Rethinking Retail in Indy: Reconnecting East 10th Street, Reinventing Small Town Shopping, Reevaluating 1970s Shopping Malls, and Revitalizing Fountain Square

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The dawn of 21st century brought about significant advances in technology that affected all aspects of social life. These advances, specifically the interstate system and the automobile, revolutionized the institution of retail and the way we as consumers shop. In the 1970s, the strip center, the enclosed mall and big box stores drew business from local retail, leaving many urban neighborhood retail strips abandoned. In present day, we see yet another shift in retail trends as the presence of "dead malls" becomes more common and authentic urban shopping strips re-emerge. The gap between these two eras of retail has not been completely bridged, though. In this presentation, we will explore different perspectives on the future of urban retail throughout Greater Indianapolis through the use of ethnographic and descriptive research methods. We will look at possibilities for the re-use of the largely abandoned Lafayette Square Mall; evaluate different perspectives on how East 10th Street can reconnect retail with a struggling residential community; analyze the impact of downtown and highway oriented retail nodes on the struggling revitalization of suburban Greenfield; and examine whether the unique and independently owned eateries and pubs are truly serving as engines in spurring the economic revival of the older neighborhood of Fountain Square.

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