (Island Press, 2004)

Friedrichs, Jürgen, 'A Theory of Urban Decline: Economy, Demography and Political Elites', *Urban Studies*, 30 (1993), 907–17

Fuller, R.L., *"Phantom of Fear": The Banking Panic of 1933* (McFarland, Incorporated, Publishers, 2011)

Gale Thomas, Jerome, 'The City of Detroit: A Study in Urban Geography' (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1928), p. 116-20

Gallagher, John, 'Is QLINE the Start of Something Much Bigger?', *The Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, Michigan, 3 May 2017) <https://www.freep.com/story/money/business/john-gallagher/2017/05/02/detroit-qline-transit-streecars/101212540/>

———, *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining an American City* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 2010)

Galster, George, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012)

Gans, H. The Urban Villagers Group and Class Life of Italian Americans (New York: The Free Press 1962)

Gandy, Matthew, 'Unintentional Landscapes', *Landscape Research*, 41 (2016), 433–40

Gansky, Andrew Emil, '"Ruin Porn" and the Ambivalence of Decline: Andrew Moore's Photographs of Detroit', *Photography and Culture*, 7 (2014), 119–39

García, I. Human Ecology and Its Influence in Urban Theory and Housing Policy in the United States. *Urban Sci. (3)* (2019)

García Docampo, Manuel, 'Theories of Urban Dynamics', *International Journal of Population Research*, 2014 (2014), 1–11

Gaspaire, Brent, 'Redlining (1937-)', *BlackPast.Org* <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/redlining-1937> [accessed 15 November 2016]

Gavrilovich, Peter, and Bill McGraw, *The Detroit Almanac: 300 Years of Life in the Motor City* (Detroit: Detroit Free Press, 2006)

Glaeser, Edward, and Joseph Gyourko, *Urban Decline and Durable Housing* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, November 2001)

Glaeser, E.L., *Triumph of the City* (Macmillan, 2011)

Goddeeris, Andrew, 'Securing Neighborhoods', *Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design*, 2014, 110–18

Goheen, P.G., 'Industrialization and the Growth of Cities in Nineteenth-Century America', *American Studies*, 14 (1973), 45–61

'Good Neighborhoods Initiative', *School of Social Work - University of Michigan*, 2018 <https://ssw.umich.edu/offices/learning-communities/community-organiziation/good-neighborhoods>

Gorham, W., and N. Glazer, *The Urban Predicament* (Urban Institute, 1976)

Graham, S., and S. Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (Taylor & Francis, 2002)

'Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation', *Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation* <http://grandmontrosedale.com/>

———, *Grandmont Rosedale Quality of Life Plan* (Detroit, Michigan, 2012) <https://mi-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Grandmont-Rosedale-Quality-of-Life-Plan.pdf>

Greenberg, Martin, *Citizens Defending America: From Colonial Times to the Age of Terrorism* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005)

Gregory, Siobhan, 'Detroit Is a Blank Slate: Metaphors in the Journalistic Discourse of Art and Entrepreneurship in the City of Detroit', in *Renewing Places* (presented at the Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference, Savannah, Georgia: American Anthropological Association, 2012), pp. 217–33

Grengs, Joe, 'Job Accessibility and the Modal Mismatch in Detroit', *Journal of Transport Geography*, 18 (2010), 42–54

Groat, L.N., and D. Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, Architectural Research Methods (Wiley, 2013)

Grund, Francis J., *The Americans in Their Moral, Social and Political Relations*, American Culture Series, History Collection (Marsh, Capen and Lyon, 1837)

Grunow, Francis M, 'A Brief History of Housing in Detroit', *Model D Media*, November 2015

Guiton, Jacques, *The Ideas of Le Corbusier on Architecture and Urban Planning*, trans. by Margaret Guiton (New York: G. Braziller, 1981)

Guzman, Gloria G, *Household Income: 2016* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2017)

Hall, S., *City, Street and Citizen: The Measure of the Ordinary*, Routledge Advances in Ethnography (Taylor & Francis, 2012)

Hambleton, Robin, and Jill Simone Gross, eds., *Governing Cities in a Global Era: Urban Innovation, Competition, and Democratic Reform*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Harris, N., and Chicago Historical Society, *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago Historical Society, 1993)

Harris, Richard, 'The Rise of Filtering Down: The American Housing Market Transformed, 1915-1929', *Social Science History*, 37 (2013), 515–49

Harvey, D., *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Wiley, 1997)

Healthy Environments Partnership, *Brightmoor's Lydon Greenway: Catalyst for Community Revival*, 2007 <http://www.hepdetroit.org/images/PDFs/Report-LyndonGreenway.pdf> [accessed 18 February 2018]

Hemmerle, Sean, 'The Remains of Detroit - Photo Essays', *TIME.Com* <http://content.time.com/time/photogallery/0,29307,1864272,00.html>

Herbert, Claire, 'Property Rights in the Context of Urban Decline: Informality, Temporality, and Inequality' (University of Michigan, 2016)

Herbert, Claire W., 'Like a Good Neighbor, Squatters Are There: Property and Neighborhood Stability in the Context of Urban Decline', *City & Community*, 17 (2018), 236–58

Herman, Arthur, *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (New York: Free Press, 1997)

Herman, Max Arthur, *Fighting in the Streets: Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005)

Herron, Jerry, *AfterCulture: Detroit and the Humiliation of History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993)

——, 'The Last Pedestrians', *Places Journal*, 2012 <https://doi.org/10.22269/120410>

Herscher, Andrew, *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012)

——, 'The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit', *Places Journal*, 2012

——, 'The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit: Properties in/of/for Crisis', *Scapegoat: Architecture, Landscape, Political Economy*, 2013, 18–19

Hill, E.J., J. Gallagher, American Institute of Architects Detroit Chapter, and B. Korab, *AIA Detroit: The American Institute of Architects Guide to Detroit Architecture* (Wayne State University Press, 2003)

Hillier, Amy E, *Redlining and the Homeowners' Loan Corporation*, 2003

'History', *QLINE Detroit* <https://qlinedetroit.com/about/history/>

'History, Mission & Vision', *Brightmoor Artisans Collective*, 2018 <http://brightmoorartisans.org/whoweare/history/>

History.com, 'Great Migration', *HISTORY* <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/great-migration>

'Hitchin' a Ride: Fewer Americans Have Their Own Vehicle', *University of Michigan News*, 2014 <https://news.umich.edu/hitchin-a-ride-fewer-americans-have-their-own-vehicle/>

Holder, Dennis, 'The Block', *The Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, Michigan, 28 June 1981)

Homan, Mark S., *Promoting Community Change: Making It Happen in the Real World*, 5th ed (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning, 2011)

Hoover, Edgar M., and Raymond Vernon. *Anatomy of a Metropolis: The Changing Distribution of People and Jobs within the New York Metropolitan Region.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959)

Hou, Jeffrey, ed., *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities* (New York: Routledge, 2010)

'How the Renaissance Center Changed the Landscape of Detroit', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, 29 September 2001)

Howard, Ashley, 'Prairie Fires: Urban Rebellions as Black Working Class Politics in Three Midwestern Cities' (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012)

Howes, Daniel, 'Howes: Detroit's Narrative Arc Bending Upward, Finally', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, Michigan, 22 December 2017) <http://www.detroitnews.com/story/business/columnists/daniel-howes/2017/12/21/howes-detroits-narrative-arc-bending-upward-finally/108835820/>

Hoyt, H. One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago (Chicago, Illinois University of Chicago Press, 1933)

Hudson Webber Foundation, *7.2 Square Miles: A Report on Greater Downtown Detroit* (Detroit, Michigan: Hudson Weber)

'Hudson's | Detroit Historical Society' <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/hudsons>

Hunter, George, 'Detroit Police Overtime Hours, Costs Soar', *The Detroit News* (Detroit, Michigan, 13 June 2017) <https://eu.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2017/06/13/police-overtime/102798536/>

Huyssen, Andreas, 'Nostalgia for Ruins', *Grey Room*, 23 (2006), 6–21

'Infrastructure, Interruption, and Inequality: Urban Life in the Global South', in *Disrupted Cities When Infrastructure Fails* (New York: Routledge, 2010)

Jackson, Kenneth T, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1985)

Jackson Turner, Frederick, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History' (presented at the American Historical Association meeting, Chicago, 1893)

Jacobs, Jane, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961)

Jessop, Bob, 'Fordism', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, inc., 2016) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fordism>

Jorgensen, Mary West, 'Planning for Housing in Brightmoor', in *Brightmoor A Community in Action*, 1940

Kelly, Eric D., *Managing Community Growth* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004)

Kerstetter, Katie, 'Insider, Outsider, or Somewhere In Between: The Impact of Researchers' Identities on the Community-Based Research Process', *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 27 (2012), 99–117

Kimmelman, Michael. "The Lights Are On In Detroit." *The New York Times*, January 10, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/10/arts/the-lights-are-on-in-detroit.html.

Kinder, Kimberley, *DIY Detroit: Making Do in a City without Services* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016)

Kinney, Rebecca J., *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016)

Kitchen, Peter and Allison Williams. Measuring Neighborhood Social Change in Saskatoon, Canada: A Geographic Analysis, Urban Geography, 30:3, (2009) 261-288,

Klepper, Steven. "Disagreements, Spinoffs, and the Evolution of Detroit as the Capital of the U.S. Automobile Industry." *Management Science* 53, no. 4 (2007): 616–31.

Kurth, Joel. "Can Detroit Find Salvation through Demolition?" *Crain's Detroit Business*, July 6, 2017. https://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20170706/news/633246/can-detroit-find-salvation-through-demolition.

LaFaive, Michael D., 'Flashy Projects Have Not Helped Detroit', 2005 <http://www.mackinac.org/7453>

Landon, Simone, 'Light Rail Out, Bus Plan In', *HuffPost UK*, 14 December 2011 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/14/woodward-light-rail-line-canceled_n_1147846.html>

Lang, J., *Urban Design: The American Experience* (Wiley, 1994)

Laursen, L H. "Urban transformations—the dynamic relation of urban growth and decline", in Parallel Patterns of Shrinking Cities and Urban Growth Eds Ganser, R, Piro, R, (Ashgate, Burlington, VT, 2012) pp 73–82

'Learning from Detroit: Turbulent Urbanism in the 21st Century A Proposal for a Michigan Meeting (Submitted January 11, 2013)', 2013

Leary, J.P., 'Detroitism', *Guernica: A Magazine of Art & Politics,* January 2011 <http://www.guernicamag.com/features/ leary_1_15_11/>

LeDuff, Charlie, *Detroit: An American Autopsy* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013)

Lee, Ardelia, 'What Does Detroit's Motto Mean, Anyway? And Is It Still Relevant Today?', *Daily Detroit*, 18 August 2016 <http://www.dailydetroit.com/2016/08/18/detroits-motto-mean-anyway-still-relevant-today/>

Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991)

Leo, Christopher, and Kathryn Anderson, 'Being Realistic about Urban Growth', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 28 (2006), 169–89

Levine, David Allan, *Internal Combustion: The Races in Detroit, 1915-1926* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976)

Ling, Peter J., *America and Automobile: Technology, Reform and Social Change 1893-1923* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990)

Livengood, Chad, 'Brightmoor to Novi: The Long Ride for Low-Wage Workers', *Crain's Detroit Business*, 18 February 2018 <http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20180218/blog026/653251/brightmoor-to-novi-the-long-ride-for-low-wage-workers>

'Local Government Authority', *National League of Cities*, 2016 <https://www.nlc.org/topics/city-government>

Loeb, Carolyn S., *Entrepreneurial Vernacular: Developers' Subdivisions in the 1920s* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001)

Lofland, Lyn H., *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory* (Routledge, 2017)

Logan, John and Harvey Molotch. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987)

Logan, John R., and Gordana Rabrenovic, 'Neighborhood Associations: Their Issues, Their Allies, and Their Opponents', *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, 1990, 68–94

Logan, John R., and Brian J. Stults, *The Persistence of Segregation in the Metropolis: New Findings from the 2010 Census* (Project US2010, 24 March 2011) <https://s4.ad.brown.edu/Projects/Diversity/Data/Report/report2.pdf>

Loukiatou-Sideris, Anastasia, 'Inner-City Commercial Strips: Evolution, Decay: Retrofit?', *The Town Planning Review*, 68 (1997), 1–29

Mac Lean, Neil, 'Hubertschool', 5 March 2003 <http://www.hubertschool.org/files/hhstmclcomp.jpg>

MacDonald, Christine, and Nicquel Terry, 'Census: Detroit Incomes up for First Time since 2000', *Detroit News*, 2017 <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2017/09/14/detroit-incomes-rise-first-time-since/105588010/> [accessed 20 April 2018]

Manning-Thomas, June, 'Planning History and the Black Urban Experience: Linkages and Contemporary Implications', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 14 (1994), 1–11

———, *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013)

———, 'Targeting Strategies of Three Detroit CDCs', in *The City after Abandonment*, ed. by Margaret E. Dewar and June Manning Thomas, The City in the Twenty-First Century, 1st ed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 197–226

Marcuse, Peter and Ronald van Kempen (Eds.) Of States and Cities: The Partitioning of Urban Space (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Marger, Martin, 'Ethnic Succession in Detroit Politics 1900-1950', *Polity*, 11 (1979), 340–361

Marr, Stephen, 'Worlding and Wilding: Lagos and Detroit as Global Cities', *Race & Class*, 57 (2016), 3–21

Marshall, Colin, 'The Renaissance Center: Henry Ford II's Grand Design to Revive Detroit – a History of Cities in 50 Buildings, Day 42', *The Guardian*, 22 May 2015

Martelle, Scott, *Detroit: A Biography*, 1st ed (Chicago, Ill: Chicago Review Press, 2012)

Martin, Elizabeth Anne, *Detroit and the Great Migration, 1916-1929* (Ann Arbor, 1993)

Massey, Doreen, *For Space* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2005)

———, "A Global Sense of Place." *Marxism Today* 38 (1991): 24–29.

———, 'Politics and Space/Time', *New Left Review*, I, 1992, 65–84

Masten, Susan J., Simon H. Davies, and Shawn P. McElmurry, 'Flint Water Crisis: What Happened and Why?', *American Water Works Association*, 108 (2016), 22–34

Mattie, Erik, *World's Fairs* (New York City, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998)

Medhurst, Franklin, and J. Parry Lewis, *Urban Decay: An Analysis and a Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1969)

Metzger, J. T. "Planned Abandonment: The Neighborhood Life-Cycle Theory and National Urban Policy." *Housing Policy Debate* 11 (1) (2000), 7-40.

Millington, Nate, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation, and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan' (PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2010)

———, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37 (2013), 279–96

Milner, H. Richard, 'Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen', *Educational Researcher*, 36 (2007), 388–400

Mirel, Jeffery. The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81. (University of Michigan Press, 1999)

Moldoff, Ross, 'Controlling Strip Development', *Planning Commissioners Journal*, 53 (2004)

Molotch, Harvey, 'The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place', *American Journal of Sociology*, 82 (1976), 309–32

Morton, Thomas, 'Something, Something, Something Detroit', 2009 <http://www.vice.com/read/something-something-something-detroit-994-v16n8>

'MowerGang.Com', *The Detroit Mower Gang*, 2016 <http://www.mowergang.com/index.html>

Murdoch, Jonathan, *Post-Structuralist Geography: A Guide to Relational Space* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2006)

Navarro, Laetitia M., and Henrique M. Pereira, 'Rewilding Abandoned Landscapes in Europe', in *Rewilding European Landscapes*, ed. by Henrique M. Pereira and Laetitia M. Navarro (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 3–23

'Neighbors Building Brightmoor - Home' <http://www.neighborsbuildingbrightmoor.org/>

Nelles, Jen, 'Regionalism Redux: Exploring the Impact of Federal Grants on Mass Public Transit Governance and Political Capacity in Metropolitan Detroit', *Urban Affairs Review*, 49 (2013), 220–53

'New DDOT Service Expansion Starts Today; 650 Weekly Trips Added', *City of Detroit*, 2017 <http://www.detroitmi.gov/News/ArticleID/1184/New-DDOT-service-expansion-starts-today-650-weekly-trips-added>

Norton, R.D., *City Life-Cycles and American Urban Policy* (New York: Academic Press, 1979)

Novak, Marguerite, Christian Savona, Aaron Dawson, Ken Hall, Dawn Ceballos, and Andre Dompierre, *Fenkell Commercial Corridor Study* (Michigan State University, Spring 2014) <https://reicenter.org/upload/documents/colearning/brightmoor2014_report_noa11y.pdf> [accessed 18 February 2018]

Okrent, Daniel, 'The Tragedy of Detroit', *Time*, 5 October 2009

Okrent, Daniel, and Steven Gray, 'The Future of Detroit: How to Shrink a City', *Time*, 11 November 2010 <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2030898,00.html>

Oliver, Melvin L, and Thomas M Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth* (New York: Routledge, 1997)

'Opting-Out Limits Manufacturing Employment Opportunities for the Transit Dependent', *Drawing Detroit*, 2015 <http://www.drawingdetroit.com/tag/opt-out/>

Owens III, Raymond, and Esteban Rossi-Hansberg, and Pierre-Daniel Sarte, "Rethinking Detroit", Princeton University (2019)

'Packard Plant — Historic Detroit' <http://historicdetroit.org/building/packard-plant/>

Pager, Devah, and Hana Shepherd, 'The Sociology of Discrimination: Racial Discrimination in Employment, Housing, Credit, and Consumer Markets', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34 (2008), 181–209

Pallagst, Karina, Jasmin Aber, Ivonne Audirac, Emmanuele Cunningham-Sabot, Sylvie Fol, Helen Mulligan, and others, *The Future of Shrinking Cities: Problems, Patterns and Strategies of Urban Transformation in a Global Context* (University of California Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, May 2009)

Park, Robert Ezra, Ernest Watson Burgess, Roderick D. McKenzie, and Morris Janowitz, *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967)

Peck, Jamie, 'Austerity Urbanism: American Cities under Extreme Economy', *City*, 16 (2012), 626–55

Pedroni, Thomas C. "Urban Shrinkage as a Performance of Whiteness: Neoliberal Urban Restructuring, Education, and Racial Containment in the Post-Industrial, Global Niche City." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 32, no. 2 (April 13, 2011): 203–15.

Pinho, Kirk, 'Blight Authority Targets Additional 21-Block Area of Brightmoor', *Crain's Detroit Business*, 2014 <http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20140120/NEWS/140129996/blight-authority-targets-additional-21-block-area-of-brightmoor>

Pinto, John A., 'Origins and Development of the Iconographic City Plan', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 35, 35–50

Platt, Rutherford H., *Reclaiming American Cities: The Struggle for People, Place, and Nature since 1900* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014)

Poethig, Erica, Joseph Schilling, Laurie Goodman, Bing Bai, James Gastner, Rolf Pendall, and others, *The Detroit Housing Market: Challenges and Innovations for a Path Forward* (Urban Institute) <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/detroit-housing-market/view/full_report>

Poremba, David Lee, *Images of America, Detroit: 1860-1899* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 1998)

Psarra, Sophia, and Conrad Kickert, 'Detroit - The Fall of the Public Realm: The Street Network and Its Social and Economic Dimensions from 1796 to the Present', in *Eighth International Space Syntax Symposium*, ed. by M Greene, J Reyes, and A Castro (Santiago de Chile, 2012), pp. 1–26

'Public Lighting Authority Completes Relighting of Detroit', *City of Detroit* <http://www.detroitmi.gov/News/ArticleID/1168/Public-Lighting-Authority-Completes-Relighting-of-Detroit> [accessed 6 September 2018]

Pullan, Wendy, 'Agon in Urban Conflict: Some Possibilities', in *Phenomenologies of the City: Studies in History and Philosophy of Architecture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 213–24

———, 'Spatial Discontinuities: Conflict Infrastructures in Contested Cities', in *Locating Urban Conflicts: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday*, by Wendy Pullan and Britt Baillie (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1–13

Ratner, G, 'Inter-Neighborhood Denials of Equal Protection in the Provision of Municipal Services.', *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 4 (1968), 1–64

Reese, Laura A., Jeanette Eckert, Gary Sands, and Igor Vojnovic, '"It's Safe to Come, We've Got Lattes": Development Disparities in Detroit', *Cities*, 60 (2017), 367–77

Reese, Laura A., and Gary Sands, 'No Easy Way Out: Detroit's Financial and Governance Crisis' (presented at the Interrogating Urban Crises Conference, De Monfort University, Leicester, England, 2013) <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/business-and-law-documents/research/lgru/laurareeseandgarysands.pdf>

Reindl, JC, 'Detroit Streetlights Go from Tragedy to Bragging Point', *Detroit Free Press*, 15 December 2016 <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/12/15/detroit-streetlights-go-tragedy-bragging-point/95483846/>

Roberts, Susan, 'A Critical Evaluation of the City Life Cycle Idea', *Urban Geography*, 12 (1991), 431–49

Romig, Rollo, 'When You've Had Detroit', *The New Yorker*, 17 June 2014 <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/when-youve-had-detroit>

'Rosedale Park Historic District - National Register of Historic Places Registration Form', 2004 <https://focus.nps.gov/GetAsset?assetID=57e2f164-2081-4eeb-a536-8b31b328fb58>

Rothstein, R., *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (Liveright, 2017)

Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1979)

Sandom, Chris, C. Josh Donlan, Jens-Christian Svenning, and Dennis Hansen, 'Rewilding', in *Key Topics in Conservation Biology 2*, ed. by David W. Macdonald and Katherine J. Willis (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), pp. 430–51

Sands, Gary, and Laura A. Reese, 'Detroit's Recovery: The Glass Is Half-Full at Most', *The Conversation*, 2017 <http://theconversation.com/detroits-recovery-the-glass-is-half-full-at-most-69752> [accessed 3 November 2017]

Sardari Sayyar, Sara, and Lars Marcus. "Urban Diversity and How to Measure It – an Operational Definition of Classes and Scales." Montreal, 2011. https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:469916/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

Sassen, Saskia, 'Re-Assembling the Urban', *Urban Geography*, 29 (2008), 113–26

Saunders, Peter, 'Reasons Behind Detroit's Decline', *Corner Side Yard*, 2012
        <http://cornersideyard.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/reasons-behind-detroits-decline.html>
        [accessed 19 February 2017]

———, 'The "Reasons Behind Detroit's Decline" Series, Part 9', *Corner Side Yard*, 2014

Schoon, N., *The Chosen City*, The Chosen City (Spon Press, 2001)

Scruton, R., *Modern Philosophy: An Introduction and Survey* (Pimlico, 1994)

Segal, David, 'Dan Gilbert's Quest to Remake Downtown Detroit', *The New York Times*, 13
        April 2013 <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/business/dan-gilberts-quest-to-
        remake-downtown-detroit.html> [accessed 28 September 2018]

Shea, Bill, 'Potential Help for Late Buses, Inefficient Bus Routes in Detroit: Advanced
        Metrics', *Crain's Detroit Business*, 9 April 2017
        <http://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20150315/NEWS/303159972/potential-help-
        for-late-buses-inefficient-bus-routes-in-detroit>

———, 'QLine Expansion Needs a Champion, Money', *Crain's Detroit Business*, 7 May
        2017 <https://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20170507/NEWS/170509858/qline-
        expansion-needs-a-champion-money>

Short, Dr John Rennie, *Urban Theory: A Critical Assessment*, 2nd edition (Palgrave
        Macmillan, 2014)

Short, James, *The Social Fabric of the Metropolis: Contributions of the Chicago School of
        Urban Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971)

Simpson, Dick, and Tom M. Kelly, 'The New Chicago School of Urbanism and the New
        Daley Machine', *Urban Affairs Review*, 44 (2008), 218–38

Soja, Edward W., *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden, MA:
        Blackwell Pub, 2000)

———, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Wiley-
        Blackwell, 1996.

———, 'The Socio-Spatial Dialectic', *Association of American Geographers*, 70 (1980),
        207–25

de Sola-Morales Rubio, Ignasi, 'Terrain Vague', in *Anyplace*, ed. by Cynthia C. Davidson
        (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge, Mass: Anyone Corp.; MIT Press, 1995), pp. 118–23

Sole, George, 'Will the Cities Ever Stop?', *The New Republic*, 16 June 1926, 105–7

Solomon, Lewis D., Detroit: Three Pathways to Revitalization (New Brunswick, NJ:
        Transaction Publishers, 2014).

Stabenow, Debbie, and Carl Levin, 'Stabenow/Levin: Detroit Comeback Already Has
        Begun', *USA Today*, 5 August 2013
        <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/08/05/debbie-stabenow-and-carl-levin-
        on-detroit/2619119/>

Staes, JA, 'Detroit Adds 8 Trucks That Suck To Clean Catch Basins, Reduce Street Flooding', *Daily Detroit* (Detroit, Michigan, 22 August 2017) <http://www.dailydetroit.com/2017/08/22/detroit-adds-8-trucks-suck-clean-catch-basins-reduce-street-flooding/>

Steinmetz, George, 'Detroit: A Tale of Two Crises', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 27 (2009), 761–70

Streeck, Wolfgang, 'Industrial Relations and Industrial Change: The Restructuring of the World Automobile Industry in the 1970s and 1980s', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 8 (1987), 437–62

Sugrue, Thomas. "Becoming the Motor City: Immigrants, Migrants, and the Auto Industry." From Motor City to Motor Metropolis: How the Automobile Industry Reshaped Urban America. Automobile in American Life and Society, 2004. http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview1.htm.

———, "Living in the Motor City: Autoworkers, Race, and Urban Geography." From Motor City to Motor Metropolis: How the Automobile Industry Reshaped Urban America. Automobile in American Life and Society, 2004. http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview2.htm.

———, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton University Press, 2005)

Suttles, Gerald D. *The Social Construction of Communities*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Talen, Emily, 'Do-It-Yourself Urbanism: A History', *Journal of Planning History*, 14 (2015), 135–48

Taub, Richard, George Surgeon, Sara Lindholm, Phyllis Betts Otti, and Amy Bridges, 'Urban Voluntary Associations, Locality Based and Externally Induced', *American Journal of Sociology*, 83 (1977), 425–42

Taylor, B.E., 'Brightmoor's Growth 47% During Last Year', *B.E. Taylor Real Estate News*, August 1924

Taylor, W.R., *Inventing Times Square: Commerce and Culture at the Crossroads of the World*, Johns Hopkins Paperback (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

Temkin, Kenneth, and William Rohe. "Neighborhood Change and Urban Policy." Journal of Planning Education and Research 15, no. 3 (April 1996): 159–70.

'The Architectural Imagination', *The Architectural Imagination* <http://www.thearchitecturalimagination.org/>

'The Detroit United Railway Years (1900-1922)', *Detroit Transit History* <http://www.detroittransithistory.info/TheDURYears.html>

'The Grand River Avenue District of Detroit', *The Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, 22 June 1924)

The Historic Designation Advisory Board, *Proposed B.E. Taylor's Subdivision House Historic District 15378 Lamphere, Brightmoor* (Detroit, Michigan, 2008) <https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2018-08/B.%20E.%20Taylor%27s%20Subdivision%20House%20HD%20Final%20Report.pdf> [accessed 7 March 2018]

The Skillman Foundation. 'Kids Matter Here. An Analytic Review of the 10-Year Good Neighborhoods Initiative'. < https://www.skillman.org/data-and-evaluation/gni/>

'The Ruins of Detroit (2005-2010)', *Yves Marchand & Romain Meffre Photography* <http://www.marchandmeffre.com/detroit>

The Vacant Properties Research Network, *Charting the Multiple Meanings of Blight: A National Literature Review on Addressing the Community Impacts of Blighted Properties* (Keep America Beautiful, 20 May 2015) <https://www.kab.org/sites/default/files/Charting_the_Multiple_Meanings_of_Blight_FINAL_REPORT.pdf> [accessed 7 March 2018]

Thieme, Tatiana, Michele Lancione, and Elisabetta Rosa, 'The City and Its Margins: Ethnographic Challenges across Makeshift Urbanism: Introduction', *City*, 21 (2017), 127–34

Tipps, Dean C. "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15, no. 2 (1973): 199-226

Tonkiss, Fran, *Space, the City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005)

Tuan, Yi-Fu, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 7. print (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2011)

'United States Census Bureau QuickFacts: Detroit City, Michigan', 2017 <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/detroitcitymichigan/IPE120216>

Upton, Dell, 'Architecture in Everyday Life', *New Literary History*, 33 (2002), 707–23

US Census Bureau, Census History Staff, 'Urban and Rural Areas - History - U.S. Census Bureau' <https://www.census.gov/history/www/programs/geography/urban_and_rural_areas.html>

Van Allsburg, M., Property abandonment in Detroit. *Wayne L. Rev.*, *20* (1973)

Vergara, Camilo José. *American Ruins* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999)

Vidler, Anthony, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, 5. print (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999)

Viljoen, André, Katrin Bohn, and Joe Howe, eds., *Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes: Designing Urban Agriculture for Sustainable Cities* (Amsterdam: Architectural Press [u.a.], 2005)

Vives Miró, Sònia, 'Producing a "Successful City": Neoliberal Urbanism and Gentrification in the Tourist City—The Case of Palma (Majorca)', *Urban Studies Research*, 2011 (2011), 1–13

Vojnovic, Igor, and Joe T Darden. "Class/Racial Conflict, Intolerance, and Distortions in Urban Form: Lessons for Sustainability from the Detroit Region." *Ecological Economics* 96 (2013): 88–98.

Vojnovic, I., L. A. Reese, J. Eckert, and G. Sands, 'Great Expectations: Two Tales of a City', in *The Sustainable City XI*, WIT Transactions on Ecology and The Environment (presented at the 11th International Conference on Urban Regeneration and Sustainability, WIT Press, 2016), CCIV, 749–61 <http://library.witpress.com/viewpaper.asp?pcode=SC16-062-1>

Wacquant, Loïc, 'Marginality, Ethnicity and Penality in the Neo-Liberal City: An Analytic Cartography', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37 (2014), 1687–1711 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.931991>

———, 'The Rise of Advanced Marginality: Notes on Its Nature and Implications', *Acta Sociologica*, 39 (1996), 121–39

Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin, 'The Chicago School and Ecology: A Reappraisal for the Digital Era', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60 (2016), 8–23

Wallerstein, Nina, and Bonnie Duran, 'Community-Based Participatory Research Contributions to Intervention Research: The Intersection of Science and Practice to Improve Health Equity', *American Journal of Public Health*, 100 (2010), 40–46

Walsh, Tom, 'QLINE a Catalyst For Investment Along Woodward Corridor', *QLINE Detroit*, 2017 <https://qlinedetroit.com/downtown-north-end-qline-drives-7-billion-development-along-woodward-corridor/>

Warren, Carol A.B., 'Qualitative Interviewing', in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, ed. by Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2002), pp. 83–102

wdet, *CuriosiD: How A 1900s Black Detroit Community Was Razed For A Freeway* <https://wdet.org/posts/2015/10/19/81771-curiosid-how-a-1900s-black-detroit-community-was-razed-for-a-freeway/>

Weber, Peter, 'The Rise and Fall of Detroit: A Timeline', *The Week*, 2013 <http://theweek.com/articles/461968/rise-fall-detroit-timeline>

White, Monica M., 'Sisters of the Soil: Urban Gardening as Resistance in Detroit', *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 5 (2011), 13–28

Wilson, David, and Jared Wouters, 'Spatiality and Growth Discourse: The Restructuring of America's Rust Belt Cities', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 25 (2003), 123–38

Wilson, Ronald E, 'Why Neighborhoods Matter: The Importance of Geographic Composition', *Geography & Public Safety*, 2 (2009), 20

Winowiecki, Emma. "Mostly-White 'See Detroit Like We Do' Ad Draws Backlash and Apologies." *Michigan Radio*. July 24, 2017. https://www.michiganradio.org/post/mostly-white-see-detroit-we-do-ad-draws-backlash-and-apologies.

Wolff, Manuel, and Thorsten Wiechmann, 'Urban Growth and Decline: Europe's Shrinking Cities in a Comparative Perspective 1990–2010', *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 25 (2018), 122–39

Woodward, C., '"Learning from Detroit" or "The Wrong Kind of Ruins"', in *Urban Wildscapes* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 17–32

Yuen, T.C. Neighbourhood Analysis for Residential Urban Renewal: A Conceptual Framework. (Calgary: Faculty of Environmental Design. 1979)

Zenk, Shannon N., Amy J. Schulz, Barbara A. Israel, Sherman A. James, Shuming Bao, and Mark L. Wilson, 'Neighborhood Racial Composition, Neighborhood Poverty, and the Spatial Accessibility of Supermarkets in Metropolitan Detroit', *American Journal of Public Health*, 95 (2005), 660–67 <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2004.042150>

Zunz, Oliver, 'Detroit's Ethnic Neighborhoods at the End of the Nineteenth Century' (Ann Arbor, 1977)

———, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, And Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983)

Appendix

Redacted.