TRANSFORMATIVE PLACEMAKING:
CREATING VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE, CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Jennifer S. Vey
April 11, 2023
Our Mission:

The Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking inspires public, private, and civic sector leaders to make transformative place investments that generate widespread social and economic benefits.
New technologies, demographic trends, and economic shifts are altering needs and demands for place.

These trends have yielded positive impacts but are failing to benefit many people and places.

Communities need to invest in transformative, place-based solutions.
New technologies, demographic trends, and economic shifts are altering needs and demands for place.
The relationship between place and economy is constantly evolving
The relationship between place and economy is constantly evolving
Multiple forces have shaped the American landscape

Concentration

Dispersion

Segregation

Source: Brookings, "Metro areas are still very segregated," Jenny Schuetz, 2017
The digital revolution is impacting growth and development

Photo credit: Unsplash.com and Data Protection Excellence Network
The digital revolution is impacting growth and development
The digital revolution is impacting growth and development

**Collaborative**

Expected vs. actual change in job density around jobs in information sector, 2004 - 2018

**Online**

![Sears store closing](image)

**Flexible**

Source: Brookings analysis of Census LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics
The digital revolution is impacting growth and development

Collaborative

Expected vs. actual change in job density around jobs in information sector, 2004 - 2018

- Expected: 24%
- Actual: 88%

Source: Brookings analysis of Census LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

Online

E-commerce retail sales as a percent of total sales, 2018 - 2022

Source: Brookings analysis of U.S. BLS Data via FRED

Flexible
The digital revolution is impacting growth and development

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Collaborative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected vs. actual change in job density around jobs in information sector, 2004 - 2018</td>
<td>E-commerce retail sales as a percent of total sales, 2018 - 2022</td>
<td>Share of professionals who prefer WFH or a hybrid work model, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>94%</td>
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Source: Brookings analysis of Census LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

Source: Brookings analysis of U.S. BLS Data via FRED

Source: Gallup, "Returning to the Office: The Current, Preferred and Future State of Remote Work"
Our demographic revolution is driving new demands for where people live, work, and play.

Household arrangements of Americans aged 23-38
1968 to 2019

Source: Brookings analysis of ACS and Census data via IPUMS
These trends are yielding positive impacts... but are failing to benefit many people and places
JV15 Change the messaging about threats to future
Jennifer Vey, 1/31/2022
Regions comprise multiple activity centers generally surrounded by low density sprawl.

**Primary Centers** concentrate a mixture of different asset types:
- Downtowns
- Major universities
- Some other asset clusters

**Secondary Centers** are smaller, but have a similar mixture of assets:
- Neighborhood centers

**Monocenters** concentrate a single asset type:
- Some malls, factories, and office parks.
- Airports
Demand for density is increasing

The information sector, particularly, is demanding **density and proximity**

Source: Brookings analysis of Census LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics
Job density = Better economic performance

Productivity Rises with Activity Center Job Density
US metro areas of > 500,000 residents*

* Excluding New York, Washington, Boston, San Francisco, San Jose (CA), Honolulu, and Bridgeport (CT)

Source: Brookings analysis of ESMI and Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data
Walkability = Rent premiums
(and social, health, & environmental benefits)

- Office: 44%
- Retail: 41%
- Multi-family rental: 41%

Source: Place Platform and Smart Growth America, “Foot Traffic Ahead,” 2023
The knowledge economy is rewarding large places… with some exceptions

Since 2005, just 5 “superstar” metro areas accounted for 90% of all US job growth in innovation sector

Source: Brookings, “The case for growth centers: How to spread tech innovation across America,” 2019
Places of concentrated advantage and disadvantage exist within regions.

Change in Business Establishments 2016-2020

Source: Economic Innovation Group, “Distressed Communities Index.”
Places of concentrated advantage and disadvantage exist within regions

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<th>Low Income Community (LIC) tracts</th>
<th>Tracts with no high-need designation</th>
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<tr>
<td>% in service occupation</td>
<td>19.1% (+1.2%)</td>
<td>10.9% (-7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with no Internet access</td>
<td>22.9% (+7.1%)</td>
<td>10.7% (-7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% owner occupied</td>
<td>49.4% (-14.4%)</td>
<td>74.6% (+10.8%)</td>
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Across various measures of need, **disadvantage concentrates** in low-income tracts

Source: Brookings analysis of U.S. Census Bureau’s 2014-2018 ACS 5-year estimates
Difference from U.S. average shown in parentheses.
Advantage disproportionately concentrates in white communities, while disadvantage concentrates in communities of color.

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<tr>
<td>% White</td>
<td>44.7% (-16.4%)</td>
<td>72.2% (+11.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Black</td>
<td>20.3% (+8%)</td>
<td>6.8% (-5.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>26.9% (+9.1%)</td>
<td>11.6% (-6.2%)</td>
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Source: Brookings analysis of U.S. Census Bureau’s 2014-2018 ACS 5-year estimates
Difference from U.S. average shown in parentheses.
Cumberland
Economically disadvantaged small town with a rich history and undervalued place-based assets

Sandtown
Disinvested neighborhood with undervalued commercial corridors and strong cultural ties

East Baltimore
Strong anchor district disconnected from surrounded disinvested neighborhoods

Columbia Gateway
Sterile suburban office park with the potential for redevelopment and placemaking

Harbor East
Dense, asset rich, high investment area that is unaffordable to most

The upshot: Too many places are failing to meet the needs of people.
Our current systems are too siloed to address key challenges

**Economic development**
often lacks a focus on place, placemaking, and (far too often) racial equity.

**Community development**
often lacks a focus on economic development.

**Land use planning**
often lacks a focus on racial equity, economic, and community development.

**Traditional placemaking**
is limited in scope and scale.
Communities need to invest in transformative, place-based solutions
Communities need to invest in transformative, place-based solutions with an integrated approach

Transformative placemaking leads to **four critical outcomes** that together foster communities of opportunity and wellbeing.
For example:

**Wytheville, VA**

Supporting local entrepreneurship by:
- Providing access to capital
- Offering free business classes
- Providing mentorship and networking opportunities

**Memphis River Parks**

Increasing connectivity between neighborhoods by:
- Defining pedestrian and cycling corridors
- Using a long-overlooked park as an anchor for new neighborhood investment

Photo credit: Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices (left), Selavie Photography (right)
For example:

Omaha Mobile Stage

Creating inclusive public spaces by:
- Converting a box truck into a mobile performance space
- Building social capital among designers, performers, and public space advocates
- Increasing social connection among diverse groups

Encouraging locally-managed civic infrastructure by:
- Offering Community Leadership Empowerment Workshops
- Providing resources to develop inclusive plans
- Adapting its development plan to reflect residents’ needs

Photo credit: Building Bridge Across the River (right); Omaha Mobile Stage (left)
Transformative placemaking requires **new** …

- Knowledge
- Policies & investment strategies
- Practices & tools
Transformative placemaking requires new ...

**Knowledge**

- Where are economic, physical, social, and civic assets clustered?
- What varied and unique roles do these “activity centers” play in the regional economy?
- How should this inform where and how to prioritize economic development, infrastructure, and placemaking investments in the region?
Transformative placemaking requires new …

- How do we revamp outmoded land use and transportation policies to support dynamic, connected activity centers instead of auto-dependent sprawl?

- How can economic development investments better support the growth of new and existing local businesses?

- How can place-centered investments be more intentional and less reactive to the latest new program or windfall opportunity?
Transformative placemaking requires new ...

- How do you adapt and design transformative placemaking practices that help grow connected, vibrant, and inclusive places?

- How do you build the capacity of hyper-local place governance organizations to drive these outcomes?
“Hyperlocal is a thoughtful examination of placemaking that asks the critical questions of accountability and who benefits from these investments.

Grounded in equity and the communities we serve, this book is essential reading for anyone engaged in designing and managing public spaces.”

Scott Kratz
Building Bridges Across the River
Senior Vice President and
11th Street Bridge Park Director