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# Reshaping Cityspace: Studying Spatial Isolation And Perceptions Of Justice In Syracuse's Southside

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## ABSTRACT

*On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1929, at nine o'clock in the morning, the national retail giant Sears-Roebuck & Company opened the doors to a new facility strategically located on Syracuse's South Salina Street and what was formerly known as West Raynor Avenue. This was 1 of 319 store locations opened by Sears that year alone. In 1964 and 1965, the S-R & Co. continued to grow in Central New York with expansion of the Automobile Center at the aforementioned location and opening of another new store in the Fairmount Fair Shopping Center North of Syracuse. This expansion of Sears' presence in Syracuse hardly foreshadowed the disinvestment that would occur 19 years later in 1979.*

*Now, approaching 90 years since inception (88 years total), the original facility still stands in the South Side of Syracuse as a hollowed-out vault used for storing medical archives. The building's physical existence is a derelict ode to a neighborhood that was once a stable component of a rising local economy here in Syracuse. This intersection of the South Side at South Salina and Mr. Luther King Jr. East/West is a transitional place; the spaces of which stand stagnantly, perpetually arrested by decline after decades of emigration and disinvestment.*

Urban development processes are the primary vehicles through which the consequential geographies of cityspaces are created. This project is designed to scale down the wider debates of spatial and social justices by examining how cityspace is reshaped here in Syracuse. Beyond looking at the power of space and place, I am hoping to explore the power of perceptions of space, the goal being to sharpen understandings of what factors both drive and stunt urban development processes. The ultimate purpose of this project would be in re-implementing that power of perception to engage stakeholders in re-claiming the lost spaces within cityspace, like those along Syracuse's South Side.

Leveraging the discourses of urban geography, culture, and justice as channels for community empowerment, this project is set to amplify both the historic and contemporary narratives of strategic spatial transformations found in the inner-city neighborhoods of Syracuse.

This project explores how certain inner-city spaces in Syracuse are reshaped through urban development, while processes of spatial isolation and injustices seemingly usurp other areas of similar reshaping. I draw on findings from a number of disciplines including urban theory, social & cultural sciences, and architecture. In depth archival analysis is used to present this former Sears-Roebuck and Company department store as a central research site for the project. Core perception data is further substantiated by qualitative research, conducted in the South Side and surrounding areas of Central New York in order to best develop this argument.

**Reshaping Cityspace:**  
Studying Spatial Isolation and Perceptions of Justice in Syracuse's Southside

by

John H. Giles Jr.  
B.Arch., Syracuse University, 2007

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Arts in *Geography***

**Syracuse University**

MAY 2023

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*God The Father*  
*Jesus The Son*  
*The Holy Spirit*

Kimani Estelle Giles  
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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the relationships between urban development and processes of spatial isolation in Syracuse's Southside inner city. I draw on findings from archival data<sup>1</sup> on this former Sears-Roebuck and Company department store site, as well as more than 20 semi-structured interviews conducted with Southside residents, advocates, and community leaders for the Southside, to explore what it might be like to re-shape the Southside through perceptions of justice. My goal has been to connect local perceptions of this environment with understandings of development and planning goals for the city of Syracuse as a whole. My thesis asks two questions:

- ***PAPER A – What do we learn about Syracuse and its urban transformations from examining the saga of the Sears building?***
- ***PAPER B – How was urban planning, in the form of the Southeast Gateway Neighborhood Development Plan [SGNDP], attempted as an intervention into the Southside?***

For more than a decade now, I have observe the impact of spatial isolation within Syracuse's inner city neighborhoods. Spatial Isolation is simply defined here as *having the bulk of disparities perpetually occurring within concentrated areas of the city*. The bulk of poverty is historically located in the near-westside inner city of Syracuse and that remains to this day. The proliferation of under/unemployment and gun violence is aligned in the Southside area of the city. abysmal education and dropout rates are highest within the inner-city. Health disparities amongst the elderly and youth are also exacerbated in these areas of the city.

I conducted semi-structured interviews to collect insider/outsider perceptions about life in Syracuse and specifically the inner-city Southside in and adjacent to Sears & Roebuck. I had a

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<sup>1</sup> Primarily Herald American & Herald Journal articles from the Onondaga Historical Association.

range of participants, including a few who regularly visited this Sears department store growing up in the 1960 - 70s. Other participants shared details of participating in community design charrettes (detailed in Paper B), as urban design groups collaborated with local politicians in efforts to rebrand and revitalize this neighborhood. I hold that “justice” is as bias as the perceptions we all carry individually and as a result we would really working toward ‘justices’ especially in a fragmented urban context such as Syracuse. Residents and insiders of the Southside even hold differences within our communities as to what justice is. However, more often than not our justice isn’t comprehensively captured in what urban planners and designers present for people to vote upon. The collecting of experiences, thoughts, and perceptions captured across multiple interviews and events allows me to aggregate similar details and desires between common themes about what might be needed in the southside.

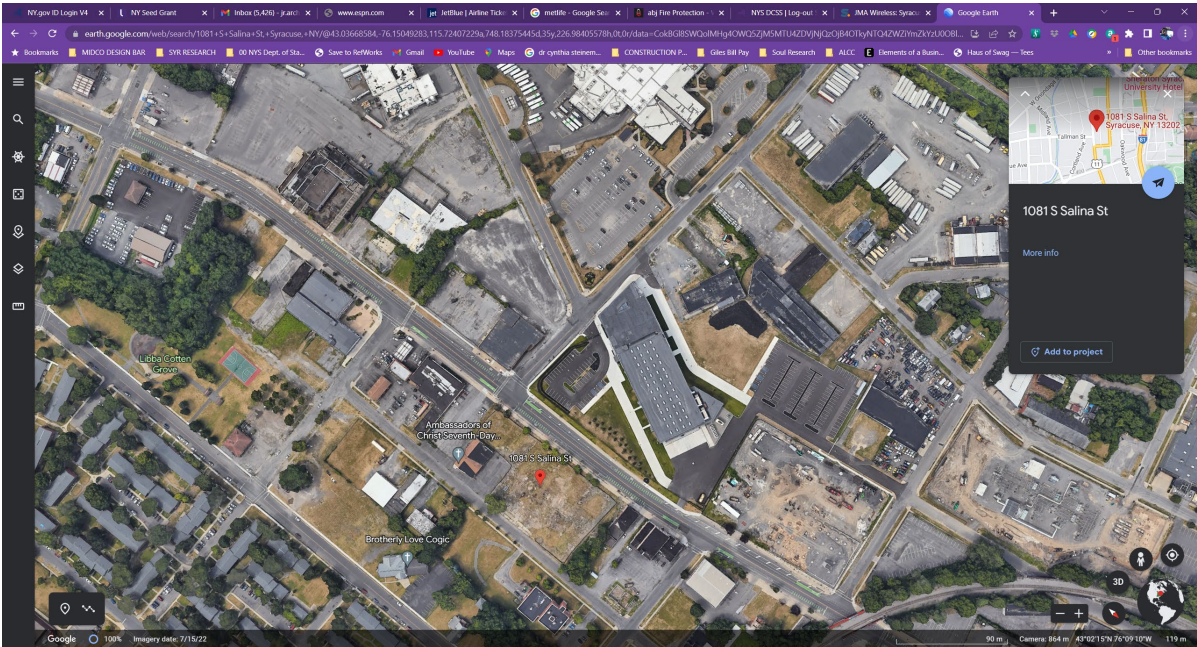
The archival components are woven together to create a historical narrative for Paper A but also to explore key questions like: Is there a shifting boundary between downtown and Southside Syracuse? Which buildings in the city hold architectural value, and which do not? Comparing Syracuse’s historical formation with successful development projects and attempted but failed development efforts helps me better understand the nature of spatial isolation in Syracuse’s Southside and further explore what spatial justice may look like.

Both Papers A and B support my primary argument that the Southside is spatially, as well as socio-economically, isolated due to historical disinvestment and inequitable access to redevelopment resources. However, since writing these papers, there has been some significant development in both downtown and the Southside. In 2020, JMA Wireless, a worldwide leader in communications, acquired a large block of space directly adjacent to the Sears & Roebuck block. This block included a through traffic street and the former COYNE Textile service



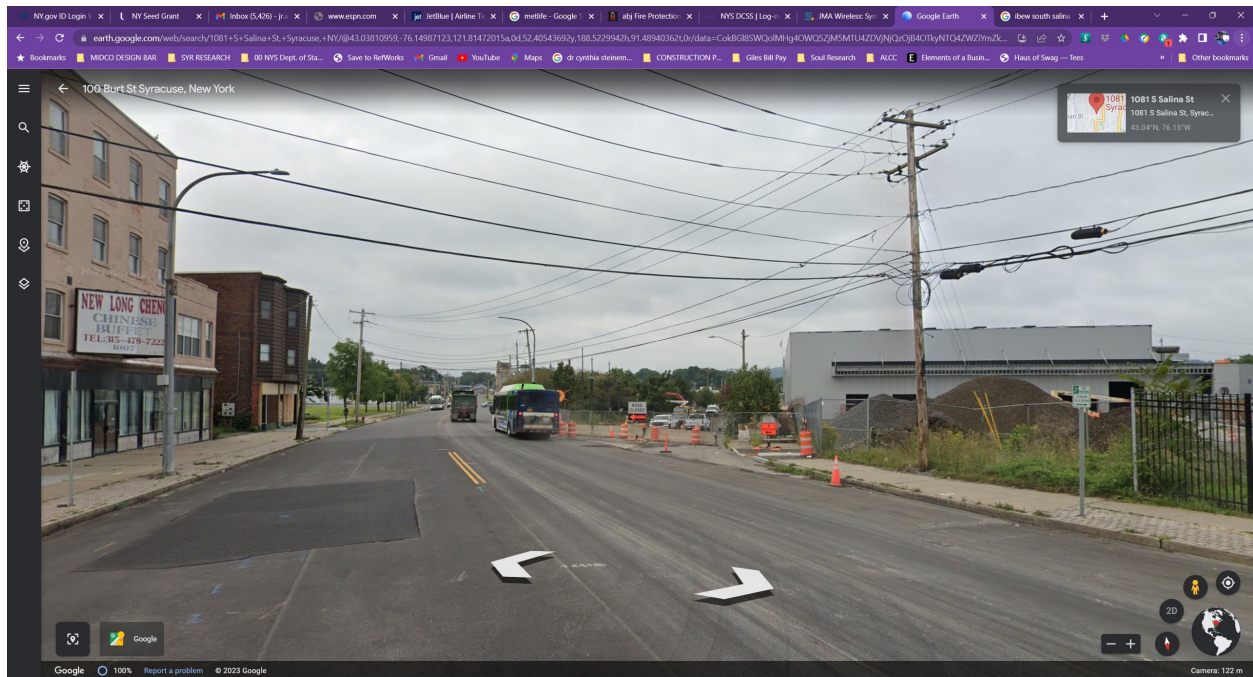
building/campus, both rezoned and reconstructed for JMA Wireless’ \$50M state-of-the-art facility which opened February 28, 2022, and promised to bring over 200 jobs to the area. The adjacent lots just north of this new facility have been cleared and staged for the brand-new International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers [IBEW] facility.

The middle portion of the block along 1081 S Salina Street is located directly east of the new JMA facility and has since been cleared for another development project entitled Salina 1<sup>st</sup> (shown below)



Additionally, there has been substantial new and reconstruction along the Salina Corridor leading into and through Downtown Syracuse along Salina Street, only a few blocks north of the Sears –

Roebuck & Co. building, JMA Wireless, Syracuse Community Health Center, and Salina 1<sup>st</sup> sites. Yes, there is now change; however, with the typology and scale of these new projects, combined with the impending deconstruction of I-81 through the Southside inner-city, the question now becomes: *Is this the pre-qual to gentrification in the Southside, or are these the changes that have been promised since the initial erasure of the 15<sup>th</sup> Ward district in the 1960's?*



Cityspaces are consequential urban phenomenon. The city and its relationships are both co-produced and polarized within various competitions happening inside and outside its boundaries (*Soja 2010, Soja, Edward., Hooper, Barbara., 1993, Massey 2005*). Syracuse's competitions can be characterized by the relationships between cultural-historical and industrial roots that remain in perpetual seizure from crippling socio-economic desolation in recurring waves of deindustrialization. A Syracuse that once simply knew itself as The Salt City and grew via the Erie Canal transit has become a fragile place of maybe. Syracuse sits at the heart of the Central New York region as a declining city composed of multiple urban rings and sprinkled edge cities

that encircle its continuously struggling center. Syracuse, like any city, fights for federal and state resources toward economic and business development. There are seasons of revitalization, however. When Syracuse does have a win, those victories trend toward one-sided suburban outcomes, mostly at the expense of other areas inside the inner city.

I believe it is the job of geography to assess and explain potential causes for such uneven gains across the city. Furthermore, it is time to re-engage the transformative power of perception and design through architecture in urban reshaping in new and accessible ways. The consequence is that certain parts of the city are consistently built up, while the Southside and inner city remain deteriorating and neglected in socio-economic stasis. Enthusiasms and partial efforts to revitalize places in Syracuse other than Destiny USA (formerly, Carousel Center), University areas, Downtown, and/or Onondaga Lake have been temporary and haphazard at best. This lopsidedness, along with other internal corruption detailed in the coming papers, lead to the reproduction of uneven and unjust cityspace. I will expound more on these histories of urban space in Syracuse and then its Southside cityspace in Papers A and B.



## **PAPER A: FRACTURED IDENTITIES: HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE IN SYRACUSE**

### **Introduction: Snapshots Through Historical Urban Formation in Syracuse**

The goal of my study is to demonstrate how the City of Syracuse, in particular downtown and Southside Syracuse, had been historically formed by the perceptions of people/groups who hold influence and power. Over time, the identities of these places have shifted, as society changed on multiple scales; however, between Downtown Syracuse and Southside, these shifts in development and investments have gone in completely opposite directions. Historically, the perceptions of those with power are prioritized and tend to hold more political influence than those who live within and are most directly impacted by the changing and/or stagnated cityspaces of Syracuse.

Paper A looks into early Syracuse, taking a cross-section through downtown, along the once-bustling Salina Street Corridor and examining the development and decline of the Sears-Roebuck & Co. site in the city's Southside. The Sears & Roebuck building is the anchor site for my research and stands as evidence of early prosperity in this inner-city site, the Southside. The later part of this paper juxtaposes that initial success with the site's current and perpetual decline after Sears' departure. A secondary comparison takes a more recently reshaped place like the *Hotel Syracuse* to explore the impacts of how selective urban re-investment/development in a city follows projected revenue markets, which are characterized by perceptions of value. Paper B takes a more in-depth look at the power of those perceptions as a catalyst or impetus to development and construction in certain areas.

Overall, this paper provides a contextual backdrop to the sustained decline in the city's Southside. It is clear that the Southside was once treated as a profitable frontier for growth of the flourishing downtown core. Ultimately, the value given to these historic perceptions is a spool of thread within an ongoing complex web of competing narratives in Syracuse. These histories intersect with the lived realities of marginalized and underrepresented peoples, including the experience of prolonged deterioration in the Southside that echo through and beyond the span of my research.

#### **SPATIAL-HISTORICAL MOMENTS OF EARLY SYRACUSE**

To call a city "industrial" in the present period in the U.S. is to associate it with a set of negative images: declining economic base, pollution, a city on the downward slide. (Jakle, John A., Wilson, David, 1992)

Syracuse has become a pixelated and broken storyboard, not unlike many Northeastern and Midwestern US cities still reeling from deindustrialization and the accompanying waves of disinvestment. Contemporary spatial-historical narratives of Syracuse portray a city in search of a redefined identity at different time periods. The inner city is always hanging on the next big change: Carousel Mall to Destiny USA expansion, Inner Harbor Developments, and/or the pending dismantling and reconstruction of I-81. This paper offers glimpses into the early development of what was more than an "industrial" city, as quoted above, and the rising innovative and hospitable City of Syracuse.

***Innovative Syracuse***

Syracuse's success began with grains of salt, as the Towns of Onondaga and Salina's earliest-19<sup>th</sup>-century gross product consisted of mining the heavy halite and salt sheds sources left behind by massive glacial deposits, reaching from the southern parts of Onondaga Lake through Tully. This is why Syracuse has long been known as the *Salt City* (Kappel, William M., Onondaga Lake Cleanup Corporation, United States, Environmental Protection Agency, Region II., New York (State), Department of Environmental Conservation, Geological Survey (U.S.), 2000). Innovations in transportation and a developing banking/finance center then sprang up alongside the salt industry. The Town of Onondaga operated as a crossroads of commerce between New York's eastern and western regions via the Erie Canal (1825) (Finch, Roy G., YA Pamphlet Collection (Library of Congress), 1925). These two diversified functions stabilized the city economically, as evidenced by the construction of the *Syracuse Savings Bank [1876]* and the *Robert Gere Bank [1894]* that established Clinton Square as the city's financial center (The Preservation Association of Central New York, Onondaga Historical Association, Erie Canal Museum, Armin Schneider, Syracuse Blueprint, 2008).

The mid-1920s were a time when industry was prime and advancements in infrastructure, along with several other modern contributions from Syracuse, were all set up by the city's layers of success in salt, transport, and its global markets for manufacturing. For Syracuse, to be an industrial city was to be a bell cow amid an expanding herd of US industrial cities. Its early developments were characterized by groundbreaking innovation and productivity, as "Syracuse [was] a leading city of the United States in the manufacture of tool steel, automobile gears, differentials and transmissions, soda ash and its byproducts... [fine china]... typewriters... the automobile... boilers and radiators" and a host of other modern entities (*Syracuse, convention*

city.1927). Syracuse's political boundaries developed when the towns of Onondaga and Salina merged in 1848 (Syracuse Then & Now & Schramm, 1979).

By 1926, the city bolstered a population of over 200,000, and that number grew to more than 210,000 by 1938-39 (Syracuse Then & Now & Schramm, 1979). Moving closer toward the southern edge of downtown Syracuse, another aspect of the city's identity emerged during this early period. Syracuse was characterized as a place of hospitality and entertainment, as theatres, shops, and a number of fine hotel options began lining South Salina Street and beyond. Syracuse Convention City (1926) read as follows: "Hospitality finds its true meaning in Syracuse," listing the city's experience in "handling large crowds" for events like "The Great New York State Fair, World's Dairy Congress [convention], American Foundry Men's Association [annual meeting], [and The] State Democratic [convention]." It further noted the repeat business associated with smaller meetings for organizations that return "year after year without solicitation [as] the best evidence of the wonderful treatment which has been accorded them by Syracuse business men and hotels" (*Syracuse, convention city.1927*).

The original Hotel Syracuse (1924), designed by New York City architect William Stone Post, had 600 rooms and, on its 10<sup>th</sup> floor, boasted the largest Grand ballroom between New York City and Buffalo at 5,900 square feet and comfortably seating 800. At the time, Hotel Syracuse was listed as one of two first-class hotels, out of a total of seven and another still being built. This proliferation of large hotels was indicative of the city's marketability in the hospitality industry, as Syracuse was doing so well it was literally making year-round accommodations for the consistent influx of travelers and visitors. Each hotel was located less than four blocks from the



city's business center and shops in Clinton Square (*Syracuse, convention city*.1927). The Hotel Syracuse was also the place where a "delegation of businessmen" would host a luncheon to honor General R. E. Wood, Sears President, on the grand opening of the Syracuse store in 1929. I return to this Sears launch momentarily. Today, the Hotel Syracuse again stands revived and reopened, after a dark period of mismanagement, unfulfilled plans, and even closure. The renowned hotel was purchased by Ed Riley of the Pyramid Hotel Group and fully renovated and restored for over \$60 million. On June 25, 2015, it was renamed Marriot Syracuse Downtown (Abbott, 2015).

I present the historic successes of downtown and the Hotel Syracuse here as an instance of a successful turn-around and a multi-million-dollar re-investment in the city's core. These sites are only a 1.2 miles north of the former Sears and Roebuck Co. facility in the Southside. Both buildings are located along South Salina Street, although on opposite sides of the tracks. The industrial innovation of the early-20<sup>th</sup> century, alongside a growing culture of entertainment and the arts, made Syracuse more than just a thoroughfare. It made the city a place that many were calling home. It was this bustling growth that first attracted Sears & Roebuck Company executives into this area.

## **HISTORY of SEARS-ROEBUCK & COMPANY**

### **Nostalgic glimpses...**

The Southside has not always been seen as the desolate shell it is now. Before its buildings came, it was ecologically lush, lined with oak trees, vegetation, and even swampy substrata, as construction teams discovered in 1929 while assessing the Sears building foundation. Recent soil samplings confirm that even the current hard-scaped lots that replaced those trees still float atop years of layered silted sands, peat, and mineral runoff into this low point basin of a site (JHG notes from VC/MW field work and design). Construction on the actual Sears facility started in April 1928 and was completed the following spring. The new Sears building and Hendricks Memorial Chapel are mentioned in the same article because both structures featured the same foundation pile type and were built around the same time. This pairing of a Southside and a University structure in the same article is evidence that at one time, construction on the Southside (geographically located in a valley at the bottom of the hill) was just as commonplace as the high-end construction occurring on the quad of Syracuse University (located higher up on the hill). Today, although literally resting upon the same types of underpinnings, these two spaces are no longer treated so equally.

### **Grand Opening 1929**

For its period, the Sears building was touted as an “Emporium” and “Modern in every detail, it present[ed] a most pleasing effect and the array of stocks artistically arranged in glass showcases and on highly polished counters could not help but attract the interest of many” (SH-Open for Business Tomorrow 1929). On October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1929, at nine o’clock in the morning, the

retail giant Sears-Roebuck & Company opened the doors to a new facility on South Salina Street, formerly known as West Raynor Avenue. This store was one of 319 opened by Sears that year. It had a staff of 500, 98% of whom were Syracuse residents. Local headlines read, “Army of Clerks, Salesmen and Women Trained for Task. Four Floors Occupied” (SH-Open for Business Tomorrow 1929). The store began transforming the economic base of the community, as well as of the city itself.

Opening events were followed by a noon luncheon at Hotel Onondaga to welcome General R. E. Wood, who flew in from Chicago, into the Syracuse business community. The General, a U.S. Army veteran and graduate of West Point Military Academy, was characterized as a “thorough student of merchandising on a large scale” (SH-Open for Business Tomorrow 1929). The luncheon was hosted by “a delegation of representative businessmen, city officials and merchants,” including then President of the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, Edmund H. Lewis, and Secretary of Commerce, Frederick E. Norton. Yet the event was characterized as “entirely informal” (SH-Open for Business Tomorrow 1929). For the small city of Syracuse, this new store was a big deal, especially as it would impact local employment. Additional sub-sections underneath the newspaper’s main headlines read, “Local Clerks Real Asset To Business... 450 Persons Employed in New Store” (SH-Open for Business Tomorrow 1929).

**1940s**

By the summer of 1941, the retail giant was ready to expand and had received approval to “make room for [its] expanded parking lot” by demolishing over a dozen dwellings (SH-Clearing for Sears Parking lot, 1941). The expansion to provide more free parking for customers was in full swing by September 1941, as General Manager J. L. Marshall rushed to complete this project for Sears’ “55<sup>th</sup> anniversary sale” (SHJ-Bigger Parking Area For 55<sup>th</sup> Sale Anniversary, 1941). This expansion doubled their parking coverage to a total 103,167 square feet and widened the adjacent West Raynor Avenue by 11 feet in an effort to relieve traffic congestion. Retail and the promise of its revenues have always had the power to shape and re-shape city space. The former Carousel Mall expansion into Destiny USA in the early 2000s is another example of how Syracuse will sell out for even the hope of big retail revenue.

In 1963, “Sears paid the city \$20,000.00 for West Raynor Avenue the 536 foot-long street,” subsequently closing it for additional parking space. As stated by Mr. Marshall in the same article, “Sears, Roebuck and Company has always felt a great sense of civic pride in the appearance of its stores and their surroundings. Customer comfort and convenience is of prime importance – as witness the new parking area. Sears makes every effort possible to insure excellent customer relationship.” The spatial relationship of the facility and its parking lots would remain a part of this area’s spatial identity, as even today, the building and those parking lots outlive its relocated consumer base.

### 1960s: “SEARS FORESEES A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR SYRACUSE”

I did not discover archival data from the thirteen-year span between 1950-1963, and if I were constructing an exhaustive corporate history for S-R & Company, it would be imperative to account for that gap. My primary goal here is to present a series of glimpses into this company's development characterizing its all-in style of accession and the aftermath of its dive out of the Southside. In the 1960s, Sears' drive toward expansion began to shift development in a different direction, mainly northward:

The upsurge of Syracuse as the vibrant business and commercial center of Upstate New York and its great potential for future growth is the stimulus that has resulted in the decision by a national council to modernize and expand its local operations and to plan two new retail stores in the metropolitan area. This expansion did not immediately spell divestment from the inner-city site as Sears, Roebuck & Co. still invested approximately \$3 million to renovate and enlarge the anchoring retail store facilities in downtown Syracuse. (SHA-Sparrow, 1963)

The above is quoted from an article in the Business Section of the August 4, 1963 *Syracuse Herald American* entitled “Sears Foresees Bright Future For Syracuse.” It points to a central issue of my research in collecting spatial perceptions derived here in Syracuse. Sparrow, the editor, described Syracuse on a regional scale, referencing it as “the vibrant business and commercial center of Upstate New York.” His outward-looking description pointed toward the development of new store locations in rising suburban areas like “Fairmount Fair” in Camillus and Clay, North Syracuse, moving away from the city's core. The city and its surrounding neighborhoods were changing both inside and out. More aggressive changes would take place across cities all over during this era of intensifying suburbanization and white flight.

Gerald Grant, Professor Emeritus in the School of Education at Syracuse University, describes how he was once “lectured” about where he was living when a young officer who had arrived to his home in the Westcott area, responding to a call from him and his wife after a trespass disturbance: “What did you expect living in this neighborhood?” In shock, Grant asked the officer where he lived, to which he responded “Camillus,” one of the outside suburbs. Grant then asked, “What if this happened to your wife while she was alone in the kitchen? Would you be happy to hear that a Camillus police officer told her what you just told me?” (Grant, 2009). Places that were once perceived as safe for white families were now being considered less safe, regardless of proximity to the university area or the status of the professors living there.

Grant went on to describe what it was like growing up in the “southside” and how initially several of his teachers, firemen, and police all lived “in our neighborhood and in the city. By the late twentieth century these civic servants rarely resided in the city. In a recent visit to the Syracuse high school where my son graduated in 1985, the principal could think of only three teachers out of 120 whose own children attended city schools.” Grant cited Syracuse’s 40% population decline during “the 1960s and 1970s... the decades of heaviest flight. A city of 220,000 in 1950 had shrunk to 139,000 by 2008” (Grant, 2009).

The development of new store locations allowed S-R & Co. to tap into this shifting consumer base now residing in outer suburbs. Still, that \$3 million investment into Sears’ “downtown Syracuse” facilities was substantial, and local expansion projects implied that this location would be around as a key part in Syracuse’s “bright” foreseeable future (Sparrow, 1963). Another issue emerging from this paper and continuing beyond is the shifting whereabouts of

“Downtown” Syracuse. Tracking the shifting perceptions of the city’s business center and the boundaries of its downtown areas starts to tell us what happened and what the Southside’s status is today. As we have seen, it was once common to consider the South Salina Sears location as downtown Syracuse, while the “south side” to which Grant referred was more of a “neighborhood.” Today, those political boundaries have shifted even more, and that experiential perception of a contiguous city has been truncated at several points around the reduced boundaries of downtown. Most certainly, by the time one reaches the railway underpass at East Taylor and South Salina Street, one is not in downtown anymore.

#### **Late 1960s - 70s: SEARS STEADILY EXPANDING IN THE SOUTH SIDE.**

“The \$3 million expansion and modernization program at Sears store on South Salina” was extensive in scope and additional territory in the 1960s. “A new 20,700 square foot home improvement living center” was constructed “just to the north of the main store building,” using the recently closed former West Raynor Avenue as a crossway entry. There was also a complete renovation of the main store’s interior, adding “new escalators from the basement to the second floor [as well as] modern display fixtures installed through[out] the store.” On top of that, S-R & CO. would expand its scope of services and retail for the American automobile:

Early next year [1964] a new 30-car service station and automobile accessory store will be started at Cortland and Alexander avenues, to the rear of the present parking lot.

The former Henson Bldg., just south of the main store on Salina Street, which has been utilized as an annex for the toy department, will be razed. This, together with an adjoining

plot and the present automobile service area, will be graded to provide additional parking space. Dwellings and commercial structures have been removed along the north side of former Raynor Avenue and on Cortland Avenue to further expand the parking area.

When this work is completed next year, there will be facilities to park 750 cars. The present capacity is 577. In the process, a new lighting system will be installed throughout the area.

The one block of W. Raynor Avenue between Salina Street and Cortland Avenue has been closed as a public thoroughfare. The former street area from Salina Street west to the rear line of the main store will be landscaped as a pedestrian mall. A canopy will provide a covered walkway between the present store and the new home improvement center. The remainder of the former street will be absorbed into the larger parking area.

The word “parking” is used at least fifteen times in this article about the development of the Sears South Salina store. In all, the company managed to acquire, raze, and develop nearly an entire block of inner-city territory, all for parking or in “the best interests of its customers.” One participant in my study, Henry Bernard Alex, talked to me about his experiences in downtown Syracuse and at Sears’ South Side department store:

BA: I remember growing up on the Southside, growing up on Townsend Street, 905 South Townsend Street in the projects. I remember going downtown, walking downtown. I remember never even having the consideration of us having to go to Shoppers Fair, on Erie Blvd because we could get whatever we needed, our mother could get it downtown. She paid her bills downtown, did shopping, Christmas shopping. I remember even when we moved on Midland, you could still shop and go downtown. You shopped, you got on the bus with your bag; it was the whole routine.



JG: Like Sibley's and stuff like that?

BA: Right, Sibley's, Addis & Dey Brothers, Flahs', Wells and Coverly, I can run them all down. Edwards', Chappel's...

JG: Sears and Roebucks...

BA: Sears and Roebucks was the stop before we would take our summer and/or winter vacation down south to Florida to see my father's people; for him to get the car checked out and for us to get our sneakers. That was the spot... and to get a hotdog, from Sears and Roebucks. Looking at it and seeing, I saw the decline, and I also saw the almost like a visible decline in the mindset of the people. Their whole sense of pride and the way that people used to take care of their property, take care of what was theirs; even those independent store owners that were indigenous to the community... not those that have since came in and taken over... took a pride in what they presented, how their store was kept. And now these corner store bandits have taken over, and we have been infiltrated, hoodwinked, and bamboozled right in our own neighborhood. The poor quality of health, food... poor food, old outdated food; servings of fried chicken and pizza and beer and all of that that goes along with a poor quality of health, is what is being sold on every single corner. It is even somewhat saddening. I see people will go and pay between \$7 to \$10 for an order of chicken wings when you can go and get your own bag of chicken wings, you know, sometimes less than that. And then just the whole quality of life issues that have come along with a lack of business opportunities; there are very few places, industry and/or business that people can work, so they have to go outside of the community. But I am the eternal optimist; I think that there are some groups of people that are really trying to make some changes.

Alex's memories of shopping at Sears as a child almost seamlessly shift into his perspectives on how people behaved in regard to their sense of responsibility and ownership of

their surroundings. He was disappointed in the loss of opportunities, as were several others who shared for this project. Alex's memories of Sears and downtown are directly connected to his beliefs and experiences around quality of life in his neighborhood. Yet Alex remains hopeful for real change. The journey to rehabilitate this Southside will require each of those "groups of people" he knows to strategically address the many complex issues and forces that have perpetuated the "decline" he has witnessed in his city. Alex recalls his experiences in the city as centered on the conveniences of mobility and travel because of the closeness of multiple retailers in the downtown area. Sears underwent multiple expansions based upon those same conveniences offered by the automobile and public transit. Like Alex's father, the Sears shopper most likely owned a vehicle that required regular maintenance and services, which the company's new Auto Center expansion made conveniently available.

However, the retail giant's convenience to expand was not without opposition. As shows, particular types of persons had the power to call for and then make physical changes in the landscape the way that Sears did. All nine Sears executives were white, middle aged, and mainly male:

Sears Roebuck & Co., yesterday [March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1964] was granted a change of zone from Planning Commissioner Sanford Getreu and the advisory City Planning Commission for property it owns at the northeast corner of Cortland and Alexander Avenues.

The change of zone from Local Business A to B will enable Sears to construct a 30-car automotive service center.

Getreu also approved another change of zone for property at 345-347 and 351 Webster Ave., (rear) from Residential AA to Local Business A, requested by Benjamin Bloom for purposes of straightening out a boundary line within the block.

Both of the applications for zone changes produced opposition at the time of hearings before the commissioner and advisory commission. Opposing the requests were neighborhood residents...

Opposition to the change of zone asked by Sears was based mostly on fear of neighboring residents [that] the center would create traffic congestion in streets where bad driving conditions already exist.

Blain street residents impressed on Getreu and the advisory group they are seeking to build up the area and contend a change of zone would downgrade it. (PS- Zone Change Granted For Sears Auto Center, 1964)

Sears' development representatives were able to wield more influence with the Planning Council than the "neighborhood residents" who opposed their expansion plans. Despite residents' opposition, "[t]he commissioner and his advisory group determined the rezoning would not increase any aspects of non-conformity which might be associated with the parcels involved." They further observed that the change in classification "would promote development of the area in accord with uses existing in the immediate surrounding area" (PS- Zone Change Granted For Sears Auto Center, 1964). This is one example of how S-R & Co. shaped and reshaped cityspace as a powerful business entity, overwriting the concerns of the people in the community it was said to be accommodating. This type of power, combined with the major spatial swipes of the

state through urban renewal, would radically reshape this site and eventually the entire Southside.

### **Urban Renewal and the demise of the Southside**

Professor Emeritus Gerald Grant's account of the process and effects of urban renewal in Syracuse is a primary source of perception and research data from an individual with both insider/outsider positionalities (Kobayashi, 1994). Grant, a longtime resident of Syracuse, grew up in the Southside before eventually becoming a professor in the School of Education at Syracuse University. His wife, also an educator, and their children worked and resided in the city for many years, even returning to the city after a few years in Skaneateles. I include his vivid account in this chapter as it describes the important contextual realities of Syracuse during urban renewal in contrast to what was a more glistening depiction of spatial conquests from the S-R & Co. archival history included above. I quote at length:

“Even before World War II, middle-class and professional Jewish families began to spread out of the old Jewish neighborhood into the Westcott area and even further, into new homes being built on the hills of the city's east side. An Orthodox temple, a Jewish community center, and a large funeral home that mostly served Jews were built in Westcott, as well as a bakery selling bagels and horn rolls. Supported by New York's fair-employment legislation and expanding job opportunities, some African Americans moved into housing abandoned by Jews and fanned out slowly block-by-block. But discriminatory housing practices confined most blacks to the Fifteenth Ward. School district lines were gerrymandered, and primarily black public elementary schools were enlarged to ensure that African Americans stayed within the ward's slightly expanded contours.”

“Most of the Fifteenth was demolished in the 1960s, as major infusions of state and federal funds underwrote a grand policy of "slum clearance." This urban renewal project was linked with plans for interstate highway construction that would cut through and destroy many old city neighborhoods, white as well as black. But only the Fifteenth Ward was virtually bulldozed out of existence. After the ground was prepared for the two interstate highways that would intersect downtown, the heart of the city looked as though it had been strip-mined. Whites began to leave the city in droves including people in my old neighborhood of Brighton. Some whites who left were undeniably motivated by racism, but others simply did not want to live near noisy, ugly interstate highways that chopped up their backyards.”

...What Grant has narrated above is not only a detailed play-by-play of Redlining politics and the 1960's here in Syracuse but it is also the context for where and what dynamics affected my family from great grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and a host of others. When the 15<sup>th</sup> ward was decimated so were the hearts and lifestyles of so many black families. The support system elements for a thriving neighborhood, including diversity, were stripped and black owned businesses fell while white neighbors fled to greener suburbs.

“The "renewal" plan included a major cultural complex of museums and parks adjacent to a new government center [*Downtown*]. To some eyes, the futuristic city hall designed by Paul Rudolph resembled an airport in a Third World country more than a monumental government office building in the United State. Aside from the stunning Everson Museum of Art designed by I. M. Pei and a new civic center, most of the complex, including the sprawling city hall, was never built. What Syracuse got was wider highways on concrete stilts that slashed through the heart of downtown and destroyed its most historic buildings. A handful of new high-rise apartments, surrounded by parking lots, towered starkly over the interstate highway.”

“The state and federal government had found money to tear up downtown and construct new roads, but not much to build anything new, except for public housing. And that is what Syracuse, like many other cities, proceeded to do. One of the largest of the new public housing tracts, named Rolling Green states, stretched for several blocks along the northern border of the Westcott area. In 1950 nine African Americans lived in that census tract. By 1970, following a decade of urban renewal, 1,444 black residents

lived there, most of them in Rolling Green Estates and most of them poor. During this period, the percentage of black residents rose from less than 1 percent to 40 percent, and the percentage of owner-occupied housing dropped from 48 to 25 percent, as more than half of white homeowners left the neighborhood. Many single-family homes were bought up by absentee landlords and converted to multiunit dwellings.”

The remaining structural impacts of this period as further described by Grant, shaped a black hole of spatial isolation along the Southside and those with the mobility to move look down their noses behind themselves to ask (rhetorically) why are things like that down there? “Down-the-way” as we called it growing up. A place where asthma rates and recidivism are the highest and both are perpetuated by adding more policing while reducing interstitial green spaces and swimming pools. A place where we were more likely to be shot, stabbed, and/or arrested rather than obtaining a high school diploma. My father and his six brothers fell into such a cycle at a very early age...

“Shunting the poorest blacks into massive housing projects like Rolling Green Estates not only isolated them from other working-class and middle-class African Americans with whom they had lived in the Fifteenth Ward but also set them apart from middle-class whites in their new neighborhood. Rolling Green residents were concentrated in a treeless, dense concrete-and-brick zone five blocks long, surrounded by a six-foot spiked black iron fence that stood in grim contrast with the frame housing, front yards, and gardens in the rest of Westcott. A few storefront churches opened along the perimeter of the project, but these hardly compensated for the massive loss of social networks experienced by the poor black children of Rolling Green. After the old mixed class black settlement was destroyed, the proportion of single parent black households increased, and Rolling Green was soon shrouded in an atmosphere of despair. Before long, some of the public housing built in that era was itself boarded up, abandoned by residents fearful of crime and drug wars.”

“Options other than clearance and removal of blacks were never seriously considered. A combination of historic preservation, rehabilitation, and upgrading of existing housing with voluntary scattered-site relocation of black residents could have maintained a real community with stores, churches, and neighborhood organizations while increasing the possibility for

residential integration. Although segregated, the old Fifteenth Ward was a neighborhood that offered jobs, informal mentoring, and community support. All of those social structures were destroyed when the buildings were leveled.”

...Although Grant says they “had never seriously considered clearance and removal of blacks” here in 2023 we sit on the horizon of a new inner city “community grid” that would again level the current I-81 highway and clear acres within the inner city and former 15<sup>th</sup> ward communities. A second erasure of the black community including the oldest public housing developments in the US in Pioneer Homes. Moving, shifting, devaluing, disinvesting, compromising, black and brown communities is still the go to anecdote for better cities and seemingly most feasible option for serious urban revitalization. Screaming in opposition to these events feels like being buried alive and nothing will be done for us.

Conversely, Grant, could go on narrating about moving onto the outskirts of Onondaga County in Skaneateles. He had the mobility to get away from the impacts of redlining where-as even now I cling to my three-bedroom apartment here in North Syracuse on an informal month-to-month basis. I and my four children have lived here going on seven years now and the landlord has opted not to renew my lease for the past three years for some undisclosed reason. We are currently the only African American family in our complex as now the only other black family within the complex were evicted. My daughter (11) would catch the bus every morning with their daughter (12) to their middle school. Now they are living with her grandparents in the city of Syracuse and commuting out here to North Syracuse School District because her parents do not want them in the city schools where they went. I also attended city schools and I am determined to incubate my children from similar experiences all at the expense of a quality education.

“What happened in Syracuse was hardly unique. It was repeated on a larger scale in Newark, Chicago, and St. Louis, where the demolition of the drug-ridden Pruitt-Igoe housing project in 1972 was considered by many to be a turning point in both American architecture and urban planning. The story of Syracuse is but a small part of a larger web of social policies and programs that shaped urban decline across the nation (Grant, 2009; Ravitch, Diane., Viteritti, Joseph P., 2001)”

S-R & Co. credited the same “Near East Side Urban Renewal Project” as the motive for expanding at its site. An influx of new residents meant new consumers coming into an old market, so updates had to be made. Then Sears General Manager for the Syracuse Metropolitan Area, Earl E. Hollings stated the following:

[I]f it had not been for the Near East Side urban renewal project, undertaken by the city of Syracuse, Sears Roebuck *would not have expanded into downtown Syracuse...* As a resident of the Syracuse metropolitan area, I vigorously supported Sears expansion program in Syracuse for, I believe, the activities of our local government, particularly during the last five years, have assured Syracuse of a healthy future.

Not only the urban renewal program, but other programs, our school building program and the renewed interest and concern being exhibited by local government for the needs and problems of private enterprise, are all contributing greatly to a growing and prosperous community. (PS-Sears Sets Expansion, 1964)

The Company’s Eastern Region Vice President and other officers toured downtown and “were convinced after seeing urban renewal areas and tremendous construction on Warren Street and in the Community Plaza, that *downtown* Syracuse [had] a sound and prosperous future.” From their perspectives, urban renewal was important to the city’s economic development. More [white] residents meant more revenue.

Resultantly, S-R & Co. went on to further create the American dream-like shopping experience at the Salina Street store, increasing its sales staff from 350 to 450, and the Auto Center itself would provide 50 new jobs. Sears increased its customer participation, financially



closing the loop by offering credit services, and a new central service and credit center office building was added that year as well (PS-Hollings, 1967). Sears was the first prototype big-box store, even providing a 125-seat restaurant area where H. B. Alex and his family would enjoy hot dogs while his father waited for the car to be fixed. Sears was a one-stop shop, providing all the amenities and luxuries for modern living. Its massive operation was undergirded by a large surplus inventory warehouse, which also saw a 40,000+ square foot expansion in 1967. This type of monopoly was essential for the company's survival, creating synergy with the community and city for economic stability. That is, until a large portion of that consumer base began fleeing to suburban areas, as Grant described above.

Still, Sears *regional* headquarters and flagship store did not have a problem fiscally or logistically, having already added five other regional stores to their Syracuse Group operations in 1966: Geneva, Cortland, Oswego, Oneida, and Newark (PS-Hollings, 1967). Also, the new highways provided access for that suburban customer base to come in and out of the city at will. Sears expanded because access expanded. However, as access expanded and the city began to change, so did the image of the inner city.

### **Why is the perception of the Southside different now?**

Earle R. Hollings described Syracuse as having a "bright future." Linked to this statement was his inclusion of this Salina Street location as an extension of Syracuse's "metropolitan district." I point this out to highlight that the Southside was once considered a viable extension of the bustling downtown business and hospitality industry, whereas today, it remains

consistently isolated, despite prolonged rumblings of significant developments. In 1968, Hollings projected that “The growth in Syracuse in the next 10 years [would] be the greatest in the State of New York” (*The Herald American 1968*). For Hollings, growth in this part of Syracuse was contingent upon the rapid expansions of Sears’ facilities. At one time, people could envision a growing Southside with shops and businesses.

Within the same article, however, similar convictions about that area of “growth” had “shifted”: “the points of emphasis and value have shifted outward from Downtown Syracuse to a new Sears site in Fairmount Fair, a highway network, and a water program at Lake Ontario.” Even still, Hollings, then president of the *Citizens Council on Urban Renewal*, re-emphasized how the city’s developments in the Near East Side through the 1960s, alongside the core business district of downtown, was the reason why S-R & Co. decided to come so deep into Syracuse in the first place. It would have been optimal for Sears to have continued growth in the Southside, as promised, while simultaneously expanding to suburban sites as well. However, this is not what transpired, as it seemed easier to give up on the Southside.

It was not the space of inner-city Southside alone that attracted the continued investment of S-R & Co.; rather, it was a particular lens of value through which Hollings and others beheld the area and a perceived interest projected into/onto his understanding and outlook for society and space (Bissell, 2009; Boger, John Charles., Wegner, Judith Welch., 1996; Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Wilkins, 2007). The potential for revenues lured Sears’ investors and catalyzed development processes in the early Southside. The fulfillment of that potential led to multiple bursts of subsequent development at the expense of this neighborhood.

During his administration, Hollings considered the Sears location on Salina Street as a part of Syracuse's downtown district. Hollings's perception is radically different from the isolated identity this realm holds today. I spoke with two key advocates of youth and economic development in the Southside, both of whom who travel in from outside suburbs (North Syracuse and Binghamton) to the Vision Center [VC] at South Salina and East Raynor for work. Both relayed that they do not feel as if they are downtown when at the VC. In fact, one said that he did not consider himself to be "downtown until I hit Adams Street"; everything else is still the Southside (*Giles Jr. 2013*). Although situated only a quarter mile from the East Taylor Street and South Salina Street intersection and railway underpass, a threshold officially marking one's arrival into the southern outskirts of the downtown core, the former Sears site may be "near" Downtown, but it is usually considered external to the downtown core. When you cross underneath the underpass, the number of people per square foot on the street suddenly begins to decrease. The ethnic diversity seen just a block prior, now levels out to what is almost exclusively black and brown people. On my own walks, I can remember starting to think more about my destination and less about places to stop along the way, as I traverse through the Southside. I seamlessly become aware of places to avoid, and the actual time of day may become blurred by the recollection of violent outbreaks across the broken pavement of a summer's moment in the hood. I am in the hood, and I am the hood all at once. That's where I am when I am at the S-R & Co. site.

### Perceptions of a lost place: From retail strip to crime hub?

Hollings's statements suggest that sometimes, the perception of a place becomes a function of what that place is in proximity to (Auge, Howe, & Harvie, 1996; Bissell, 2009; Buttimer, 1976; Harris, 1993; Hayden, 1995). Hollings initially perceived his chief market to be those in downtown Syracuse, in what he referred to as the "Near Eastside area." Resultantly, he included places close in proximity as capable of receiving that market influx, Syracuse's Southside. It is particularly the expendable dollars attached to new residents that drove his cognitive map of which areas of cityspace made up downtown Syracuse.

Likewise, the Southside and other inner-city places are now perceived as dangerous because of the frequency, proximity, and constant reporting on criminal activity in this area. The advocate whom I interviewed above showed me on his Mac Book, a crime instance and location map application which updates him whenever there is an occurrence in the area. While we were meeting, he noted that our area was being hit like crazy as he pointed to what had just come in (around 1:15pm) and the long list of incidents that followed.

*How did we move from the late 1960s' perception of the Southside as a place for business to its current perception, some 40 years later, as a den of crime?* This inner-city ring is marred by a perception of desolation and impoverishment because of its history of disinvestment, vacancy, and violence. Downtown Syracuse is still much different from even the proximate South and Westside neighborhoods. There is continual change and construction occurring in downtown development through the advocacy of many, especially those from the up-and-coming bourgeoisie: the "forty belowers" and "young professionals" so craved by real-estate

development. Urban histories show that downtown was bustling this way during the Hollings's era. One difference, however, is now clear: the Southside is not considered a potential catch basin or supportive realm for the growth or successes set to occur in downtown Syracuse today. The Southside stands alone.

### **Sears-Roebuck & Co. Vacates the Southside**

If things were all good in the neighborhood for S-R & Co. in the late 1960s, *why did the company decide to leave?* Considering the economic and urban success attained by Sears over its forty-five years in Syracuse's Southside and its expansions into neighboring areas of the city, the company's vacating in 1974 initially seemed abrupt. However, tensions between the Sears Corporation and the City of Syracuse over exorbitant property taxes ultimately sealed the company's disinvestment from the Southside and left the city with ownership of \$2M in property and a facility purchased for \$1 (plus the remaining \$115,000 in property taxes for that year), all in exchange for several recanted lawsuits by S-R & Co. The lasting vacancy suggests that a sustainable exit and replacement strategy for this inner-city acreage were not priorities for S-R & Co. or the City of Syracuse. By 1974, after an onslaught of legal battles, each party was eager to put this transaction behind them. Unfortunately, the neighborhood was also placed to the rear and remains relegated out of sight.

### **Where did S-R & Co. go?**

Retail companies generally follow their consumer markets. When people and businesses grew, populating Syracuse's inner city, so did S&R Co. When people began moving out of these inner-city zones to buy homes in the suburbs, retailers followed the migrating markets to suburbia, reallocating thousands of dollars recovered from city property tax monies into newer and larger facilities. By 1968, Sears had already broken ground in the up-and-coming suburb of Fairmount, while positioning to exit the inner city of Syracuse (*The Herald American 1968*). The Southside's Sears Building would be left to stand as a giant economic mausoleum.

### **Market Analysis: a perception-based assessment**

Market analysis is also function of perception, which, as I described earlier, is largely based on proximity. According to accepted migration theory, most of us do similar work when we are contemplating a move or are forced to relocate to a new place; we like to consider what things and places will be close, including our work, good schools, hospital and medical facilities, types of stores, and types of people we will be living around. None of this is objective; we bring our ideas and ideals, good and bad, whatever they may be (Gregory, 2009). In my experience, architects, designers, engineers, and planners thrive on similar analysis anticipating and providing these perception-based ideals and desires that, in turn, drive consumption markets, including for housing and development industries. Archival information further confirms that businesses left as the Southside became more black and immigrant populated.

## Suburbanization & Preservation in Syracuse

Schramm described what suburbanization looked like during the 1970s “as residents [who] fled to the suburbs, [and] street widening projects and development of the sites for commercial use soon wasted these avenues” (Schramm, Henry W., Roseboom, William F., 1979). Henry W. Schramm’s perspectives on how his city shifted are insightful and turn toward a more preservationist view: “One section remains architecturally secure the protected Sedgwick Farms historical tract to the north of James Street, where homes blend the English Tudor concepts of Ward Wellington Ward with Colonial and Moorish style homes on graciously landscaped grounds” (*Syracuse Then & Now, Schramm 01/01/2010*). Schramm is ascribing an areas importance/value based upon its architectural identity.

Schramm’s perspective and others like it employing phrases like “architecturally secure” again reveal the connection between how personal politics are ascribed onto spatial value because people generally build and take care of what they see value in. Furthermore, Schramm’s perspectives are in alignment with those expressed in *Architecture Worth Saving in Onondaga County (1964)*, a book that resulted from the New York State Council on the Arts-sponsored “appraisal of the architectural character of [the] region and assessment of buildings that should be preserved as our cultural heritage.” Nationally renowned preservation scholar Harley J. McKee led the project, which was researched and written by four Syracuse University architecture professors. The book, no longer in print, features over 60 area buildings categorized under four main precepts: (1) particularly distinguished buildings, (2) representative buildings, (3) buildings of historical interest, and (4) adaptive uses (McKee, Harley J., Syracuse University School of

Architecture, 1964; Syracuse Then & Now & Schramm, 1979; The Preservation Association of Central New York, Onondaga Historical Association, Erie Canal Museum, Armin Schneider, Syracuse Blueprint, 2008).

Buildings in Category 1, *Particularly Distinguished Buildings*, “include buildings which were, first of all, beautiful.” These buildings also had to satisfy at least one of the following five criteria: “a unique building or of a kind rarely encountered, the first of its kind; the oldest building of its type, Fine interior detail and craftsmanship, the work of a notable architect, the best work of a given architect.” Buildings in Category 2, *Representative Buildings*, “provide faithful representations of the architectural styles of the day.” In Category 3, *Buildings of Historical Interest* “figure[d] prominently in local historical events, or incorporated materials or methods [rhr are considered] novel for the time.” This is probably the category within which the Townsend Block Buildings, including the Jerry Rescue Building, would have been situated, had the authors not regarded those sites as already “so well known.” The Townsend Block Building and Jerry Rescue Buildings are both inextricably linked to Syracuse’s abolitionist histories yet are not included. The final, Category 4, *Adaptive Uses*, includes “historic buildings that had outlived their original purpose but might be saved through useful adaptation to new functions.”

Those categorizations say a lot about how value is attributed in this canonical work of spatial-historical preservation in Onondaga County. However, for me, it is the ethos of the written communications of value found in the work’s introduction which shed even more light on perceptions of value in this city’s architecture and society: “*Although newer buildings deserve appreciation as well, they are more likely to receive it in the normal course of events; it is the older*



*ones which are under the most imminent threat of demolition in the course of urban development, by gradual deterioration and general oblivion, unless they are pointed out for special attention”* (*The Preservation Association of Central New York, Onondaga Historical Association, Erie Canal Museum, Armin Schneider, Syracuse Blueprint, 2008*). From the practical standpoint of preservation, older things need to be maintained to survive. However, this preservation can only occur when that practical standpoint is coupled with a value-placing perception concerning the “worthiness” of such aging artifacts (McKee, Harley J., Syracuse University School of Architecture, 1964). The residual question, thus, is who has the power and resources to place this type of value?

A special comment about commercial buildings like the [Syracuse Savings Bank Building, White Memorial Building, Robert Gere Bank Building] and the old Onondaga County Savings Bank, is appropriate. When they were built they ranked among the very best in the state - indeed, in the region. We must keep them to lend distinction to our downtown streets, for unfortunately their modern counterparts cannot claim to rank among the finest. (syracusetheandnow.org)

This “special comment” demonstrates how value-placing in preservation is inherently competitive. Value for buildings is made in comparison to their contemporary counterparts from the same time period, as well as their “modern counterparts.” “We are preserving things of cultural value for future generations as well as for ourselves; we cannot predict what they will appreciate but we should be cautious about destroying buildings which were once valued, which now – temporarily – happen to be out of fashion. Destruction is final” (syracusetheandnow.org).

For skilled artisans and elite trades that produce architecture, there is a common goal to leave the legacy of process like crumbs along a trail to be followed. Furthermore, the pedagogy of classical and neo-classist architecture requires practitioners to know well and learn from specific examples of the disciplines past. Based on these criterion and similar planning principals, the Southside of Syracuse would not have anything worth saving.

### **Who gets to determine what is preserved in the Southside?**

As a young aspiring architect, I often sensed that my own understandings and instinctive design tendencies held no value in this discipline. The African proverb “Sankofa,” meaning “to reach back and get it” or learning from the past for the future, actually rings similarly to preservationist rationale, but the difference is that one can only reach into what one has knowledge of or access to. African Americans are not inclined to readily reach back into the rich spatial histories of Central New York’s building heritage in the ways described above. Black, Latino, and refugee groups have been historically isolated from the awe-inspiring processes of space-making considered in this preservationist document and typically not attributed with any level of contribution to these rich heritage-building processes. However, the connection of these same historically marginalized groups to urban and spatial decline is more readily accepted:

It is important... for each region to recognize and preserve its own architectural inheritance. That of Onondaga County has a character not duplicated elsewhere, whose loss would be felt far beyond the borders of the county. (syracusethenandnow.org)

We seem to have been very discriminating in Onondaga County – we have consistently chosen from among the best when tearing down or mutilating the buildings which our generation inherited! This tendency can best be seen in the city of Syracuse, where whole streets and districts have been the victims of private neglect and public indifference, which, had they been given proper care, could still be among the most useful and attractive parts of the city. (syracusesthenandnow.org)

For the Southside, the “architectural inheritance” that Schramm references has already been discarded. Clearly, there are some preferred edifices that do not make this project’s distinguished list for preservation because they had already been “discriminatively torn down or mutilated” However, most of those buildings he mentioned were in the downtown area. Also not included is the Art-Deco Sears & Roebuck facility built in the 1920s. The facilities’ current use as a medical records house suggests that that it had already been adapted to some capacity, even if inappropriately being reused by preservationist criteria. Furthermore, according to this criterion, the inheritance is lost by way of “private neglect and public indifference.” Although still standing, there is no value placed by Schramm onto the Sears building because it is inside the blackened Southside, an unkempt place of desolation.

An introspective look at these lost pieces of fine architecture suggests the terrifying thought that in spite of all our egoistic bragging today, we may not be worthy of our inheritance. By destroying fine things and replacing them with ugly ones we make the world worse, not better. If we cannot create beauty, we should at least help preserve that which was given to us. (syracusesthenandnow.org)

The above invocations of beauty, ego, and worth are aligned with many philosophies, epistemologies, and exclusive practices of space and boundary-making that still systemically

permeate our unjust societies. Historically, places in Syracuse's Southside have been labeled unworthy by omission of preservation efforts and by the continual extraction of resources through strategic disinvestment and non-development.

### **ISOLATED and BIASED UNDERSTANDINGS OF WORTH**

Schramm's earlier exaltations of the prestige and grandeur of the "protected" and "historical" Sedgwick areas, on one side of the city, come at the expense of acknowledging how urban renewal tore through the equally flattering and significant residential communities of Syracuse's 15<sup>th</sup> Ward, now known as the Southside. This one-sided narration of place flattens the actual experiences of many spaces and people, seeing them as less desirable than those spaces upon which value or worthiness is being attributed. Jesse Nichols, founder of the Urban Land Institute, had the following to say about how people decide which places to value or destroy: "We have been thoughtless, carefree opportunists, outgrowing our cities [and] the houses of our fathers. Either we tear down and rebuild or we move away from the old centers. This is not 'progress' but an enormous destruction of property values" (1922 - Jesse Clyde Nichols, founder of the Urban Land Institute).

Mr. Nichols and Mr. Schramm were both worried about property because property ownership has always been the primary thing that established one's rightful connection with the land and the city [See Lockean Space Dynamics] (Wilkins, 2007). During this earlier time period, only certain folks owned property, while others likely rented. Mr. Nichols and Mr. Schramm's families, both suburban homeowners, would need to preserve that relationship with the city to

keep “the houses of their fathers.” The heritage and worth of those properties forever anchored that family’s relationship to the history of Syracuse. *But what about blacks who essentially slid into a void created by Jewish families? What do we preserve beyond tall concrete stilts that stomp over what was the 15<sup>th</sup> Ward?* What remains unjust is the continued lockout of ‘other’ groups through redlining and gerrymandering practices, preventing them from fulfilling their supposed right to establish the same connection and relational worth within the cityspace that they too lived and worked for. Unfortunately, those who share in the labors of the city are not automatically a part of it. Hence, The City and the Southside.

Recalling Soja’s breakdown of the Greek “Polis” and “common bond,” I posit that preservation is a mechanism whereby certain marginalized groups are closed out of sharing in this common bond of space-valuing (Soja, 1989; Soja, 1996; Soja, 2000; Syracuse University Architecture Lecture Series, Spring 2008) because they are perceived as not having contributed and as not having anything to offer to the city’s overall spatial heritage (or some specific people’s overruling perception of that heritage). The Greeks were saying you can be assimilated and share a certain bond with us if we perceive that you have something of value, judged by our internal standard, that you could contribute for our greater benefit. Again, for many, that level of contribution was capped at servitude, enslavement, or marriage to Greeks. For those who did not incur such ingratiation, it was usually because they presented a threat that would somehow dilute the elite pedigrees of the highest castes in Greek society or jeopardize their eternal reign in power. For many, the experiences of living in Syracuse - and for me, working in the field of architecture and design – have been a microcosm of this viewpoint: constantly excluded from a

common-bond experience and being perceived as having nothing to offer (*Couch, Kenneth A. (Kenneth Alan), Fairlie, Robert W., 2010*).

### **The Post-War Shift in Syracuse**

I chose to focus on the Sears site in Syracuse as a specific spatial, historical, cultural, and social cross-section through the heart of this city, a heart that changed significantly after WWII [1939-45]. Syracuse's population declined as the move to the suburbs began in earnest. New school systems and shopping centers usurped the city's economic base. Movie houses closed, as television took over. Urban renewal resulted in the expansion of more downtown blocks. New buildings arose, including the twin towers of MONY Center, the War Memorial, Civic Center, and I.M. Pei's Everson Museum of Art. All added significantly to the area, as did new government buildings and a number of high rises dedicated to modern banking, financing, and core city apartment dwelling (*Syracuse Then & Now, Schramm 01/01/2010*).

As the railroad and streetcar declined, the automobile became king. Major construction was spurred on, as overhead, superhighway I-81 officially began in 1957 and continued through 1963. I-690 was elevated in 1962, ultimately producing traffic on interstate highways that led in all four directions through the city center. This hodgepodge infrastructure threatened to engulf the region until local government and visionary planners began to protect the "truly" historic sites— the Erie Canal's Weighlock Building, Clinton and Hanover Squares, Columbus Circle, Armory Square, and such areas as the Nettleton and Franklin Square developments, located

north and west of downtown. The Southside has been historically used as an expendable means to an end.

## DYNAMICS OF DISINVESTMENT

Syracuse was still a boomtown with a mixed industrial base. At the End of World War II, nearly 80 percent of the real property value was in the city, with little more than a fifth of taxable land in the suburbs of Onondaga County. Willis Carrier founded what became the largest air-conditioning company in the world on the west side of the city. Learbury clothing made suits for Brooks Brothers (you could buy them at the factory for half price) and many other brand-named companies – Nettleton Shoes, New Process Gear (which made parts for General Motors cars), General Electric – where my maternal great grandmother Viola Johnson retired from, Will and Baumer Candles, and the Solvay Process Company (later Allied Chemical) – prospered here. Syracuse University quadrupled in size under the GI Bill. (*Grant 2009, p. 11*)

Syracuse's manufacturing network, working in tandem with its rich hospitality industry, was a powerful system of economic sustainability so long as each gear remained in its place. Conversely, Syracuse's decline has been most defined by disinvestment since the onset of this millennium. Miller Brewing Company left in 1992. Nestlé North Syracuse, the birthplace of 'Quik' and the 'Crunch' bar, left Fulton in 2003 after filing for bankruptcy and concentrating on a younger plant in Wisconsin. The 450+ Nestle workers were slated to find new work with then-developing super-retail destination, "Destiny USA." The list continues with Chrysler/New Venture Gear, Syracuse China, and a host of other viable employers and suppliers who found it cheaper to operate elsewhere (Syracuse.com- Kurtz 2011).

Then, there was the shocking exodus of the Carrier Corporation, from which the city is still economically reeling. For \$250,000, the inventor of the air-conditioner, Willis H. Carrier, moved his company from Newark, NJ, into Syracuse in 1930, and by 1980, the company employed over 7,000 workers (*Luo, Polgreen & York 2003, Wiener 2016*). 1980 marked a new beginning for Syracuse Orangemen (now known as simply the Orange), when the Carrier Dome was built. It was also the beginning of the end for Carrier in Syracuse, as the company was bought a year earlier (1979) by the United Technologies Corporation, moving its headquarters from Syracuse to Farmington, Connecticut. Workers say this was the point when the “family atmosphere” also left (*Luo, Polgreen & York 2003*).

Multiple phases of global outsourcing followed that relocation, including the consolidating of manufacturing to Singapore, China, and Georgia to increase profit by being closer to its primary Asian customer base. By 2009, the number employed in Syracuse was less than 1,000, and Carrier closed its warehouse, laying off 170 union workers (*Wiener 2016*). June 2011 marked the razing of the \$30 million Dewitt campus, destroying what was left of one of the region’s greatest manufacturers. “‘It hurts me,’ said James Farrow, 38, who [had] worked in the packaging department for five years. ‘I’ve got five kids. Tom Vanderhoof, 38, who has three children, has worked on one of the assembly lines for 11 years. Growing up, Carrier was always the place to work... If you can get a job there, you’re in’” (*Luo, Polgreen & York 2003*). I can remember how as a teenager my beloved aunt Carolyne, who had no children of her own, would admonish my older cousins and I, to get a job at Chrysler, GM, and/or Carrier. After I graduated undergrad in 2006 [Syracuse Architecture] she was leveraging her relationships as an experienced nurse practitioner and trying to get me to work for Robert Congel at Pyramid Company. The blue-



collar industrial identity of Syracuse was suddenly changing into a retail development hub for the future.

Sears-Roebuck & Co. was to this Southside community what Carrier was to the Central New York region. S-R & Co. vacated to be closer to its suburban customer base, economically impaling the community it left behind in the same way that “Layoffs by Carrier Corp. [Struck] Syracuse in [The] Heart” (*Luo, Polgreen & York 2003*).

I remember looking down into the Southside from between two Syracuse University Law School buildings [now the Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics] and seeing the Sears building standing out yet totally muted in the Southside skyline. Now more than 88 years since inception, the facility is still there, a money pit, storing medical archives, its physical existence a derelict ode to a neighborhood that was once a stable component of a booming local economy. The current owner group of the facility has a white-knuckle grip upon the facility and apparently no amount of money has been worth giving up the vast lot with its dilapidated retail mausoleum. Neither is community development beyond that which was sold to her cousins for the creation of the Mercy-Works Vision Center. Occupying the former auto garage building of S&R & Co. The Clarence Jordan Vision Center provides much needed outreach to the neighborhood youth and surrounding community. They have made great strides yet still lack critical funding for expansion and renovations that would help bring its programming to another level. The center remains an anchor point of hope in the middle of a place, where spaces, and its people also stand perpetually arrested by decline after decades of out-migration and obstinate disinvestment. This is the essence of a lost space.

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## **PAPER B – ATTEMPTED RE-SHAPINGS OF THE SOUTHSIDE: THE “SOUTHEAST GATEWAY NEIGHBORHOOD” DESIGN PLAN**

### **Soja Understanding Causality Coming from Space:**

we’ve been accustomed for a long time, particularly in geography, to understand how social, political, economic, and cultural processes shape space. But we have been less comfortable following the other direction, how the geographies we produce shape culture, and class, and economy, and politics.

...[T]his is becoming more comprehensible today than it was in the 1960-70s... ideas similar to these were emerging during this period, but the intellectual world was so biased against this type of thinking or against any attempt to talk about geographical or spatial causality. Geographers kept it secret, and architects kept it secret: you were designing determinists, and we were environmental determinist in geography. (Syracuse University Architecture Lecture Series. Edward Soja: Putting Cityspace First 2008)

### **INTRODUCTION**

This second paper analyzes a specific historical instance of attempted development in Syracuse’s Southside, critically examining how narratives of economic and retail development often dominate and even overwrite certain understandings of cityspace in Syracuse overall but especially in the Southside. It shows how local residents and contributors to Syracuse’s Southside came to feel and think about where they lived and the city’s greater context.

The previous paper was historical in nature, looking into the forces that caused the Southside, a once-viable location, to become less than feasible for S-R & Co’s continued investment. This paper further examines who actually gets to decree vitality and worth in these now-lost places. Here, I hope to emphasize the power that perceptions and stereotypes hold in

planning and design during economic development attempts in the Southside. I identify persons with power in these processes and persons denied power in these exchanges considered to be urban revitalization and good design. Two issues germane to the lack of development and spatial justice in the Southside can be better understood in this paper: *(1) how ascribed perceptions of worth and value are still barriers to the successful redevelopment of certain inner-city areas and (2) the complex networking of power geometries at work in the supposed revitalization of communities.* As this paper shows, this power has not adequately worked in the Southside.

I argue here that the **2006 Southeast Gateway Neighborhood Design Plan (SGNDP)** was the most comprehensive design plan put forth since the vacating of S-R & Co. some forty years earlier. The SGNDP was an attempt in urban planning and economic development to rebrand the former S-R & Co. site and several adjacent blocks as the Gateway into Syracuse's Downtown area. In this analysis of the SGNDP, I primarily focus on five of the eleven report sections and what they reveal about key motivations behind the plan. These sections include the opening segments, 1-4, as well as the ninth section, which contained the projected costs to implement this design plan. To conclude, I look into the wakeful effects of failed development and whether perceptions can be useful to an actual methodology of spatial justice.

### **Development is always bubbling in Syracuse...**

The previous paper highlighted a rich history of development and space shaping Syracuse, including the early South Syracuse and Southside areas. Recent decades have been much different, and although there has been some progress with the development of *The Salt-City Market* and a few smaller projects along the South Salina Corridor, other pending projects have lacked direction



and economic traction and are now underneath the shadow of Interstate 81's impending dismantling.

The Southeast Gateway Neighborhood Development Plan is an example of how similar development processes have not played out in the Southside of Syracuse (Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc 2006, 1-124). The previous paper showed that Sears & Roebuck Co. had the power to change neighborhood blocks and eliminate whole streets – far more power than its residents had influence to effectively oppose the razing. Again, this was a prominent undertaking, and even though local residents and the Syracuse University community had already referred to this part of the city as *the Southside* for some time, this proposed development plan attempted to rename the area as the “Gateway Neighborhood,” named after a plan transplanted from Providence, Rhode Island (p. 2). In the story of the SGNDP, we see how both state agents and rooted community leaders latched onto this rebranding as a marker toward new beginnings for the area. **It is my contention that such attempts at re-shaping reinforce the systemic isolation of economic recovery, as well as social and environmental injustices set in motion in the 1950-60s by redlining, urban renewal, and other discriminatory spatial practices (Gans 1967, Grant 2009, 8-9, Lewis 1991, Adams, Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs 2003).**

Even today, the Southside remains polarized by both deep internal cultural conflicts and external socio-political movements. Insiders live out these struggles generation after generation, while the voiced perceptions of outsiders further stymie this depressed zone (*Grant 2009, 8-9, Wilson, William J. 2009, Wilson, William J. 1996, Wilson, William J. 1987, Wilson, William J., Taub 2007, Wilson, William J. 2010, Wilson, William Julius 1991, 1-14*). The SGNDP set out to

radically transform this dynamic. Design Charrette<sup>2</sup> planning efforts in 2006 were portrayed as amiable between design practitioners and city officials, but my interview data show dissent between those who represented resident stakeholders and the ‘good’ design-oriented approaches from design practitioners. One set of ideals was levied by those with the power and resources to both plan and execute development, the other set of expressed needs from local community members hoping for actual change. I revisit this tension later via my interview with Raheem Mack (*Giles Jr. 2010*).

### **Waiting for a Messiah: Failed attempts at Revival**

The SGNDP is but one of several proposed interventions for this site over the past four decades. What each previous attempt held in common is a lack of resources and capital for overcoming impediments to development in this part of the city, such as brownfield remediation. Once the environmental component was addressed through Federal Brownfield Opportunity Funding, the site again regained some commercial interest. Still, development occurred more readily in other areas of the city with similar issues. Upon Chancellor Nancy Cantor’s induction in 2004, Syracuse University, for example, began an unprecedented shift to become more integrated into the surrounding city’s landscape. This development targeted the western edge of downtown, just off Armory Square, beginning with the relocation of Syracuse Architecture in 2005 to a renovated facility known as “The Warehouse.” Subsequently, there came an intensified push for the development of the “Near West Side” of Syracuse’s inner-city ring, an area with

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<sup>2</sup> CHAR•RETTE - a final, intensive effort to finish a project, especially an architectural design project, before a deadline.

neighborhoods ranking among the nation's top-ten most impoverished zones (*Weiner 2015, N/A, Brookings Institute 2010, Brookings Institution., Nadeau, Carolyn A., Istrate, Emilia., United States., Census Office., University of Oxford., Moody's Analytics (Firm)*). Building and revitalizations in the Near Westside have not stopped since, and several large non-profit organizations, private, and real estate firms now call this area home [See Figure 1 - The SALT District and the Near Westside Initiative].

Although notably marked by Syracuse University's Southside Initiatives investment and the establishment of the Southside Innovation Center (SSIC) in 2006, Syracuse's broader Southside has yet to be endowed with the same level of private funding and development push as the Westside. What small investments has occurred in the Southside has generally steered clear of the Sears site and focused more on the reclamation of the former automotive center on the adjacent block across the street or a few blocks south in what is currently dubbed the Sankofa District. A 1998 *Post-Standard* article listed the host of shallow attempts to salvage, sell-off, or redevelop the vacated S-R & Co. facilities following Sears' withdrawal from the Southside and the city's purchase of its properties in 1976 [See Figure 4 – *Post-Standard* 03-27-1998]. However, the Southeast Gateway Neighborhood Design Plan seemed more comprehensive, as it encompassed additional neighborhood block sites, including both former S-R & Co sites [See Figures 2 and 3 - Section Four: Physical Context + Existing Conditions].

**Section Four :**  
Physical Context and Existing Conditions

**SITE CONTEXT**

The area studied for this Design Plan [ the aerial photograph portion shown below] is just south of the Syracuse Downtown center. This area evolved around the intersection of South Salina Street, State Rt. 11, and Cortland Avenue, two of the original commercial routes linking Syracuse and the agricultural communities to the south.



Center of Downtown Syracuse to the north

Syracuse University & Hospital complex immediately to the east

The OnTrack elevated railway runs through the neighborhood, forming a "wall" or visual barrier between this area of the city.

I-81 runs along the east edge of the Southeast Gateway Neighborhood.

**Section Four**

Onondaga Creek is a close walk to the west, through what has evolved from low lands and flood plain, to many industrial uses. Over the past 150 years residential neighborhoods have developed to the east and south. South Salina Street was predominantly residential in these early years, and transforming to commercial uses from the 1920's and 1930's. Over the past 30 years, with the growth of shopping malls and larger retail stores, this area has see little economic growth.

The areas in yellow are predominantly residential, including Syracuse Housing Authority apartments and managed properties. Many homeowners in the area are second & third generation families. Business owners and associations have promoted the need for a neighborhood commercial center.

**The Southeast Gateway Neighborhood Design Plan [SGNDP]**

Although the SGNDP nods to revivalist planning, it hardly references this area's historical success during the S-R & Co era. In 2008, I attended a community meeting in which a discussion arose between leaders/participants who were involved in the SGNDP's inception and the new team

of environmental engineers who were now involved in brownfield designation efforts for the sites. One community representative who had also been central to the SGNPD stood up to ask, “*What about the Gateway plan?*” “*Why are we starting from scratch to tell you what we desire in this community?*” [John’s Dunbar Community Center Notes]. The interactions during that meeting indicated that the SGNPD had been largely ignored and also that aspects of the S-R & Co. building and site history were shared knowledge but were also non-essential [John’s Dunbar Community Center Notes]. Some proponents of the plan still think that the SGNPD was one of the more innovative approaches to planning and design that Syracuse has seen. The planning process aimed to be inclusive, including every level of public and civil advocate in direct collaboration with ‘the community.’ The plan’s stated goals revolved around meeting an underserved population and business community who needed resources and infrastructures. There is also tension between the need for infrastructural or brick-and-mortar investments and for programming and social resources. The needs of this Southside Syracuse greatly differed from those of the prior generation. In 2006, the SGNPD proposed to revive the same quality spaces and participation from retailers and investors inside of what had become a fragmented and economically struggling string of neighborhoods. In what follows, I analyze four sections of this proposal and some of the oversights that may have caused it to lose viability and traction, despite endorsements at almost every level.

### ***SECTION ONE: Roots of Revitalization***

It’s important to point out that the SGNPD plan was actually a collaborative development involving several prominent groups, some of which I examine here. One such group, *The Gateway* collaboration, included a diverse people from the City of Syracuse’s Common Council, Syracuse

University, Metro-Edge<sup>3</sup> - a private marketing research firm from Illinois, the AIA/CNY Chapter, and, of course, ‘the community’ (*MetroEdge 2005, 1-112*). In many ways, the plan appeared to demonstrate an ideal approach to integrative community design in Syracuse, while simultaneously acquiring several key political signatures and approvals for its implementation. However, the plan’s ultimate failure reinscribed racial boundaries of isolation across Syracuse by further stigmatizing it to investors and political actors as untenable. There’s a longstanding stigma that you can’t do anything down there; it’s not worth the investment. This framing only serves to strengthen that line of thought.

To begin, the groundbreaking Community Design Charrette of 1999 was hosted at the Central Village Youth Center on Van Buren Street, just off West Castle Street near downtown Syracuse Southside’s or “Brick City” (what we called the Syracuse Public Housing and Pioneer Home neighborhoods when I was growing up). For a longtime, my mother was the Syracuse Housing Authority youth services coordinator at this center, including during this period. I spent a lot of time at the center as a teenager, although coincidentally, this Charrette was in full swing during my first year of architecture at Syracuse. The charrette featured the Urban Design Center [UDC],<sup>4</sup> a team of designers formed through partnerships with the American Institute of Architects’ [AIA] Central New York [CNY] chapter. It was facilitated by professors and students from Syracuse University’s School of Architecture, along with local business owners and youth

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<sup>3</sup> **MetroEdge**, a Chicago market research company specializing in urban markets, was commissioned by NeighborWorks America to conduct a market analysis of the potential for retail development in the South Salina Street Trade Area of Syracuse in 2005.

<sup>4</sup> **Urban Design Center**, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization created with participation from the American Institute of Architects/Central NY Chapter; the Syracuse University School of Architecture, the SUNY-ESF School of Landscape Architecture, the American Society of Landscape Architects/Upstate Chapter, and the Downtown Committee of Syracuse, Inc.

from the Central Village (Brick City, Tha Brix)/Pioneer Homes (Tha PH) neighborhoods as participants (*Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc 2006, 1-124*). I will detail the undertakings and results of this Charrette momentarily.

Five years later, in 2004, the charrette was followed by a “workshop of design professionals and business owners from around Central New York.”<sup>5</sup> Their subsequent design efforts were compiled to formulate the *Southeast Gateway Neighborhood Design Plan*, even though the original document was called the “SE Gateway/Kings Park Landing Neighborhood Design Plan.” From the onset, we have the clash of placemaking identities, and here’s another example of the co-opting and renaming of places and spaces that already hold an identity in the community. This theme of contested naming and renaming of this project and area brings to light the competition of space and narratives or ideas about a particular space/place. All participating groups had different convictions about how to identity this place, but somehow, the Southeast Gateway Neighborhood won out. My analysis of these different narratives shows how particular perceptions become elevated while others were muted through these collaborative design settings driven by outsider perception. Second, these multiple meanings are co-generative with the production of space and culture.

Emmanuel Carter, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the State University of New York Environmental Science & Forestry at Syracuse University (SUNY ESF) and some of his students are listed as participants of the SGNDP collaboration under SUNY ESF. Carter and his

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<sup>5</sup> Local business owners are listed as follows in the report: Chuck DeWoff, Tri-Kolor Printing; John Lumia, Coastel Tools; Tony Brown, Custom Alarms; Chey Wel Xlg, New Long Chey [Chen]; Emannual Henderson, J.SOUTHSIDE.P. Industrial Supply; Jim Bright, Dunk & Bright Furniture; Florece Cannon, Cannon’s Lounge; Ozell Jones, Kal Real Estate; Cheres Torrence, 7 Styles Convenience Store; Leroy Smithwick, 99¢ & More; Brighton Pizzeria Fish & Deli; Warren Frank, Custom Alarms; Kenel Antoine, Architect; Charles Garland, Garland Brothers Funeral Home.

design students referred to this area as “King’s Landing,” due to its proximity to the MLK Elementary School (p.2). Through my interactions with local pastor Maxwell Jones (Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ), I learned that Professor Carter regularly had his students working in the community and incorporating their studies of the Southside, along with his own work, into the design curriculum. Jones consulted with another local architect, Kenel J. Antoine (Haitian), and me about developing his church’s site at West Castle St., located just a block west of the Sears & Roebuck site, into a youth outreach program. Carter, who is African American, was not in a facilitating role in the community charrette implementation of the SGNDP, nor was Kenel, a licensed architect who had completed several local projects for community-based organizations. However, the resulting studies from Carter’s students’ explorations were included in Section Six’s proposal for street landscaping. Resident/community charrette inputs, on the other hand, are more difficult to decipher from the final proposal. My point is that some black input was valued enough to at least be co-opted, while other inputs appear to be omitted or mentioned in passing at best.

For one, Carter’s naming of the space King’s Landing did not shape the final naming of the proposal. There were other community participants, like Raheem Mack, who felt they had contributed desired and valuable information, but *to what end?* The giving of such information coincided with the hope of being heard and responded to, a privilege those in this neighborhood must still fight to obtain.

Rooted in Revivalists Theory of Urban Planning, the SGNDP further highlighted guidelines for future development in this area, with a goal toward re-densification of the urban fabric, starting with the massive former S-R & Co. site. As with many post-industrial cities, there was a time when this area of Syracuse was very populated yet also contested socially as a place.



The place politics of inner-city Syracuse is a dynamic I have sought to further understand in my work as a scholar and as a local professional in the building design industry.

The early days of Syracuse's Southside featured prominent residents who were politically and financially successful. People who could build, drive, shop (at Sears), and eventually relocate when those amenities were no longer available. However, the neighboring inner-city ring also consisted of several ethnic neighborhoods, including Irish on Tipperary Hill and Italian, Polish, and Germans throughout the north part of the city gathered into groups around Catholic parishes. Syracuse's "Protestant manufacturing elites lived in the Sedgwick area off James Street on the east side as well as the Strathmore area around the hills of Onondaga Park" (*Grant 2009, p. 10*).

As Grant describes it, "Jews still lived in what locals then unselfconsciously referred to as Jewtown, the old area of Jewish bakeries and kosher meat shops just southeast of downtown. It abutted the black settlement referred to as the Fifteenth Ward or, among some whites, Niggertown" (*Grant 2009p. 10*). These descriptions are ascribed onto this same Brick City, Southeast Gateway Neighborhood of the SGNDP. If these were the common post-war sentiments for Jewish and black communities in the Southside, then one must ask what aspects of that society are being considered for "revival"? How would urban "revivalist" planning approaches navigate a contemporary context when that era's associated activities (shopping, baking, tailoring, etc.) were generally reserved for the privileged, wealthier, upper-class, and business elite while discriminating against working-class immigrant populations and certainly those from "Niggertown?" As described in Paper A, the experiences of white elites, immigrant populations, and African-Americans, especially those displaced by urban renewal across the country in the 1960-70s, were markedly different (*Haraway 1988, 575-599, Grant 2009, 35, Sullivan 2006, Wilkins 2007, Lipsitz 1998, Lipsitz 2007, 10, Bluestone, Barry.,Harrison, Bennett., 1982*).

## ***SECTION TWO: COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE<sup>6</sup>***

Ed Soja, in his introduction to *Seeking Spatial Justice: Right To The City*, described Lefebvre's concept as "packed with powerful ideas about the consequential geography of urban life and the need for those most negatively affected by the urban condition to take greater control over the social production of urbanized space" (2010, 1-11). In Syracuse, there was an organization serving this mission, formerly known as the Community Design Center (CDC) and then restructured as the Center for Community Design Research (CCDR). The CDC is mentioned throughout the SGNDP report introduction as the vehicle for a community-focused urban design course offered to both undergraduate and graduate students of Syracuse University's School of Architecture (SOA). Professor David Gamble led that aspect of the project in September 1999. The Southeast Gateway Neighborhood Design Plan Charrette became the setting where the young designers and staff of the CDC partnered with design professionals of the Urban Design Center [UDC], both groups serving as interpreters for participating community members. The SGNDP report introduction states that the CDC and UDC were brought to the forefront "to help with design and to help with visioning" for the Gateway project. It does not mention residents or community as drivers of purpose (*Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc 2006p. 3*). Conversely, "It was agreed that the study's purpose [was] to create a design vision for a revitalized Gateway Commercial Neighborhood based on the desires of the business community and the MetroEdge economic analysis and findings of 2005." These statements around vision shaping further call into question the level of community involvement and the value of those inputs. Both this third-party study

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<sup>6</sup> SE Gateway / Kings Park Landing Neighborhood Design Plan, 16-20.

(MetroEdge) and ambiguous mention of “the business community” were primarily economic in nature.

The act of community participation is an essential component to spatial justice in urban planning and development; it is not just a matter of everyone showing up to the hood for cheese and crackers while someone takes attendance. With multiple collaborators, many receiving credit in this report for explicit contributions, the question becomes, *What level of priority in the stratification of contributions did those community inputs take?* I consider the following statement: “[The] Design Plan [had] evolved from meetings over the past two years with business and community leaders and in part from a previous Community Charrette of the Gateway Neighborhood from 1999” (Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc. Summer 2006, 10). Again, in the report, there is an explicit naming of the design groups and professionals, with a less descriptive group of “business and community leaders” given first crack at contributing to the plan over a two-year period. While the report touts a “groundbreaking Community Design Charrette,” it includes no specific mention or quotation of resident and community members’ actual requests or suggestions for improvement. Rahim Mack, who participated in that Community Design Charrette, had this to say:

One thing that I do remember about that study was that it came in with ideas, and it actually asked the community for its input of what they would like to see there. Came back with very nice drawings, and all those drawings turned to nothing, and that is what I remember about that whole experience. Like, they came in, and it wasn’t like they said, “This is what is going to happen.” But they gave the illusion of, “This is what our goal is, and the project is going to be this, and this is going to happen.” I am not going to say that they said this was going to happen, but they gave the false hope that this is coming soon. (Giles Jr. 2010)

### ***SECTION NINE: ESTIMATE PROJECTIONS***

Section Nine of the SGNDP highlights the estimated costs<sup>7</sup> for these developments, broken down for the various units and phases of development. Those phases broadly included all potential new design brick-and-mortar facilities estimated at \$145,747,553, interior space outfitting estimated at \$30,390,663, and existing building renovations estimated at \$18,947,182. The project estimate totaled \$195,085,397, or slightly under \$200M. This proposal was radical at the time and would still stand as the most fiscally aggressive plan to date ever put forth for the Southside. This proposal began to challenge the longstanding idea that black space is poor space and not worthy of significant investment. If implemented, the dynamics of gentrification may have gone into overdrive in the area.

If adopted, the SGNDP could have completely transformed the Southside, even if at the expense of its residents, including those from the community who participated in the first place. For example, a \$200M investment in the Southside would most likely have created a non-incremental rent gap which would have displaced current occupants and businesses (*Goldsmith, William W., Blakely, Edward J., 1992, Ley 1996, Sibley, Smith 1996, 629, Mitchell 2006, 123-127*).

In this instance, the SGNDP did not garner actual support beyond its well-known promoters. Powerful figures, including then New York State Senator David J. Valesky [49<sup>th</sup> District 2006], had expressed support, but there has been little follow-up in the time since, and the plan has been delayed or ignored.

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<sup>7</sup> SE Gateway / Kings Park Landing Neighborhood Design Plan, 66-69.

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TRANSPORTATION

**Remarks by Sen. David J. Valesky  
June 28th 2006**

"It is a pleasure to be here this morning as we discuss plans, strategies and ongoing initiatives to spur economic development and job growth on the South Side of Syracuse.

"Of course, I'd like to thank Mayor Matt Driscoll for his leadership on this issue. I'd also like to thank Darlene Kerr, the President of the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce. Thanks to Syracuse University's Dr. Craig Watters, from the Falcone Center for Entrepreneurship; to Robert Haley and Dean Biancavilla, from the American Institute of Architects; and to Petty McClain from the Southeast Gateway Development Corporation Center.

"Finally, of course, thanks to my friend Mike Atkins from the Southeast Gateway Community Development Corporation leadership, and countless other projects and organizations.

"Before us we see representatives from local businesses and the private sector; we see scholars from our world-class academic institution; we see elected officials; and we see many community leaders. All of us are here with one goal in mind – creating jobs and economic opportunity on the South Side of Syracuse.

When you ask economic development gurus what it takes to transform cities and create growth in communities that have lacked opportunity for too long, these experts are bound to say you need to build strong partnerships between public and private; you need to leverage the intellectual capital of your universities; and you need to tap into the expertise of existing business leaders. Ladies and gentleman, we are doing all of it.

The group assembled here, and the projects we have discussed represent exactly the kind of partnerships and cooperation needed to reinvigorate the south side. Just think again of what Syracuse University is doing, under the leadership of Chancellor Cantor, to tap into the intellectual capital at the Whitman School and turn that into real life resources for aspiring entrepreneurs. I want to again recognize Craig Waters, from the Falcone Center for Entrepreneurship, for his work on both the South Side Entrepreneurial Connect Project and the South Side Innovation Center. The South Side Innovation Center alone brings together Syracuse University, Key Bank Foundation, Dunk & Bright, and the Gifford Foundation to supply tangible resources for aspiring businesses. This is exactly what we need to transform the Southeast Gateway.

So there is no doubt we are doing what we need to do on a local level to spur growth. On the state level, we also need to address other concerns – like the cost of energy, the broken workers compensation system, and the every-increasing cost of health care. Unfortunately, this was the unfinished business of the legislative session that just ended. But I will keep talking about these obstacles to job growth.

In the meantime, we can look around the state, to our friends that have had economic development success in other regions and see what we can learn. On August 3rd, community leaders from Syracuse will take a bus to Queens and to Harlem, where business and community leaders there – including my colleague Sen. Malcolm Smith – will show us a bit about what economic development strategies have worked in their sections of the city.

Right now, New York and Syracuse lead the state in job growth, so I think it is a good time to share what we know. I will be on the trip, and I know many of the people in this room will be as well.

When you look around this room and when you see all these local leaders and you hear about all these initiatives, you cannot help but have hope.

Hope knowing that we are leveraging our intellectual capital. Hope believing that we can transform the Southeast Gateway. And hope that, finally, the seeds of economic opportunity are taking root on the South Side of Syracuse.

So again, I want to thank all those community leaders here today, and all of you for attending.

### *Good Ideas Came and Went*

In April 2010, I called into the Power Perspectives radio broadcast<sup>8</sup> and spoke with current Mayor Stephanie Minor [MM] (*Power 106 + Pastor Daren Jamie 2010*). During this conversation, I asked about the SGNDP to gauge whether the project still had any traction. The dialogue went as follows:

JHG: Where is development in the South Salina Gateway community currently at?

MM: I am unfamiliar with this project, as it's from the previous administration.

JHG: What about the Brownfield Opportunity Area [BOA] program?

MM: We are still trying to market these areas to investors who might be interested.

Minor further mentioned that she had been over at Blues Brothers Barber Shop on South Salina in conjunction with announcing \$500k in grant money to fund Southside projects, including a chess park, infrastructural repairs, and housing developments (Sankofa District).

Following our conversation, Mayors Minor's on-air discussion shifted to employment opportunities in Syracuse. Mayor Minor began to express how we needed talented young people to stay and work in Syracuse and the various partnerships and initiatives between Syracuse

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<sup>8</sup> Notes from Power Perspectives show 4-24-10; **guests:** Pastor SOUTHSIDE. Bernard Alex & Mayor Stephanie Miner. **Topics:** Felons get jobs! Hard workers don't. Why?\_Where's Destiny USA going?

University and other organizations that were being used to make this city more attractive. I felt I had more to say about this particular issue, so I called back into the show and continued the conversation:

**JHG:** I would love to stay and work on behalf of the communities I came from. However, the opportunities don't appear to be available. As a 2007 graduate from the Syracuse School of Architecture, I was employed at one of the leading firms here in the city. The week of the inauguration of President elect Barak Obama, which was also the height of the economic downturn, I was fired in 2009. I was accepted into the Graduate program at Maxwell for Geography and returned to complete a Master's program.

**Pastor Jaime:** I feel you! You know John's story is familiar.

**MM:** In these tough times, employers ask me where to find qualified individuals of diverse backgrounds... I would first like to congratulate John for going back to school and furthering his education after losing his job... which is what many have had to do...

While I appreciated Mayor Minor's congratulations, I did not feel that the mayor would go back and re-evaluate *why* employers were asking her for talented people. My point here is that our leadership and civic developers tend to harp on the needs lamented by those who already have political power and fiscal clout as leverage but fail to address the problems that they may be cogenerating. To date, national turnover rates for African-American design employees and architects, as well as retention rates for underrepresented design students at universities, remain abysmal (*Oguntoyinbo 08/08//2017*). There are both local and national equity, diversity, and inclusion [EDI] initiatives that I am currently engaged with to help address this issue.

During our conversation, Mack also had this to say: I think in a community where we are down trodden so often, that you cannot come in and do things like that [Community Charrette] without solidification that something is going to happen; not all of it in one phase, but a phase, and then another phase. I think that that was a reality check for a lot of people like me who believed in the powers that be and then in reality, reality struck in with they really do not care about us in this area (*Giles Jr. 2010*).

### **What does this charrette demonstrate about the search for Spatial Justice?**

The weaknesses of the community design process offer some key insights into how spatial isolation continues to be an issue in the Southside, despite efforts toward community collaboration. In order of priority, the SGNDP's introduction begins with the involvement of design professionals and university students, followed closely by "business owners" and "community leaders." Only tertiary are the partial inputs from the "Community Charrette" invoked. With the exception of the title "Gateway Neighborhood," this early mention of the community is but one of two uses of the terms '*neighborhood*' or '*community*' within the report's introduction. Most of the section embellishes on how the UDC organized and executed the Community Charrette, as opposed to what feedback or inputs were gained. The use of "community" is seemingly a single and thin slice of meat sandwiched between the more laudable naming of top bun design professionals and their fancy bottom bun ideas for an "active public realm."

My argument about the co-opting of community voices is affirmed when reading Pages 18 and 19 of Section Two – the lone two pages devoted to the Community Charrette out of the proposal's 124 pages. The small section and its contents confirm that the charrette may have been



just a logistical nod to the community as a rite of passage before suggesting full-on gentrification. Here, the ambiguous nature of the term *community* is again seemingly locked within structured moments of participation from ‘others’ being facilitated by the team of design professionals: Much of the strength of the non-profit Urban Design Center comes from its volunteers - both the design professionals and the Syracuse University students who participated in outreach to our community by helping study pressing urban problems and applying good design (*Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc 2006p. 16*).

I am not sure if the “supporting organizations” considered community participants as members. However, the above excerpt suggests that the bulk of participation came from those within these partnering organizations. This was a study of an economically stressed neighborhood on Syracuse’s Southside called the Southeast Gateway area by city agencies seeking to mobilize private and public resources to begin a revitalization of this neighborhood [See Figure 6 - Plan highlights the benefits of South Salina Corridor]. It is stated that the project team met many times at the Central Village Center with neighborhood organizations and toured the Gateway area to document residents’ concerns and to consider the visionary ideas coming from locals about where things might be best located to enhance the urban fabric (*Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc 2006p. 16*). I look further into this claim by examining the report’s images in this next segment.

### **People, Power, and the SGNDP**

A quick glance at the report’s accompanying images might affirm the perception that many participated in the community design session. A closer look, however, reveals that students from the design course, combined with other local professionals, significantly outnumbered the few

local participants from the neighborhood (Figure 5), raising the question of whether power is shared in this process of collaboration? Section Two concludes by briefly stating, “Even two city common councilors participated in the Charrette.” The two councilors are later named in the study’s acknowledgements.

Although the presence of these underrepresented leadership figures<sup>9</sup> did positively demonstrate black voices at the platforms of power that would shape this community, that political momentum yielded no results. These gatekeepers’ involvement in community action efforts since the SGNDP has become very contentious because they are associated with the plan’s failure from the comforts of their public offices and are resented by those who do not have the same incubation. Even though these leaders have often worked to leverage their influence and power to benefit more disenfranchised groups and bring attention to their unseen needs, there is a new generations of community leaders who are rising in leadership and have similar goals to do the same but in new ways.

On the other hand, these same leaders, including council representatives, pastors, and business women and men, have often been overambitious in their expectations or blind to the real extents of their power, causing them to overpromise and under-deliver. This is the last thing needed in distressed inner-city communities, as more broken agreements contribute to an atmosphere of apathy. The Southside’s spatial desolation has been produced alongside a history of lies and a culture of apathy shaped by environmental and economic depression, as is the case with the unsuccessful S-R & Co. projects and the failed SGNDP. It takes more than representation to fight this type of norm. It takes the acknowledgment of differences, cross-collaboration between

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<sup>9</sup> This includes but is not limited to race and ethnicity.

leadership hierarchies, cultural and ethnic enclaves, industries and businesses, education, and the penal system, to name but a few. It means that sometimes, experts must suspend what they have learned for what is known within the entrails of those they serve. It means allowing the people to have actual power.

## **POWER FROM THE PEOPLE**

Looking again at the above charrette photo with the featured figureheads, it is clear that they are accompanied by only a few community members, who usually stand behind those holding pens at the table of decision-making. This photo and the process it conveys prompted me to ask exactly who shared what in the process of collaboration. A blurb of text on the page provides an answer: Information booklets were prepared for handouts the day of the Charrette to all participants, volunteers and citizens alike. A short introduction and orientation were given that Saturday morning by UDC Director Dean Biancavilla to all Charrette participants. Presentations were made of the information boards, maps, and booklets so that all present had an understanding of the day's agenda, as well as the desired goal for what resultant sketches would come from the study (*Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc 2006, p. 16*).

Section Two of the report further described how the previously “generated designs” had been printed up and compiled with instruction pamphlets that *helped inform participants* of the types of sketches to be produced. If participants were handed the broader ideas that had already been mapped out, this begs the question what would they actually be inputting toward the design? This process stands in contrast to Participatory Action Research, which designs projects collaboratively with community members at the outset so that outsiders are not setting the agendas

for projects (*Mountz A., Moore E.B., Brown L., 2008, 214-238*). The aforementioned pen-in-hand dynamics now adds clarity to the opening paragraph of Section Two, which states how success was mobilized by “the design professionals and the students from Syracuse University who participate in outreach to our community by helping to study pressing urban problems and applying good design.” If this charrette was viewed primarily as a form of “outreach” serving the need for “good design,” then who identified this need? What exactly did the orchestrators need from “the locals” experiencing these “pressing urban problems” (p. 16)?

Both the CDC and the UDC featured experienced architects. In the design plan, these professionals are listed individually, and many already had renowned careers and histories within the Syracuse area. Voices from locals or community participants are missing from the report. The recognition of local knowledge might have given more credence to the actual needs of Southside residents than a million of the most brilliant design ideas from design professionals.

For the designer, though, it is the designs’ brilliance that will captivate most onlookers. Design professionals are trained to exude expertise in the execution of complicated design tasks. We are even trained to tell others how they will experience a designed space. These persuasive techniques tend to overshadow the invisible broader aspects of context that we are discussing here. As a result, the designers and facilitators are named while the community gets three photos with no quotes. It is clear that those representing outside influence are those with the power.

A search for spatial justice should be predicated upon questioning what happens to our physical environments when we continue to plan our cities using proto-people ideals that target a virtual demographic of young middle-incomers, while marginalizing its present dwellers (*Sutherland 2006, 1-42*). The planners did due diligence to look at historic urban maps to compare

the density of past urban Syracuse with what exists today. They did not, however, consider the different demographic and social norms that characterized those historic times. The plan, in clear revivalist fashion, harkens back to some idealized notion of an urban past: “Part of the preliminary analysis of the Gateway neighborhood included looking back to a time in the 1890's when the area was densely populated and many more shops and businesses were located there” (p. 16).

In Syracuse, many immigrant families from Western Europe, Poland, and Ireland made their humble beginnings throughout the inner city, establishing distinct ethnic enclaves (*Grant 2009, 35*). However, it was only after the great migration of African Americans from the US South, followed by multiple waves of spatial change including suburbanization, deindustrialization, and urban renewal, that the inner city evolved into the more concentrated realm of black poverty and isolation which we see today. Implicit in the revivalist idea of re-populating based on historic density is the absence of a critical acknowledgement that African Americans were not present in those glorious times whose shops and services were now being re-proposed. In this way, a historical and social mismatch occurs when we attempt to make the future the same as our past. How would a predominately African-American community respond to or fit within a city returned to the 1890s? This would require further investigative research and time not allotted in the 2005 SGNDP or its MetroEdge study. Urban design does not have to be a one-size-fits-all approach.

The design plan notes, “With assistance from the City of Syracuse Department of Community Development and the Syracuse Housing Authority the Charrette drew some sixty participants.” This inclusion is not depicted in the accompanying photos or reflected in the leadership assignments for the three charrette teams. Tom Anderson was appointed leader for

Gateway Business Team #1 and Matthew Broderick,<sup>10</sup> AIA,<sup>11</sup> over Gateway Business Team #2. Dean Biancavilla, AIA and Director of the UDC, led Urban Village Team #3. The UDC's Associate Director, Robert M. Haley Jr.<sup>12</sup>, AIA, "circulated as monitor for both Teams 1 and 2." The structure and management of the charrette's team assignments are not indicative of the proclaimed diversity and inclusion practices of this specific effort. The charrette drew some 60 participants; however, the majority were either lead or collaborative facilitators for the project (*Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc 2006, pp. 17-18*).

Participants also included Mr. Kenel J. Antoine, AIA, one of the few licensed minority architects in Syracuse. Mr. Antoine has designed and consulted for several local church developments in Syracuse's South and Westside neighborhoods. Having been mentored by Mr. Antoine for several years, I knew he had a sense of familiarity with the inner city and experience working with youth. Mr. Antoine is an accomplished designer and longtime director of campus planning for Onondaga Community College. I question why neither he nor Professor Emmanuel was called upon to facilitate or oversee any teams. Diversity of race/ethnicity, gender, and class in representation is not the sole element required for the adequate translation of ideas and concepts or spatial justice among blacks; however, it is important that power structures more adequately reflect those they claim to serve. This diversification could better limit the subtle projection of stereotypes and tactics of domination which have marred effective integration and synergies

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew Broderick, AIA. My former partner in charge at Ashley McGraw Architects, PC- 500 South Salina Street Downtown Syracuse. I worked under Mr. Broderick's direct supervision from Aug 2006-2008, mostly on EPDM roof replacement projects for suburban and rural school districts and some elderly facilities.

<sup>11</sup> American Institute of Architects

<sup>12</sup> Bob was also Director of Design at a local firm we both worked for. He was project architect on an innovation studio room he and I designed for Syracuse University's I-School in 2008.

between inner-city groups and research institutes in the past (*Bunge 2011, Bunge 1974, 485-488, Inwood, Martin 2008, 373-395*).

Even though there is no documentation of cultural misinterpretations, projections of stereotypes, and tactics of domination in this report, my interviews revealed otherwise. Although the elimination of spatial isolation is not solely predicated upon having black people in power, when there are equalized power relations and when designs are worked out from a bottom-up perspective, this could lend to a more just planning process. This kind of planning challenges the mere optics of diversity and imbalances of power that privilege dominate voices, see Figure 7 - Sketch Plan from Charrette 1999 [drawn by architect].

None of the “sixty community participants” are named for their contributions. Subsequent to the publication of the plan, the Central Village Youth Center of the Syracuse Housing authority was closed, and the staff, including my mother, dispersed into other positions, many in other inner-city organizations. Raheem, from whom we heard earlier, went on to own housing properties in the Southside and was the head of a family intervention program at the Southwest Community Center when we talked a few years back.

### **SECTION THREE: Development Needs<sup>13</sup>**

There is one piece of evidence in Section Three that suggests that community participation did occur at some level. Numbered one on the brief list of proposed development is a neighborhood grocer, a request that begins to align with local viewpoints and with much of the input and feedback

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<sup>13</sup> SE Gateway / Kings Park Landing Neighborhood Design Plan, 21-30.

I gathered from those who lived and worked on behalf of this community. Lenard Cage Sr., a longtime Syracuse resident and Lead Supervisor for the New York State Thruway Authority, grew up in the Southside. He and Steve Coker of the South Side Innovation Center both described several grocery stores that existed in this area in the 1960s, including Ebony Market, Victory Market, and Big M Market. Former grocery facilities include 1121 South Salina Street inside what is now known as the Greater New Testament Missionary Baptist Church, adjacent to Tallman Street across from what is identified as Kings Park Landing in the Gateway Report.

Despite the report's brief alignment with actual community need, it quickly begins to deviate again. Even though access to fresh food had been a concern for Southside residents for a number of years, I had not heard anyone ask for an *open seafood stand/market* on the Southside [See Figure 9 – Section Three features a precedent photo of Lexington Food Market in Baltimore].

One of the core reasons inner-city areas need fresh food is highlighted in the work of anthropologist Sandra Lane on inner-city pre-natal health (2008). Dating back to the early 1990s, her research highlights how concerns around mobility and food access began to permeate both the research communities of Syracuse University and LeMoyne College and various religious and non-profit community organizations in Syracuse (Lane 2008). Section Three of the Gateway Design Plan initiated a very practical and useful set of guidelines for addressing this longstanding issue. Since then, another collaborative group, the Southside Community Coalition [SCC], has championed this issue to break ground on a new 35,000 sq/ft Food CO-OP & Café at 2327 South Salina Street, about six blocks from the former S-R & Co. Site. The Eat-To-Live Co-op originally opened in October 2013 but only for three months, before a misappropriation of funding was uncovered and staffing was cut. The Co-op resumed operation in 2017 but again faces closure, due to lack of revenue and funding. Significant cutbacks in hours of operation and supplies have cast



shadows over the effectiveness of this venture. Several new larger and grocers have since expanded into the Southside – namely, Tops and Price Rite (*McClafferty 2017, na, Tampone 2014, NA*).

Section Three continues in quantifying the area’s spatial assessment and offering a proposal of development needs based on the available economic and community analysis. This segment itemizes development suggestions from the Gateway Report of 2000 (p. 22), followed by the 2005 Metro-Edge economic report’s development suggestions (p. 23), and ending with a combined synthesis of development suggestions from both reports (pp. 24-31). Photos are included in the SGNDP report alongside this excerpt:

A quick summary of the proposed development of mixed use Infill along the South Salina Street Corridor from Adams Street south to East Castle Street from the SE Gateway 2000 report has a handful of important components of this Plan includes the following projects: **1) Neighborhood Grocery Store** 75pprox.x. 11,000sf] **2) A National Retailer** 75pprox.x. 20,000 sf] **3) A City-county Center for Social Services** 75pprox.x. 5,000 sf] this was proposed for a renovation project in the old Sears Bldg. **4) A Food Court Development/ & Public Park** that could double as an events Space [2 small restaurants /2 coffee shops / 2 sandwich shops--75pprox.x. 400sf each for a total of 2400sf] **5) A Seafood Restaurant Franchise** / national chain 75pprox.x. 6,000sf] Under item 3) above the idea of renovating the vacant Sears Department Store building on South Salina Street was prime consideration by the residents because of the history of the store in the economic life of the neighborhood. The existing 193’s Sears building at 1300-1340 S. Salina Street is both in the Empire Zone and the Empowerment Zone and has 84,540 SF floor area (Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc. 2006, p. 22).

At the end of Section Two, the report states that “The City of Syracuse [had] begun to incorporate the design suggestions that came out of this successful community charrette and the process is being used as a model for future efforts.” Still, after more than a decade, the plan has not generated any built results. Even with viable design approaches created by some of Syracuse’s

best architects and designers along with endorsements at the city, county, and state levels, somehow, the SGNDP was not a strong enough proposal to yield result. However, its presentation left much to question from an insider's perspective, and the plan lacked the characteristics that people in this community saw as a way of life.

What is more commonly referred to using local African-American colloquialisms of '*Da Hood*,' '*Down-The-Way*,' or next to '*The Brix* [via brick built public housing complex often referred to as *Brick-City*],' this design plan and its makers chose to refer to as the Gateway Neighborhood. They used this term because of the neighborhood's proximity to a growing downtown district and a world-renowned research and athletic institution, Syracuse University. This name is a more amorphous way of describing what is widely recognized as the ghetto and could have proven useful for the City of Syracuse Neighborhood and Business Development Department, looking to sell an "emerald green" and clean palate of opportunity to outside developers at the expense of local business owners.

So what is missing? This plan did not explicitly include partnership or expansion for local businesses like 7 Styles [See Figure 10]. This shop is not a Seven-Eleven or Wilson Farms chain-mart; however, it was created to meet the necessities of isolation within this community. In a November 2012 issue of the local newspaper, *The-Stand*, Craig Davis was featured as owner of 7 Styles convenience store and deli on 2030 South Salina Street. Craig mentioned that his shop "serves the need for quick to-go food as well as light grocery shopping as an alternative to distant grocery store trips."

It is important to point out that 7 Styles had been listed as one of the "business community" contributors to the SGNDP. The idealistic photos included in the report and in the *Syracuse City Eagle's* cover and spread do not suggest that the design plan would integrate this kind of shop,

although I suspect that all businesses would be given a chance to pay the new rental rates. As the start of Section Three of the SGNDP outlined its “handful of important components,” none of the five listed aspects included the retention or relocation of previously thriving community businesses. Even local real estate mogul Douglas Sutherland proposed that he would strategically relocate the successful downtown bakery, Mimi’s, into a better and newer location to create a mixed-use development infill in that part of Downtown Syracuse (*Sutherland 2006, 1-42*).

Douglas has got it all worked out here! Even down to the increased profit margins of Mimi’s Bakery. The sought-after developers and designers do not speak about the Southside or its businesses with this same level of optimism and endearment, leading me to ask, where do Craig and others like him go if the SGNDP were to actually take off? Put differently, a serious approach to spatial justice in this community would ask how neighborhood revitalization will account for current residents and business owners.

#### **SGNDP ANALYSIS: IGNORING HISTORICAL CONTEXT<sup>14</sup>**

Section Four reveals that this specific UDC project covers the center portion of the “Greater Southeast Gateway Area,” having been previously defined by the Southeast Gateway Community Development Corporation in 1995-96 [See Figure 11]. One of my central research questions examines SGNDP’s use of revivalist theory as a design strategy. In short, urban revivalists look to restore a given structure, site, or neighborhood back to a level more comparable to some beautiful, successful, and more productive era in that place’s history (*Krueckeberg 1974, 486, Spielman, Golembeski, Northridge, Vaughan, Swaner, Jean-Louis, Shoemaker, Klihr-Beall, Polley,*

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<sup>14</sup> SE Gateway / Kings Park Landing Neighborhood Design Plan, 31-38.

*Cushman, Ortiz, Hutchinson, Nicholas, Marx, Hayes, Goodman & Sclar 2006, 100*). SGNDP Section Four, along with Appendices A and B, highlights distinct references from the historic preservation literature and renowned urban planner, Andreas Duany of architecture and planning firm Duany Plater-Zyberk. Duany is known as the father of “New Urbanism.” When one of my undergraduate professors urged me to get a copy of *The New Civic Art* by Plater-Zyberk (2003) from our reserve collection at Bird Library, I came to understand that it was something like a magna carta for urban planning and design. This approach to architectural histories at Syracuse University, in addition to hours and years of historical training in high classical and modern orders of space, meant that a younger contemporary like me could develop a strong sensibility and appreciation for these historical fundamentals and their impacts on modernity. However, the entrenched, elitist, and isolationist attitudes often remain alive through the ritualistic worship and canonical reverence that master builders place on these design theories and approaches. It is the attitude that this is the way that “good design” must be, look, and feel. This attitude is often followed by a look of devaluation onto those not privileged enough to have had sufficient exposure to such ideals. As a result, I question the real motives for the urban design class and facilitators who trekked into that Southside center to ensure the rules of “good design.” How did they pre-decide which specific development model building types would be chosen versus another type? I discuss this issue further in my review of Section Four to come.

Section Four’s introduction makes it clear that the SGNDP is a continuation of the prior data collections and proposals made by five<sup>15</sup> organizations over a seven-year period [1998-2005].

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<sup>15</sup> The five organizations and contributions include SUNY Syracuse ESF School of Landscape Architecture- Urban Landscape Proposals [1998], SU School of Architecture- Neighborhood Planning Proposal [1999], Urban Design Center of Syracuse- Neighborhood Planning Proposal [1999], Southeast Gateway Community Development Corporation, MetroEdge- economic analysis [2005].

I find this connection noteworthy because the SGNDP report used this information to drive retail and shopping as primary lynchpins and catalysts to any future development: This report utilized the findings of the MetroEdge economic analysis and market projections as support for previously gathered information by the UDC and the SE Gateway CDC for a phased development of first-floor commercial space as the generator of a neighborhood center of shops, markets, stores, services, and restaurants. These developments would be designed to create an area where people shopped, worked, and lived and were planned to provide an interesting and inviting place to visit (*Urban Design Center of Syracuse, Inc 2006, p. 23*).

I agree that there must be a starting point to economic development for historically challenged areas like this Gateway Community; however, I question why retail must be the sole priority. Facilities and spaces for the arts, education, and entertainment as products generated from within the community could also spur subsequent economic growth.

This presents yet another competing narrative whereby the Southside is considered an economically depressed zone, yet the MetroEdge research had somehow discovered a large sum of “Retail Float” dollars worth pursuing. This economic priority captured then Mayor Matthew Driscoll’s attention. I quote at length:

Last year, NeighborWorks America commissioned a market analysis study to determine the potential for retail development in the South Salina Trade Area. The study, conducted by MetroEdge proved what we already suspected, that the area holds great promise for retail development. As you can see by these boards, a number of factors contribute to this potential, including the area’s population density which gives it 10 times more buying power per square mile compared to Onondaga County and the fact that the number of median income households is rising. However, “retail float” out of the area is perhaps the best indicator of the potential for retail development. Approximately \$43 million dollars leaves the South Salina trade area every year because goods and services are not available locally. For example, the

area experiences over 8 million dollars in “retail float” associated with food stores alone. Also, the lack of department stores, drug stores and automotive and home supply stores accounts for an addition 10.7 million dollars in retail float annually. “Retail float” affects neighborhoods not only economically but socially as well. (MetroEdge 2005, 1-112)

The former Mayor’s remarks from the South Side Economic Development Press Conference at the Chamber of Commerce on June 28, 2006, led me to question whether the Southside was being viewed as a seat of poverty or a realm of unexploited opportunity. The SGNDP report justified the push for retail in reiterating that it was local business owners who saw the need for a centralized shopping zone to serve the adjacent residential communities. The remainder of Section Four details the area’s land use and zonings, along with the appropriated sources of funding those developers would be eligible to receive, including Empire Development Funding (a source since restricted, due to corruption) and State Brownfield Site Development Programs. A map of “Existing Businesses and Conditions” closes out the section, emphasizing the decline in area business as a result of building decay. I would argue that this is a recursive process: buildings decay as businesses flee, and landlords find more value in suburban homes and properties than in the upkeep of tenant properties. These specific points are emphasized to further support the design plan’s drive for new infill for the purposes of ground-level retail occupancies [See Figure 8 - SE Gateway Neighborhood Commercial Center].

Section Eight of the design plan laid out the Gateway project in steps of “incremental change”; however, the way the SGNDP was halted suggests that even those moderate steps were too much for potential investors, city officials, and others involved in the plan’s projected implementation. This observation is important because in many ways, this \$200M project would

have served as a pivotal change. However, the negative perceptions and demoralizing economic history of these neighborhoods pose major challenges to the attraction of \$200M investment.

Destiny USA, the waterfronts, and Downtown Syracuse all say “Yes” to development, while the Southside elicits the eerie chirps of crickets in the night followed by a litany of concern about any substantial investments. As I have shown in my discussion above, while most participants in my study agree with the SGNDP that change is needed in our inner-city communities, fewer felt that change was worth the cost. In most cases, various stakeholders invited developers/investors, who were stabilized and established as benefactors, to participate in the radical change of a less stabilized, declining area of their city. Why would anyone take this plunge? Psychological marketing must be done to sell the Southside as good investment. More from my discussion with Mack gives credence to this thought process, as he described the challenges of owning real estate in the South Side and the stigma left by continued non-investment at the S-R & Co. sites, quoted at length:

JG: Obviously, I understand that you are also involved in real estate, so that probably has an impact on where you decide to live, purchase land. Can you talk a little bit about that, what is your experience of being a business owner?

RM: It is tough because one of the key issues is the ongoing gun violence on the Southside. It is continuously in the news, in the papers. Stories are being told about how many incidents happened on X Street on the Southside, or Y Street on the Southside. So obviously, when these incidents happen, it creates a depression or stigma attached to those communities. So, me owning properties or trying to sell properties in that, I only can effectively sell to someone that are either lives in this area or lived in this area or new to this area and have no clue of what the stigma that is attached to that area.

JG: What do you think about that stigma? Do you think it is accurate in its portrayal, that it is skewed...?

RM: Definitely, I feel like it is exaggerated a lot. Unfortunately, it is exaggerated, but reality is reality. There are issues over here that a lot of neighborhoods or a lot of communities do not see.

JG: What are your thoughts about the Sears and Roebucks site?

RM: I think the Sears and Roebucks site is an exact example of how our city believes the Southside is. Because for a site that large with a building that size on there to continue to be under-utilized and I see it deteriorating by the day, that means Syracuse city does not care about that area. If that same block were on another part of this city, it would have economic development beyond belief. Because it is on that Southside site, the city believes that it is okay for it to be that way and the city believes it is okay to wait until the next administration or let somebody else deal with it. I think that the reality is... and it is social, and I think that the residents of the Southside needs to step out and voice that to the city so then the city is force to do it and not allowed to neglect such prime real estate. (Giles Jr. 2010)

Community insiders may hold hope that something better will emerge from within the community, having seen both the bad and the good for many years. Upwardly mobile young leaders like Rahim embody community hope as they gain traction that can trickle back into the communities where they grew up. Their success is seen as the community's success that will transform this area into a gateway. Mack suggested he would change the Southside's environment in this way if he could:

JG: I guess I would ask if there was anything that you could change about the environment, about these particular sites, what would you change?



RM: Two different questions, because the site I think should be the gateway to the Southside of the city. It should be not just marketing, it should be storefronts; it should be the avenue to the Southside that obviously can help grow business and attraction to that area. I think that that site does a disservice to the Southside because as soon as you exit downtown, you hit that site and that right there starts the down trotting of the community. (Giles Jr. 2010)

Outsiders see the criminal-speckled crime maps more than the humanity of a Southside grandparent who keeps a grandchild so that his/her daughter can go to work and finish nursing school, as in the case of my mom and sister. Outsiders may selectively focus on billboards of the gunned down, rather than murals of those who ascend up Van Buren Street into the hallowed Hall of Languages. Perhaps the Southside is already a gateway, but outsiders have yet to collectively respect the blessings its crossroads carry.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this conclusion, I take a closer look at what this plan actually communicated conceptually and as a form of Participatory Action Research [PAR]. Reflective connections to what this plan meant to me and the coming generations of creative intellectuals from the Southside will conclude the paper.

## PROBLEMS WITH REVIVALISTS DESIGN METHODS PROPOSED BY OLD SCHOOL PLANNERS

In a multi-phased rebuilding of connected sites, Urban Revivalist planners would look to restore an area to a state comparable to its past vibrancy. In the absence of S-R & Co., there is mention and inclusion of a seafood market, directly reminiscent of a seafood restaurant on this

block of South Salina Street during the S-R & Co. era. It is my contention that the unfulfilled results of PAR projects, combined with unrealized Economic Development initiatives, are significant detractors to any spatial or social change, other than the outright razing and gentrification of Syracuse's Southside. Like Mayor Minor's \$500,000 investment (spread over her four-year term), just enough investment into the area is made to give the illusion that its recovery is important. When community input is overwritten and not valued, it neutralizes the little community input that *is* given and reinforces negative response from community members. Years of being unheard breeds frustration and contempt from the people for such collaboration. I argue that it is insulting for people to try to act as if they are listening, only to give you what they wanted you to have in the first place. Doing so devalues the other. As we will now see, there were community leaders present at this charrette who since have realized that they were not really heard.

The community's frustration became evident in 2008, as the Metropolitan Development Association and the City of Syracuse Department of Neighborhood Planning & Development partnered with Liverpool, New York firm Barton & Loguidice: Engineers, Environmental Scientist, and Landscape Architects to re-visit development in the Southside. I was informed of a community planning meeting that would take place at the Dunbar Community Center. At the meeting, large presentation boards and graphic posters covered the padded wall coverings. There was a white screen and projector up front. People were entering, glancing, and posturing sometimes so as to determine whom they knew in attendance, while the body language of others toward the front suggested that they would play an important role in facilitating this meeting. There were several gatekeepers present, including two integral to the SGNDP's developments several years prior. I was reassured to see the local community's political presence, voice, and representation. As the presentation began, it was evident they were starting from scratch with the

gathering of ideas and inputs about the Southside area's eligible for NYS Economic Empowerment Zone funding. I remember the quiet and awkward silences as the facilitator struggled to connect with those present, fishing for inputs. The presence of multiple gatekeepers that night suggested that they, too, had been ignored. They started speaking up during the input points of the session to ask, "Why new feedback was being requested about what to do/build in the area?" The gatekeepers were all puzzled that this new planning team did not know about the efforts of the Gateway project/SGNP just a few years prior.

I gave some input about valuing the assets of the people, especially the talented youth in our community. I often wondered why the plans did not include a series of studios, arts workshops, and a theater for youth to develop their talents to make it to the next level. Several people approached me after the session, commending me for my comments, most likely because I was the youngest person present.<sup>16</sup> Some said I might be on my way to working for the city in planning. Others came bearing business cards and promised to use their influence to help me if I needed. After I was fired the next year, I tried to connect with those professionals from Barton & Loguidice Firm in Liverpool. One of the individuals had moved to another company; however, I was able to speak with one project manager who remembered me and helped forward my profile information to HR. I never heard from any of them again.

There were so many power dynamics in that room that day. This is critical to stress because it is only in acknowledging existing power relations that we can redistribute power and gain the participation of those we seek to assist. Perhaps what is most problematic about attempts at revitalization is that many architects act as if they do not understand that the spatial is social and that social is emotional and complex. Gateways should not be of one-way orientation. This leads

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<sup>16</sup> I was 27 at the time.

us to ask what about the Community Folk Art Gallery [CFAC] that called the Southside its home in the 1970s? Will the CFAC return now that its sponsoring institution is not opposed to investments in the Southside? Where can our young artist and designers become deliberately trained to be the qualified workforce for which Syracuse employers beg? As of now, it will not be in the Southeast Gateway Neighborhood, as presented by this design plan.

Although no plan has radically changed the built environment in this community, I have examined the SGNDP as the most comprehensive among the proposed plans. I looked to see, whether inadvertently or intentionally, the steps toward development had contributed to the continuance of spatial isolation in this Southside neighborhood. The Gateway design plan is a primary example of how ‘place’ can become a function of whatever city leaders and people in power need it to be, juxtaposed with what residents actually make the place out to be in their daily lives. Catherine Adam’s (2006) work, “Defending Our Place,” details the Midland Sewage Treatment Facility in Syracuse’s Southside as a major example of this manipulation of place. As we have now seen, through analysis of an official plan, the notion of urban planning can carry the goal of identity reform under the guise of historical restoration, as has been occurring in Syracuse’s Near-Westside Area for more than a decade now.

I do believe that change through the vehicles of investment, architecture, planning, and civil development can carry immense power to affect society by altering the built environment. However, such power in design is not neutral or without costs. These costs go beyond the brick and mortar of structure and into the complex networks of social and cultural systems of choice, privilege, and exchange. I argue that those leading the Southeast Gateway Neighborhood Design Plan project attempted to change the feeling of this Southside area by providing pre-scripted ideals without fully considering the historical perceptions and experiences levied in the place. Such

considerations were overshadowed by ambition and enthusiasm for the potential development of this now long-blighted area of the city.

This paper provided a closer look into a move toward urban revitalization in the Southside of Syracuse. In planning terms, political platforms of urban vitality and economic development are woven through the built environments as the settings where these revitalization processes are set to occur. However, it's never just about the building or the paved pathways surrounding its footprint. Urban social identity is symbiotically established as building footprints are woven across landscapes and as building envelopes elevate to reflect the power, purpose, and influence of their namesake organization/benefactor. Travel less than one mile north of the research site, up Salina Street into downtown, and you will see the AXA Towers site under constant development directly across from the freshly Renovated Hotel Syracuse, marking the presence and prestige in their respective finance and hospitality industries. Legitimacy and viability as a business are reflected through the organization's presence of place and the grandeur or perceived stability of that built space.

**PAPER B - FIGURE REFERENCES**

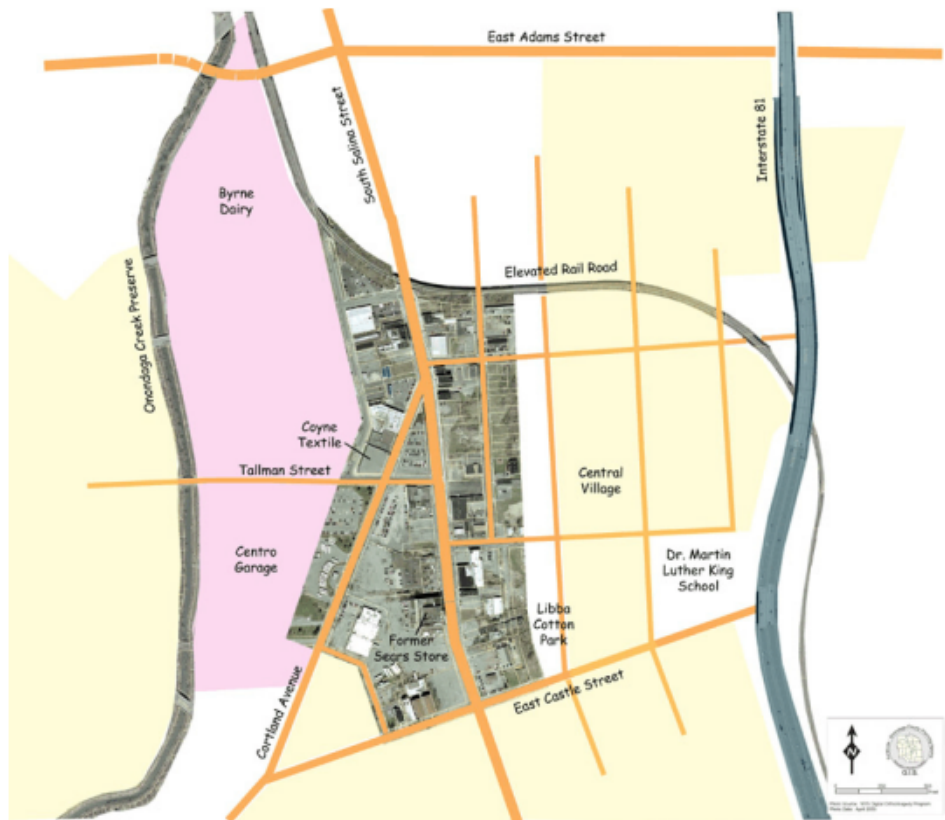


**Figure 1 - The SALT District and the Near Westside Initiative**

**Section Four :**  
Physical Context and Existing Conditions

**SITE CONTEXT**

The area studied for this Design Plan [ the aerial photograph portion shown below] is just south of the Syracuse Downtown center. This area evolved around the intersection of South Salina Street, State Rt. 11, and Cortland Avenue, two of the original commercial routes linking Syracuse and the agricultural communities to the south.



Center of Downtown Syracuse to the north

Syracuse University & Hospital complex immediately to the east

The OnTrack elevated railway runs through the neighborhood, forming a "wall" or visual barrier between this area of the city.

I-81 runs along the east edge of the Southeast Gateway Neighborhood.

Section Four

Onondaga Creek is a close walk to the west, through what has evolved from low lands and flood plain, to many industrial uses. Over the past 150 years residential neighborhoods have developed to the east and south. South Salina Street was predominantly residential in these early years, and transforming to commercial uses from the 1920's and 1930's. Over the past 30 years, with the growth of shopping malls and larger retail stores, this area has seen little economic growth.

The areas in yellow are predominantly residential, including Syracuse Housing Authority apartments and managed properties. Many homeowners in the area are second & third generation families. Business owners and associations have promoted the need for a neighborhood commercial center.

**Figure 2 - Section Four: Physical Context and Existing Conditions**

## Section Four : Physical Context and Existing Conditions

### Existing Businesses and Conditions



Many years of business decline and the resulting building decay has left this area with a fragment of it's original business density and character.

Existing buildings will need to be rehabilitated to be compatible with new development construction.

Some buildings presently closed should be renovated for commercial use, rather than being demolished.

Preliminary land planning and control is necessary to be able to develop the intended master plan design.

An index of the existing buildings and commercial space needed to verify existing development areas.

Preliminary rehabilitation estimates are suggested elsewhere in this report.

**Figure 3 - Section Four: Physical Context + Existing Conditions**



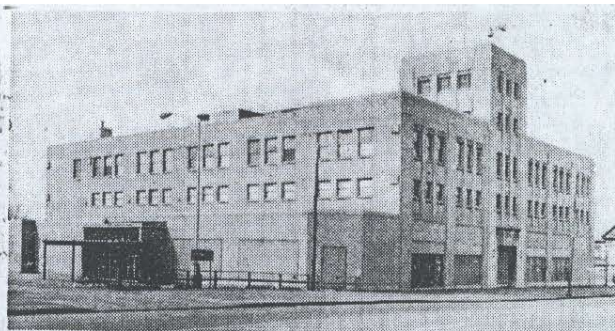


Photo by Staff Photographer John Sherlock

The Sears Building, a handsome and strong looking structure now 49 years old, has become "a brown elephant" since it was vacated four years ago, some say.

# Building Still Empty Many Ideas Later

*ps 3-27-78*  
 Aug. 1, 1974: Sears Roebuck and Co. announces the closing of its 45-year-old store in the 1300 block of S. Salina Street. Two years later, the building and property, assessed at \$2 million, are turned over to the City of Syracuse.

**UPDATE:** Despite numerous proposals and offers, the main building, described by some as "a brown elephant," remains vacant. The city, however, has had success with the smaller garden and auto center buildings.

David S. Michel, who as city commissioner of community development is among the vanguard of city fathers trying to get the building back in service, said those efforts are destined to be futile because of the sheer size of the building.

"There's no one looking for that kind of space," Michel said. And while the broad, open spaces of the three-story building are fine for retail use, "industrial or office use would require a lot of rehabilitation," Michel said.

When the city offered the two smaller buildings for bids, they were snatched up, with two bidders seeking each. Byrne Dairy Inc. finally bought the auto center, while a bookbinding firm, Erhard and Gilcher Inc., is setting up shop in the former garden center.

Michel said the city now is "exploring the idea of using federal funds to rehabilitate the main building to make it more attractive to potential buyers." Retail use of the building in the economically depressed neighborhood is unlikely, he said.

The city's aim is to put the building back on the tax rolls, as it succeeded doing with the smaller buildings. For that reason, Michel said, none of the many suggestions for the big brick structure have been carried out.

Most of those suggestions, he noted, have been public, or "quasi-public" uses that would not have generated badly needed tax dollars for the city.

Among the suggested uses for the building and the 8.5-acre site have been:

- Relocation to the Sears building of parts of the Onondaga County sheriff's or city police department's offices to

make more room at the Public Safety Building.

- Opening of classrooms, to eliminate costly new construction by the City School District.

- Erection of the proposed and much discussed football stadium.

- Relocation to the Sears building of the city's water, engineering and transportation units.

- Occupation of the Sears building by the offices of the United Way of Central New York Inc.

— STEVE GALANTE



DAVID S. MICHEL

Figure 4 – Syracuse Post Standard 03-27-1998



Figure 5 - Gateway Models on Display- Prof David Gamble discussing the design



# COVER STORY

## Plan highlights the benefits of South Salina corridor

From page 1

The market analysis conducted by MetroEdge Corporation, a subsidiary of Local Initiatives Support Corporation from Chicago, Ill., found the South Salina Street Trade Area "contains a higher concentration of money to be spent in retail stores in the city of Syracuse than in the typical surrounding suburbs."

The market analysis report identifies a staggering \$122,751,307 of "Retail Float," dollars leaving an area due to the lack of retail. Retail opportunities are identified by taking area demand minus supply, which in many categories means sales to consumers who are spending millions of dollars out of the area for basic goods and services such as food stores and department stores, a float of \$4,028,652 for drug and proprietary stores 100 percent of these dollars are spent out of the area.

The trade area as defined consists of these boundaries: North: Adams Street; South: Brighton Avenue; West: Midland Avenue; East: Interstate 81 just under one square mile.

Within the trade area there are two nodes where a retailer could invest the Brighton and Salina Node which is a "residential friendly" environment and Castle Street at Salina Node where land is available for larger retail sites.

A chart identifying existing income indicates 33 percent of



CHUCK WAINWRIGHT

South Salina Street is one of the gateways to downtown Syracuse. A new economic development plan hopes to take advantage of the business that are there, while paving the way for new development.

South Salina Street area households earn more than Syracuse's median income of \$25,931. That income is concentrated in a smaller space within the Salina trade area 813 households per square mile with incomes above the city's median income versus Onondaga County's 169 households per square mile earning above the median income.

According to MetroEdge the buying power in the Salina Trade Area is "\$850,000 or 10 times the concentration in

Onondaga County." Ten major businesses employing 2,112 people are located in the South Salina Street Trade Area. The area employs a total of 4,150.

The study promotes retail potential in what appears to be a bid to entice National Retailers like Wal-Mart and Target to the Castle Street at Salina Street Node an area which was once home to Sears, Roebuck & Company.

City Economic Development Officials hope to fund The South

East Gateway Neighborhood Commercial Center project through a variety of sources including the Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative and Community Development. For larger developments Brownfield Cleanup and other economic development tools would be utilized.

The South East Gateway Community Development Corporation is going on a trip by bus to Harlem on Aug. 3 filled with a contingent of area residents and neighborhood leaders to

see for themselves a community transformed from within.

South East Gateway CDC Economic Development Committee Chair Mike Atkins was excited as he discussed the South East Gateway Task Force trip "We want to show people in Syracuse what's being done in Harlem. We can make these things happen right here in Syracuse."

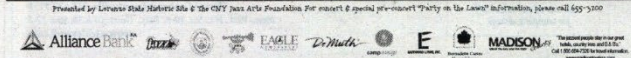
**Alliance Bank**

# Jazz Under the Stars

Friday July 21, 2006 at 8:00 pm  
on the grounds of Lorenzo, Cazenovia NY

Featuring the CNY Jazz Orchestra  
with Nancy Kelly and Houston Person

Presented by Lorenzo State Historic Site & The CNY Jazz Arts Foundation. For concert & general information, contact the Lorenzo Information, phone: 515-535-3100



### South Salina Street Trade Area

Population: **6,569**

Employees: **4,150**

Places of Business: **237**

Size: **0.908 square Miles**

Source: Claritas, 2004

Home to several major employers, civic, philanthropic and community assets.

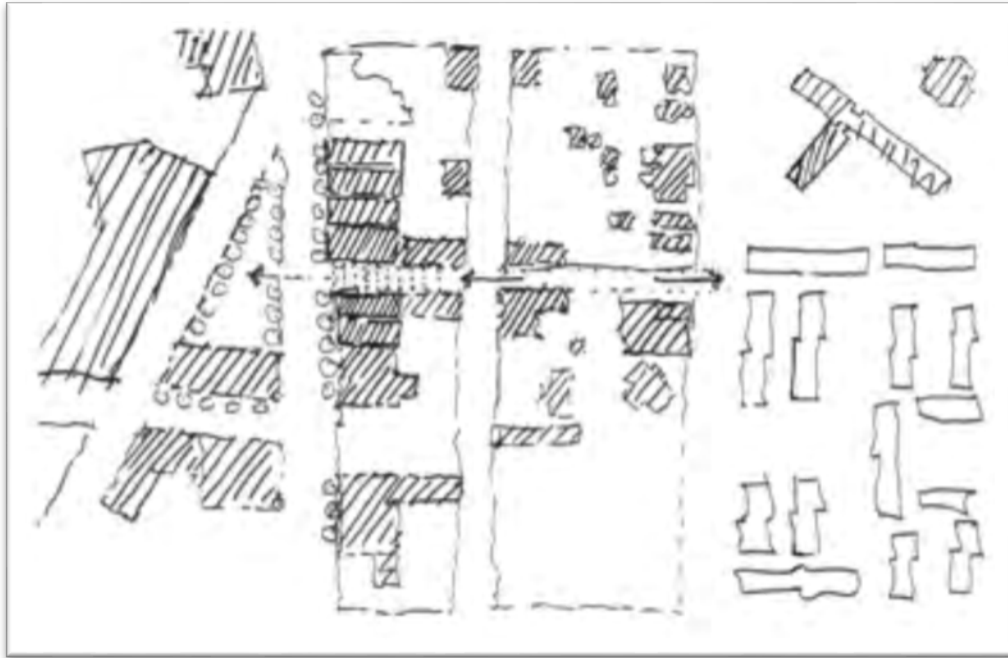
### Voting saga takes to the streets

The Progressive Coalition of Central New York will stage a street theatre demonstration in Columbus Circle at 11 a.m. Thursday dramatizing concerns about the choices facing Onondaga County regarding what new voting machines to purchase.

Flyers will be distributed to the public with up-to-date information comparing the two systems: the direct recording electric devices and the paper ballot optical scanner with the AutoMark for the disabled.

Funding for purchasing the machines is part of the Help America Vote Act but maintaining and storing them will be the responsibility of the county. For further information on the demonstration or for more information on the voting machines go to the web site of New Yorkers for Verified Voting [nyvv.org](http://nyvv.org).

**Figure 6 - Plan highlights the benefits of South Salina Corridor**



**Figure 7 - Sketch Plan from Charrette 1999 [drawn by architect]**



**Section Six :**  
**SE Gateway Neighborhood Commercial Center**  
**Design Plan Illustrations : The Vision**

Looking north, at South Salina & Castle Streets



Section Six

This vision for a South East Gateway Neighborhood Commercial Center creates a place for increasing local shopping and downtown residential density. The "Gateway" concept has long expressed a sense of this area's importance and strategic location as the south entrance and transition to the Downtown Syracuse center. As such this vision creates a "Gateway" to this commercial center and to the greater Downtown area as well.

These buildings create a "Gateway" to the commercial neighborhood. Two small "towers" are located on either side of South Salina Street, at the intersection of Castle Street, providing the "Gateway" to this area. Planning and design guidelines for this district will create a typical shopping streetscape of large 1-story, and 2-3+ story, "Mixed-Use" buildings, all with commercial space at street level, and "market rate" residential or office space on the upper levels.

Key Elements

- Create a "Gateway" to the neighborhood commercial center
- Build to street lot lines to establish the "the public realm"
- Provide shared parking lots behind the buildings

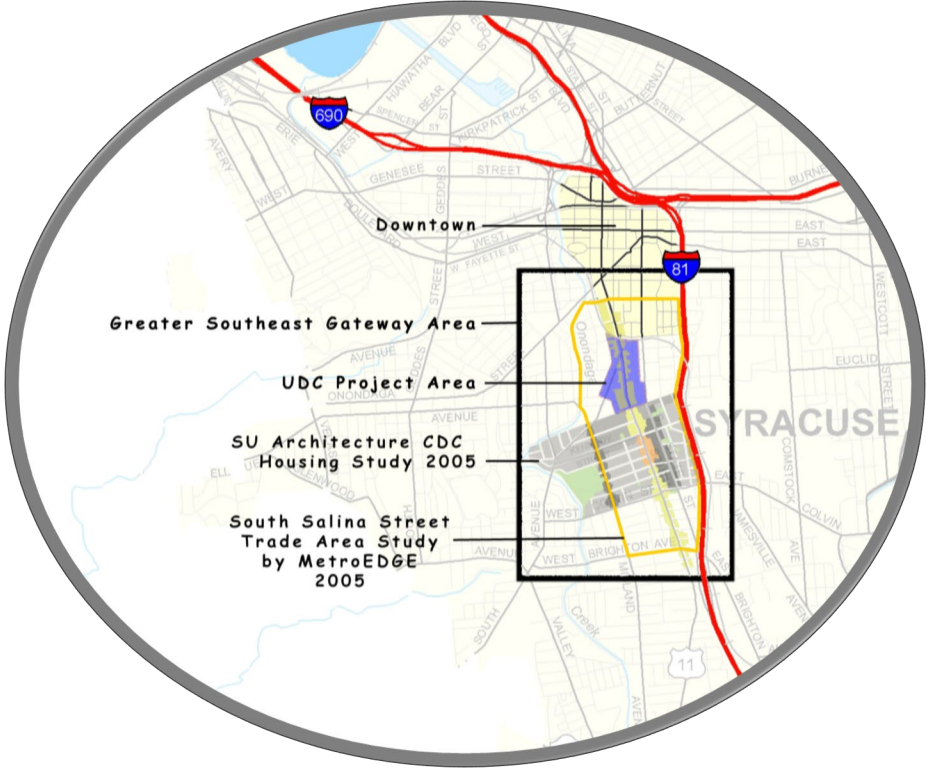
**Figure 8 - SE Gateway Neighborhood Commercial Center**



**Figure 9 – Section Three features a precedent photo of Lexington Food Market in Baltimore**



**Figure 10 - 7 STYLES CONVENIENCE STORE Leroy Mikell, Staff Photo**



**Figure 11 - The Southeast Gateway area just south of Downtown Syracuse and west of I-81**



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### **Education**

Syracuse University (Syracuse, New York)

Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs

Masters of Arts in Geography – Graduated May 2023

Primary Advisor: Jamie Winders Committee Members: Jonnell Robinson, Anne Mosher

Research Interests: Urban Studies, Black Geographies, Spatial Justice, Social Justice

Research, and Qualitative Methods

Syracuse University (Syracuse, New York)

School of Architecture

Bachelor of Architecture – May 2007

### **Teaching Experience**

Teaching Assistant- Sustainable Development in the Global South [GEO 200] FALL 2009

Graduate Assistant- Human Geography [GEO 101] SPRING 2010

Graduate Assistant- Introduction to Urban Geography [GEO 200] FALL 2010

Graduate Assistant- Community Geography + Participatory GIS [GEO 400] SPRING 2011

Future Professoriate Project Participant [FPP] FALL 2009 –  
SPRING 2011

RELATED COURSEWORK [MORE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST]

PRESENTATIONS AND PAPERS SPRING 2011

*“Spatial Justice in the City: Representing past geographies of the South Salina Neighborhood of Syracuse, NY”*

Session: Perspectives on Environmental Justice @ 2011 Annual Meeting AAG- Seattle, WA

*“Spatial Justice in the City: Isolation of the South Salina Neighborhood of Syracuse, NY”*

Session: Social Justice @ 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Eastern Community College Social Science Association [ECCSSA]- Erie Community College Buffalo, NY

Development Sustainability [GEO 558] FALL 2009

Research Design in Geography [GEO 602]

FALL 2009

Reviews a range of approaches to research, alternative philosophies, and research designs. Review of research procedures and techniques for information gathering. Initiated my collection of original data toward my pending thesis project. Formulated my research topics in spatial isolation/justice.

Geographic Information Systems [GEO 683]

FALL 2009

Course is centered on the understanding of basic concepts in spatial data handling. Reviewed algorithms and data structures for Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Explored the demonstration of power, potential, and limitations of GIS.

Seminar on Qualitative Methods [GEO 600]

SPRING 2010

Seminar in Political Ecology [GEO 755]

SPRING 2010

Political Geographies of Violence [GEO 600]

FALL 2010

Development of Geographic Thought [GEO 603]

FALL 2011

Seminar facilitated a historical survey of the development of Geography. Emphasis on 20th century: regionalism, positivism, humanism, Marxism, feminism, post-structuralism/post-colonialism.