

NAPTOWN RISES: HAS A SPORTS STRATEGY REAWAKENED A SLEEPING CITY?

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Downtown Indianapolis is witnessing a dramatic resurgence. For Indianapolis, a chance to host the 2012 Super Bowl is not only an honor, but an opportunity to rebrand itself as a “big league city” with Midwestern charm. From the building of Lucas Oil Stadium, to the expansion of the existing convention center and the recently completed Georgia Street corridor, to subsidizing the building of a soaring hotel, Indianapolis has bent itself backwards to be ‘cool’ and ‘sporty.’ Few neighborhoods boast the development that has become common downtown. This dependency on sports as a means for economic development blurs the distinction between public and private space. For our research, we target the “mile-square” as ground-zero for analyzing and observing how a sport strategy has transformed the once called “Indiana-place” to “Super City.” We collected a considerable amount of information through literature reviews, site visits, mapping (ArcGIS), field trips, and interviews. In this poster presentation, we study how the vernacular landscape of Indianapolis has changed due to the reliance on sports as an economic development strategy. We also discuss the role of public-private partnerships in the making of downtown development as well as the development of districts to appeal to the new ‘creative’ class. We hope that our presentation will shed light on the complex relationship between recent events and downtown redevelopment.

This study was funded by the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Research Institute (MURI).