Urban Renewal in New Haven and Boston

Transgression or Triumph?

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The evolution of our culture has been nothing short of an exceptional learning process. Developing in tandem with this culture has been humanity's craving to tame the unknown, its intrinsic desire to control nature. Throughout history, various forms of engineering and sciences have filled this role; this has spurred debate among scholars around the world. Will this desire lead to catastrophic, or euphoric consequences? Henry David Thoreau has referred to these advances as "improved means to unimproved ends."[1] In contrast, Oak Ridge National Laboratories director Alvin Weinberg has actually suggested that Thoreau's "improved means" may someday *replace* social engineering.[2] Though both sides posit valid theories, an objective analysis must deal with specific situations to make accurate judgments.

A particularly striking attempt to control natural development characterized the 20th century United States; I allude to the federally adopted urban renewal program. The United States Congress has defined urban renewal as "the general term applied to public and private efforts to improve cities by sound planning, elimination of blight, restoration of adequate public facilities, such as schools and streets, improvements of public institutions, revitalization of central business districts, and provision of proper sites for industrial plants within cities.[3] Unfortunately, this somewhat romantic definition is not complete. Experts hoped that urban renewal would encourage "gentrification," which is generally considered to be residential and commercial investment in urban

[1] Marx, Karl. "Does Improved Technology Mean Progress?" Technology & The Future. Albert H. Teich. Wadsworth, 2006. pages 282-292.
[2] Weinberg, Alvin M. "Can Technology Replace Social Engineering." Technology & The Future. Albert H. Teich. Wadsworth, 2006. pages 282-292.
[3] National Commission on Urban Problems, *Building the American City: Report of the National Commission on Urban Problems to the Congress and to the President of the United States.* Washington: 1968. page 37.

neighborhoods, accompanied by inflows of higher economic status households, which may displace the former residents of lower socioeconomic status.[4]

Questions and controversy surround early urban renewal. Many considered it social engineering with heartless outcomes, such as displacing long time residents, demolishing historical neighborhoods, and tearing apart strong feelings of "community" felt between people in affected areas. Others feel urban renewal has been the creator and savior of "New Boston," demonstrated by the removal of blight and slums, and profound reinvestment into the city. Though Boston was a leading participant in the urban renewal program, it was not the only one. New Haven, Connecticut implemented the program with zeal. The combination of an ambitious Mayor Richard Lee, the rising star of urban planning Ed Logue, and a well respected development director resulted in the city obtaining $1,018 in urban renewal funds per citizen, the highest in the nation, in comparison with Boston's third best $409.[5]

Funding was provided under the Federal Housing Act of 1949, however the origins of federal urban renewal date back to before World War II, when "slum clearance" took hold of the nation. Though the war temporarily became the nation's primary focus, the Federal Housing Act of 1949 returned housing issues to the spotlight. This was an attempt to remedy national housing shortages due to returning war veterans and post-industrial suburbanization. The 1949 act created the Urban Redevelopment Agency, and gave it the authority to subsidize up to three fourths of local slum clearance and redevelopment. The Federal Housing Act of 1954 fundamentally reinforced the 1949

[4] Vigdor, Jacob L. *Does Gentrification Harm the Poor?* Brooking-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs. Duke University: 2002.
[5] G. William Domhoff. *Who Really Ruled in Dahl's New Haven?* Who Rules America: Power, Politics, and Social Change. McGraw Hill: 2005.

act, however it placed emphasis upon code enforcement and relocation of displaced residents in order to prevent the recurrence of urban blight.

At first glance, the cities of Boston and New Haven do not appear to have much in common. With dissimilar population sizes, different ethnic compositions, and entirely distinct economies, a casual observer may conclude that the cities are not worthy of a detailed comparison. However, careful observation of Boston and New Haven in the mid 20th century leads to the emergence of several clear relationships. Both cities had experienced rapid early 20th century industrialization, which lead to the increased usage of the automobile, and the eventual middle-class exodus to the suburbs. This economic depletion was augmented by an influx of lower class immigrants, who took full advantage of the declining land value. Both were termed "cities in decline." In fact, author David Kruh has even referred to 20th century Boston as "a hopeless backwater, a tumbled down has-been among cities."[6] To rise against this escalating progression, both Mayor John Hynes of Boston and Mayor Richard Lee of New Haven adopted zealous urban renewal programs. Richard Lee hired Ed Logue, an aggressive urban planner to lead his urban renewal team in December of 1953. By 1960, Ed Logue was on his way to Boston. The following study intends to answer a myriad of related questions:

- What is the present day economic situation of commercial and business areas that received urban renewal?
- What is the present day social situation of neighborhoods and residential areas that received urban renewal?
- Do any patterns or similar outcomes emerge between the two cities? Can these similarities be attributed to specific strategies adopted by Edward Logue, or the Mayors of Boston and New Haven?

[6] Kruh, David. Always Something Doing: Boston's Infamous Scollay Square. Northeastern University Press: Boston, 1999.

- Did urban renewal accomplish the goals it set forth? Where did it succeed? Where did it fail? Do its successes outweigh its failures and inherent human sacrifice?

New Haven and Urban Renewal

As Plato has stated, a ship on the high seas must be steered by a firm hand.[7] Mayor Richard C. Lee led New Haven in concurrence with this theme. Unlike the previous administration of Mayor William Celentano, "the city government was converted from a highly decentralized to an executive-centered order."[8] This systematic hierarchy would eventually allow Mayor Lee to assemble the most relentless, efficient urban renewal program that mid 20th century America would witness.

In 1953, Edward Logue worked closely with Richard Lee's mayoral campaign. Soon after Lee's election, Logue would become acting director of the mayor's Redevelopment Agency, and later become his Development Administrator. Following through on a politically savvy campaign promise, Mayor Lee quickly began to form a commission of prominent citizens to help coordinate physical renovations within New Haven. The director of this Citizens Action Commission (CAC) would be Carl Freese, a powerful bank president. In the fall of 1955, Ralph Taylor, an academically respected Harvard graduate was named director of Lee's Redevelopment Agency.[9] Next was Thomas Appleby, the agency's number three man and Harold Grabino, the agency's internal attorney. Finally, Charles Shannon and Robert Hazen arrived to complete Mayor Richard Lee's urban renewal team of technocratic elites.[10]

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[7] Winner, Langdon. "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Technology & The Future. Albert H. Teich. Wadsworth, 2006. pages 282-292.
[8] Dahl, Robert A. Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961. p. 130.
[9] Dahl, p. 121.
[10] Douglas W. Rae. CITY: Urbanism and its End. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003., p. 318.

This team, nicknamed the "Tigers" in conjunction with the CAC would create a wonder of modern politics. Lee dealt with the community's local political interests, Logue ensured developer participation, and Taylor completed the circle by appeasing the federal government.[11] Striking political maneuvering came in the form of Lee's usage of the CAC to co-opt the support of local political figures. The commission served as a tool, used by Lee and his team to gain the support of the whole community. This was made effortless; the CAC was composed of the most powerful citizens in New Haven's local politics. Its subcommittees included over four hundred educated, activist, community members. In an interview of a CAC member, conducted by Robert Dahl, it was revealed that Lee and Logue's proposals "usually came up pretty well developed, but we oftentimes would slant the way we felt the business community would react to certain things and the way we felt the approach should be made. I think that our function was to – *we were a selling organization*."[12] The CACs main function was molding public opinion to agree with Lee and Logue. Mayor Lee gained support for his proposals *within* the CAC from conservative business interests and liberal social activists alike. A banker stood to gain increased parking and improved street access, while a social worker would receive promises of better living conditions for the underprivileged. This key element in Lee's strategy provided beneficial programs for strikingly distinct ideologies, all encompassed within *one project* proposed by the development team. These powerful CAC members would then influence public interests to create a receptive environment for Lee and Logue's proposals.

[11] Dahl, p. 129.
[12] Ibid, p. 131.

Lee's urban renewal had its genesis in a painstakingly planned highway connector. The connector obliterated the infamous Oak Street neighborhood, which was widely considered the city's worst slum.[13]

Oak Street Razing and Redevelopment

In addition to the highway connector a retail plaza, an office building, and apartment complexes quickly rose from the debris. The apartment complex was constructed by a Boston company, which *outbid Yale for the project* despite the University's close proximity to the site.[14] This lends credence to Robert Dahl's rebuttal of a common misconception. According to Dahl no single interest – including Yale Universtiy, controlled New Haven's redevelopment.[15]

After renewal, the Oak Street area's new development was considered boring and desolate by Lee and his team. The dreary outcome led Lee and Logue to realize that complete neighborhood clearance was not always the best route to take. In spite of this slight deficiency, The Oak Street connector opened the floodgates for nearby downtown renewal. In 1957, the federal Urban Renewal Administration granted formal approval for

[13] Talbot, Allen R. The Mayor's Game. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970. p. 116.
[14] Ibid, p. 116.
[15] Dahl, p. 138.

Lee and Logue's Church Street Project. The project was as shocking as it was ambitious; it was the largest scale renewal project attempted up to that point in the national urban renewal program.[16] Mayor Lee faced significant challenges in bringing this development to fruition involving complex litigation, broken investor promises, loans from Yale University, and an erratic developer. Despite these obstacles, the project was almost fully complete by 1965. In the early years after renewal, the downtown Malley's department store reported increased sales, while the adjacent Macy's reported less business than anticipated.[17] Many businesses and structures, including the McShain-Gilbane hotel, a retail complex, an office tower, and an underground garage were then built in the area. Today however, many of these organizations have vacated.

Today's academics widely consider New Haven's *downtown* urban renewal as having been ineffective. New Haven's *neighborhood* renewal however, has in some instances been comparably successful. In the early 1950's, New Haven's Wooster Square neighborhood was in rapid decline. America's suburbanization phenomenon, coupled with neglected city services, traffic, and physical appearance, all lent toward a deteriorating Wooster Square. To correct this imbalance, Mayor Lee and Ed Logue set to work. With the plight of resident displacement and full neighborhood clearance fresh in his mind from the Oak Street project, Lee began forming a community alliance, rather than pursuing callous land demolition. The Wooster Square neighborhood renewal project became a model in neighborhood renewal. It was the "first of seven city neighborhoods to be improved through an arsenal of urban renewal techniques: rehabilitation, spot clearance, new schools and other community facilities, new off street

[16] Talbot, p. 119.
[17] Ibid, pp. 130-133

parking areas," shopping strip renewal, and added commercial-industrial areas.[18] Before long, neighborhood residents caught the "renewal buzz," and began privately rehabilitating their homes and directly participating in the process. Those who could not be convinced to rehabilitate were bought out by the city. Though not faultless and still causing chaos and confusion, this process was a far more humane approach to urban renewal than eviction and clearance. The sites that *were* demolished paved the way for Lee and his team to choose which housing types were placed in specified locations. According to Allan Talbot, who was a municipal employee in the urban renewal years, these sites were distinctively selected to achieve increased racial integration. Up to the point at which he wrote his chronicle of the renewal process in 1970, he feels this has been an astounding success.[19]

Though it was the first, Wooster Square was not alone in New Haven's efforts at neighborhood renewal. The Hill and Dixwell neighborhoods received major attention as well. This included the removal of blighted buildings, public housing construction, strip mall development, and creation of cooperative housing. The renewal in some areas was not limited to physical aspects; it sometimes included social programs. A social development organization, The Ford Foundation directly involved itself in Dixwell urban renewal. The Reverend Dr. Edwin Edmonds was appointed to the Ford Foundation's Community Progress Inc (CPI) "board of nine." Its intention, in his words, was to provide "social interaction – we were gonna make that equivalent to physical development. When you tear down a building, you've got to put something in its place,

[18] Talbot, p. 137.
[19] Ibid, p. 143.

and you want some involvement in citizens…"[20] The Ford Foundation granted one million dollars, which was immense by 1960 standards, to form an apprenticeship program for minorities who were many times neglected from the benefits of urban renewal. According to Edmonds, the program had many successes, but produced mediocre overall results due to a lack of willing journeymen.[21]

Today, New Haven is far from being a "model city." Though efforts to attract business and economic development still continue, urban renewal clearly did not accomplish its intended effects. Between 1870 and 1920, the city of New Haven's ratio of the region's population reached its high of about 80%. This has been gradually declining, reaching 31.8% by 2000, with no clear reversal of fortunes that can be attributed to urban renewal.[22] As well, in the renewal period much of the projects caused temporary pathological conditions such as minority displacement, chaos, confusion, and decreased quality of life. This is not to say that it entirely failed, however. After his transfer to Boston, Ed Logue stated, "You know, one of the things I thoroughly enjoy is going back to New Haven." There you learn success is possible. New Haven is a village compared to New York, even to Boston, but the problems are really the same, just on a smaller scale. I go to New Haven to get recharched. And I don't go back to see that Church Street Project now that it's finished. No, the place I head for is the neighborhoods we rebuilt. That's where I get my kicks…"[23]

[20] Yale University. *Life in the Model City: New Haven Oral History Project (NHOHP).* 2004. p. 14. www.modelcity.org
[21] NHOHP, p. 14.
[22] Rae, pp. 406-407.
[23] Talbot, p. 136.

Boston and Urban Renewal

The city of Boston has continually adapted to change. As the United States underwent its Industrial Revolution, Boston complied with its own. As the nation moves into an era characterized by higher education, technological innovation, and medicinal advancement, Boston has emerged as a leader in all of the above. Barry Bluestone has categorized Boston's 20th century changes by citing three separate transformations, "demographic, industrial, and spatial revolutions of enormous proportion."[24] This "spatial revolution" designated by Bluestone is essentially a euphemism for mid 20th century urban renewal.

Any legitimate analysis of Boston's urban renewal program requires definition of the city's power structure. In contrast with New Haven's version of urban renewal, which was performed primarily under Mayor Richard Lee, Boston's program was executed under three mayors, each with a distinct leadership style and view of how urban renewal should be implemented. As well, the mayor *preceding* Boston's period of renewal provided foundation for the bitter conflicts that would ensue. I refer to the leadership of Mayor James Michael Curley.

Although still beloved by many, Mayor Curley's tenure in office was characterized by conflict and rivalry. Curley was the first powerful representative of Boston's underprivileged Irish Catholic population. His associations and loyalties to these constituents led to Curley's policies of neighborhood favoritism. These policies all but ignored the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) and Yankee business community,

[24] Bluestone, Barry. The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space, and Economic Change in an American Metropolis. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000. p. 1.

whose investments comprised most of downtown Boston.[25] Under Curley, neighborhood interests were bolstered at the expense of Boston's central business district, leading to severe decline and disinvestments in Boston. In addition to local quarrels, WASP leaders ran the Massachusetts state government, creating conflict between state and municipal interests.[26] Compounding this issue were Curley's neighborhood patronage policies and explicit corruption. If antagonizing local and state interests was not enough, federal officials as well saw Boston's government as corrupt and untrustworthy. This led President Truman and the United States Congress to severely limit Boston's federal funding. These dynamics affected the terms of the subsequent three mayors immensely. According to Thomas O'Connor all of these factors, "ethnic tensions, social rivalries, urban parochialism, regional insecurity, and fiscal irresponsibility – were part of the long Curley legacy that created a form of municipal paralysis so insidious that even after ten years in office Hynes was unable to overcome its crippling effects."[27]

After a snide remark made by Curley, deriding the leadership abilities of John Hynes, the latter mounted a full-scale assault on Mayor Curley's political machine. John B. Hynes was elected Mayor of Boston in 1949, with the full support of all those who Curley's regime had neglected. The most influential of these supporters were the WASP and Yankee business leaders. This led to a full priority shift, creating a climate where the balance of power defined the programs. Boston entered an era where downtown business development and overall city image was promoted at the expense of urban neighborhoods. In the words of Mayor Hynes, "the only way the decay and blight may

[25] E. Michael Jones. The Slaughter of Cities: Urban Renewal As Ethnic Cleansing. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2004. p. 538.
[26] Ibid. p. 538.
[27] O'Connor, Thomas H. Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal 1950 to 1970. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993. p. 278-288.

be uprooted" was "by a complete physical change in the affected neighborhood area."[28] This was overtly demonstrated in the two most significant urban renewal actions undertaken by Mayor Hynes – the leveling of the South End's New York Streets neighborhood, and the razing of Boston's historic West End. Both neighborhoods were inhabited by diverse, ethnic populations who, despite their large numbers and strong cultures, lacked a voice in the city government due to Boston's new business-focused political climate. Below are pictures of the West End, before and after its demolition.

Though an accomplishment for John Hynes and his newly formed Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the West End would prove to be a pyrrhic victory. The clearance of this neighborhood "brutally displaced people, disrupted neighborhoods and destroyed pleasing buildings" so as to quickly gain "national notoriety" because it "bulldozed the homes of poor people and replaced them with an enclave for the wealthy.[29] The wealthy enclave to which Lawrence Kennedy refers is the Charles River Park, financed by Jerome Rappaport, which was constructed rather than the affordable housing promised by the Hynes administration. The city's gross negligence in failing to construct housing for former West End residents directly contradicted the requirements

[28] Mollenkopf, John H. The Contested City. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983. p. 144.
[29] Kennedy, Lawrence W. Planning the City upon a Hill: Boston since 1630 Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992. p. 164.

set forth in the federal government's Housing Act of 1954, and ensured strong opposition to subsequent urban renewal projects.

John Hynes announced his retirement in 1959 (DID HE?), which led to the election of Mayor John Collins. To quell the growing opposition to the vision of "New Boston," Collins acquired Ed Logue, the aggressive urban planner from New Haven, to lead the BRA. Logue was faced with recalcitrant citizens who viewed urban renewal with hostility. His solution was to enlist the assistance of the Ford Foundation, which provided Logue with Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)."[30] The Ford-funded program intended to help Logue handle "the human side of physical renewal."[31] Rather than fulfilling its romantic ideals, it quickly became a social engineering tool used to achieve Ford Foundation goals. "The purpose of Ford money in Boston was, as in Philadelphia, to allow agents congenial to Ford's philosophy of social change in the interests of the nation's ruling class to take control of racial migration in the nation's big cities."[32] For example, in 1961 The ABCD program, at Logue's urging conducted a study in the South End that scientifically rationalized the BRA's desire to demolish and redevelop the area. In short, ABCD took the role of the "psychological warfare arm of the BRA,"[33] a process referred to by John Mollenkopf as "highly regressive social engineering."[34]

Despite these underlying themes of iniquity, the "New Boston" envisioned by John Hynes finally began to take shape under Mayor John Collins. Ed Logue

[30] Jones, p. 526.
[31] Kennedy, p 162.
[32] Jones, p. 526.
[33] Ibid, p. 527.
[34] Mollenkopf, p. 175.

commented, "the stars were right for a great leap forward."[35] As his first priority, Collins undertook the task of finishing the projects begun under Hynes. These included the Prudential Center, the Central Artery, the Boston Commons underground garage, and the ongoing Government Center project. However, rather than the piecemeal approach to development taken by the Hynes administration, Mayor Collins formed an ambitious, expansive plan. Prepared by Logue, the plan called for redevelopment of one quarter of the city of Boston. In addition, it called for creation of the "development administrator" position within the BRA, to be filled by Logue, giving him full control of the Redevelopment Authority. The approach outlined in Logue's plan and implemented by Collins focused on "rehabilitation," rather than resorting to "the bulldozer."[36] Collins made it a point to involve influential community leaders in the planning process, in an effort to simplify the process and provide a voice for the neighborhoods. He also involved businessmen, financiers, academics, and professionals in the decision-making paradigm. These participants would become the most powerful and efficient urban renewal group in Boston's history.

Under the leadership of Collins and Logue, the BRA received nearly $30 million from the federal Urban Renewal Administration. Yesterday's Scollay Square became today's Government Center. What had only existed in theory then existed in steel and concrete.[37] This encouraged federal, state, and local government interests to invest in Boston, and reinforced feelings of a new city looming over the horizon. The Prudential Center and the War Memorial Auditorium gradually replaced the abandoned railroad yards on Boylston Street. This led to the Sheraton Corporation's construction of the

[35] Logue, Edward. "Boston, 1960-1967," p. 83.
[36] O'Connor. pp. 190-191.
[37] Ibid. p. 198.

adjoining Sheraton Boston hotel, which encouraged the First Church of Christ Scientist to request funding and begin renovations. The Christian Science Center has become one of the most aesthetically pleasing areas in Boston. Though corporations had to be persuaded and enticed at first, investors gradually became confident in a prospering Boston. The State Street Bank, Forbes, Employers Group Life Insurance, the New England Telephone Company and many more invested and created, shaping Boston's financial district.[38] In addition to these striking successes, many neighborhoods managed to fight and *prevent* enactment of BRA plans for their areas. These included the airport expansion in East Boston, and demolition of schools in South Boston.[39] These successful neighborhood impasses, coupled with avid community involvement represented democracy in action. Collins and Logue *needed* the support of communities to follow their program to fruition, which worked in tandem with neighborhoods' *need* for a voice.

Unfortunately, the system was not infallible. The BRA's later targets were Allston-Brighton and Charlestown. Bitter struggles ensued within these communities. The BRA received permission to proceed with stated plans, but did so in the face of much controversy. Scenes reminiscent of the West End occurred in Allston-Brighton's Barry's Corner, with protesters and upset homeowners refusing to vacate. In both instances demolition proceeded, but the BRA was met with fierce community opposition to its development plans.[40] These were the final urban renewal projects executed under Mayor John Collins.

[38] O'Connor. p. 204.
[39] McCann, Paul L. "From Neighborhood Clearance to Neighborhood Involvement: Land Use Policy and Democracy in Boston." Cambridge: Harvard University, 2005. p. 7.
[40] O'Connor, pp. 218-222.

The end of the Collins administration also began to encounter the issue of increasing racial unrest. When Mayor Collins failed to provide promised renovations and improvements, the South End's Black population became increasingly hostile towards redevelopment programs, feeling they amounted to multiracial eviction and replacement with middle-class whites.[41] These residents had already lost the New York Streets area to light industry developments, and were predisposed to mistrust of the city government.

Mayor Kevin White was elected in 1967, inheriting a national scene of political turbulence and racial instability. In the fallout of the bitter Allston-Brighton and Charlestown conflicts, the BRA turned its focus to the South End. The South End neighborhood had already experienced African American flight due to the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (B-BURG), which became a perversion of the known practice of "redlining." This process destabilized Mattapan and infused it with poor African Americans, many of whom were enticed from the South End, while unscrupulous bankers and realtors made a hefty profit.[42] Mayor White acted upon programs designed to improve the remaining South End residents' services, increase lighting, and clean up general neighborhood neglect. This was not limited to the South End; White's neighborhood rejuvenation policies came to define the early part of his tenure.

Mayor White's next immediate focus became the urban renewal of Fanueil Hall and Quincy Market, the Waterfront, and the North End. In 1973, developer James W. Rouse completed Fanueil Hall Marketplace. Shortly after, renovation of the waterfront from the North End to the Aquarium and South Station was completed. Mayor White became known as the creator of the first "nationally recognized popular success in the

[41] McCann, p. 11.
[42] Bluestone, p. 89.

rebuilding of downtown."[43] Quincy Market produced record sales, and Boston quickly became one of the most popular cities in America.

Parallels Between Cities

Analysis of urban renewal in New Haven and Boston brings to light a number of stark differences, along with two acute similarities. The first similarity deals with each city's inaugural urban renewal projects. The early projects performed in both cities led to the complete clearance of colorful, cultural, ethnic neighborhoods. The Oak Street neighborhood was razed in New Haven, and the West End including Scollay Square was demolished in Boston. Displaced residents of both areas have long been left with feelings of hurt and injustice. As well, both of these areas evolved into rather sterile, bleak parts of their respective cities, and in many ways set the platform for how "not" to approach urban renewal. Though it is human nature to learn from one's errors, it is rather unfortunate that Ed Logue arrived in Boston *after* clearance of the West End had occurred. Judging from his comments regarding the "dreary" outcome of New Haven's Oak Street, the process likely would have been approached with more tact.

The second apparent parallel emerges from levels of community involvement. In the early stages of Mayor Lee's term in New Haven, and Mayor Hynes's term in Boston, projects were carried out against the will of many – quickly, and devoid of democratic processes. These policies, of course led to the "dreary" results mentioned above. In contrast, with Mayor Lee's formation of the CAC, and the method of community involvement consummated by Boston's Mayor Collins, subsequent projects were completed under democratic principles and the general consent of the affected people.

[43] Frieden and Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc.*, p. 7.

This evolution of the "human side" of urban renewal enabled both administrations to accomplish otherwise impervious tasks. It is far easier to find a long time South End resident who is happy with his or her historic, beautiful surrounding neighborhood than it is to find a former West Ender who is happy with his or her neighborhood's eviction and demolition.

Statistical Comparison of Present Day Commercial Interests

How does one measure "success?" This is a difficult question to answer, made even more complex by the inability to empirically show what "would have happened," had urban renewal not occurred. In order to make this judgment in an academically acceptable fashion, what follows is a comparison of statistical data, first involving commercial and downtown interests, and then relating to neighborhood demographics between New Haven and Boston.

Through the late 20th century, the city of Boston has evolved into a bustling east coast megalopolis. The city, only fifty years ago called a "hopeless backwater," has become one of the most distinguished cities in the United States. In fact, commercial land in Boston has become so highly sought after that the BRA has developed a "linkage" program, requiring large investors and builders to partially finance community facilities as a prerequisite for construction. New Haven has not experienced this brilliant growth. Table 1 below displays a number of economic statistics relating to New Haven and Boston.

Economic Indicators	Boston	New Haven
2004 Dollars Spent on Retail	$ 6,500,000,000.00	$ 847,000,000.00
Total Population	589,141.00	123,626.00
Dollars Spent Per Person	**$ 11,033.01**	**$ 6,851.31**
Total Number of Hotel Rooms	16,191.00	800.00
Total Land in Square Miles	48.60	15.38
Hotel Rooms Per Sq. Mile	**333.15**	**52.02**
Office Vacancy	**12%**	**16.10%**
	(5th Best Downtown	
	office Market out of	
	the 20 largest cities.)	
Commercial Land Use Sq. Ft.	**115,649,040.00**	**64,600,000.00**
Total Land in Square Feet	1,354,890,240.00	428,782,860.00
Percent of Total Land	**9%**	**15%**
Sources:		
The Boston Economy: Turning the Corner, 2004		
Business New Haven: A Report on Business Sales,		
Employment, and Market Opportunities, 2004		
United States Census 2000		

Using analysis documents from each city's economic development department, the data above reveals some notable differences. New Haven's land use shows commercial usage as 15% of its total, as compared to Boston's 9%. Unfortunately, an increased ratio of commercial land does not lead to economic success. New Haven's office vacancy rate is 16.1%, whereas Boston rests at national fifth best of 12%. The city of Boston provides six times as many hotel rooms per square mile than New Haven, and retains almost twice as many dollars spent per person in retail stores. These statistics all point towards a definitive end result: urban renewal has not nourished New Haven's economic development, but appears to have stimulated Boston's. This is not surprising, as even Ed Logue himself stated that he does not return to New Haven for the Church Street commercial development, he returns to view the neighborhoods – a place where

"success is possible." Did urban renewal actually succeed in neighborhood revitalization?

Statistical Comparison of Neighborhoods: 2000 Census

As urban renewal is a process generally performed on a neighborhood basis, a statistical comparison of present day census data between New Haven and Boston neighborhoods should portray relative success or failure levels between the cities. The data can be found in Table 1 on the following page. A cursory examination illustrates a number of startling disparities, beginning with the city level. (1) As a whole, the cities of Boston and New Haven are demographically very different. Boston's proportion of Caucasian residents exceeds that of New Haven, while New Haven's share of minority residents far exceeds Boston's. (2) Boston appears to be performing economically better than New Haven. Boston's poverty rate is 8% lower, its unemployment rate is 9% lower, and it contains 6% less vacant housing. (3) Most importantly, the city of Boston's median income far exceeds the city of New Haven's. As you can see, even after adjusting the data to accommodate New Haven's lower cost of living using the Consumer Price Index (CPI), Boston's median household income still stands at $12,903 higher than New Haven's. The significance of this difference should not be lost.

The two cities come no closer to convergence when examining neighborhood level data. Conditions in each city's **central business district** (CBD) differ greatly. Boston's CBD contains the renewed West End, new Government Center, renewed North End, Fanueil Hall, and the Waterfront District. New Haven's CBD contains the renewed Downtown, Oak Street, Church Street and State Street areas. Boston's CBD maintains a

	New Haven (City)	Downtown, Church, State St. Areas.	Dixwell	Dwight	Hill	Wooster Square
Population	123,626.00	1,919.00	5,011.00	5,446.00	14,090.00	2,911.00
Race						
White Non-Hispanic	44%	53%	16%	37%	24%	57%
Black Non-Hispanic	37%	27%	74%	39%	41%	28%
Hispanic	21%	14%	12%	21%	45%	19%
Poverty Rate	28%	34%	25%	40%	28%	20%
Unemployment Rate	11%	10%	5%	6%	9%	8%
Housing Units						
Housing Stock	52,941.00	1,140.00	1,906.00	3,675.00	5,409.00	1,678.00
% Occupied	89%	94%	81%	91%	82%	88%
% Vacant	11%	6%	19%	9%	18%	12%
Median Household Income	$ 23,194.00	$ 22,377.00	$ 23,994.00	$16,732.00	$ 26,978.50	$ 31,636.00
Occupation						
Service	23%	18%	30%	44%	26%	17%
Mgmt. or Professional	29%	23%	26%	21%	23%	42%

Note: Race data may not add to 100% due to overlapping ethnicities.

	Boston (City)	Central (West End)	Back Bay Beacon Hill	Charlestown	South End	Allston Brighton	Roxbury
Population	589,141.00	25,062.00	26,398.00	15,195.00	28,160.00	69,648.00	55,663.00
Race							
White Non-Hispanic	49%	71%	85%	78%	45%	69%	5%
Black Non-Hispanic	25%	4%	3%	6%	25%	4%	65%
Hispanic	14%	4%	4%	11%	16%	9%	25%
Poverty Rate	20%	17%	10%	18%	24%	23%	27%
Unemployment Rate	7%	9%	6%	4%	7%	5%	12%
Housing Units							
Housing Stock	251,935.00	14,615.00	17,633.00	7,755.00	15,261.00	30,988.00	21,909.00
% Occupied	95%	92%	93%	95%	94%	98%	91%
% Vacant	5%	8%	7%	5%	6%	2%	9%
Median Household Income	$ 39,629.00	$ 46,841.00	$ 66,427.00	$56,110.00	$ 41,590.00	$ 38,941.00	$27,113.00
(With cost of living Adjustment)	$ 36,097.00	$ 42,666.00	$ 60,506.00	$51,109.00	$ 37,883.00	$ 35,471.00	$24,696.00
Occupation							
Service	18%	12%	5%	9%	14%	14%	26%
Mgmt. or Professional	26%	58%	71%	56%	56%	52%	27%

17% poverty rate, exactly half of New Haven's 34%. As well, Boston's adjusted median income of $42,666 in this area is almost double that of New Haven's $22,377. The two areas maintain similar unemployment rates, with New Haven's 10% just slightly higher than Boston's 9%. Finally, Boston contains more vacant housing in this area, 8% as opposed to New Haven's 6%. Overall, it appears that residents of Boston's CBD are significantly more successful than residents of New Haven's.

Boston's **South End** and New Haven's **Wooster Square** share a similar demographic composition. Despite exceedingly dissimilar population sizes, the two neighborhoods retain surprisingly similar ratios of Caucasian to African American and Hispanic residents. As well, both areas are considered "historic" neighborhoods in their respective cities and underwent much 20th century urban renewal. The poverty rate in Boston's South End is 4% higher than New Haven's Wooster Square, and the two share very similar unemployment rates. However, Wooster Square holds twice as much vacant housing as the South End, and its residents possess a $6,247 lower median household income. As both neighborhoods were in rapid decline before the urban renewal era, it does not appear a misstatement to conclude that urban renewal worked in these two areas. Wooster Square is especially impressive; many of New Haven's neighborhoods have stuttered and failed, both economically and with respect to racial integration. Wooster Square, in the face of this adversity has succeeded.

Analyzing the South End of Boston throughout the urban renewal period delineates significant trends. Viewing table 2 on the following page, the patterns are consistent with the process of gentrification. The population peaked in 1950 and rapidly declined until a reversal, which occurred shortly after the renewal period in the 1970's

Table 2: Long Run Demographic Trends in Census Tract 708, Boston

Percent unless otherwise indicated

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1990	2000
Population (N)	5,177.00	5,624.00	3,728.00	2,305.00	3,274.00	3,600.00
Vacancy Rate	7.9	0.9	13.6	22.9	13.2	1.8
Adults With College Degree	2.8	3.7	3.5	10.5	54	n.a.
Workers in Professional or Managerial Occupations	9.1	7.6	5.6	10.6	55.3	n.a.
Ratio of tract median income to city median income	n.a.	0.603	0.618	0.667	1.037	n.a.
White (Non-Hispanic) residents	43.1	24.7	7.9	13.4	58.6	58.2
Black Residents	56.5	74.8	89.8	83.7	34.9	26.6

and has been rising since. Racial integration followed this model as well. The neighborhood in 1950 housed equal ratios of white and black residents. By 1960, the neighborhood was predominantly black, but by 2000 returned to an integrated state with a slight white majority. Adults in the South End with college degrees are rapidly increasing, while the neighborhood vacancy rate is diminishing. This influx of educated, higher socioeconomic status households brings higher property values, more city revenue through property taxation, and increased public services. This correlates directly to Jacob Vigdor's notion that demographic data within gentrifying neighborhoods indicates increasing socioeconomic integration.[44]

Yet another interesting comparison to make is within the city of New Haven itself. New Haven's **Dwight** neighborhood lies directly North of the **Dixwell** neighborhood. Despite their close proximity, the two areas are socially and economically at odds. Residents' median income in Dixwell lies at $23,994 while in Dwight, residents work for a meager $16,732. Dwight's median household income is lower than all other residential neighborhoods analyzed in this study, along with having the highest incidence of poverty, at 40%. The poverty rate in Dixwell is near the average observed in this study, and its unemployment rate is *the lowest among all of New Haven and Boston's neighborhoods*. It is important to realize that Dwight and Dixwell, while geographically similar, illustrate remarkable statistical differences in the two crucial categories above. Directly relevant is each area's development history; Dixwell received much urban renewal attention and appears to be economically and socially *superior*, while much of Dwight's land clearance remained undeveloped, and appears socially and economically *inferior*. In fact, just beyond Dwight Street lies a parcel of undeveloped land, more than

[44] Vigdor, p. 135.

a half a mile long, that was formerly a bustling working class neighborhood.[45] Other differences lie in the application of social programs. Dixwell was the only neighborhood to take part in the Ford Foundation's Community Progress Incorporated (CPI) program. The superior performance of Dixwell is occurring in an overwhelmingly African American neighborhood – residents whose interests were targeted by CPI, while shortcomings in Dwight exist in an ethnically balanced group. Can the relative success of the Dixwell neighborhood be attributed to the combination of well executed urban renewal and the Ford Foundation's CPI? It would appear so.

A comparison can be made between New Haven's largest neighborhood, the **Hill** area, and Boston's **Allston-Brighton**. Urban renewal in the Hill neighborhood removed blighted buildings and replaced them with affordable housing. The razing of Barry's Corner in Allston-Brighton led to moderate-income housing and currently undeveloped space owned by Harvard University. Allston-Brighton houses 5% fewer residents living in poverty, and 4% less residents who are unemployed as compared to the Hill area. In addition, Allston-Brighton retains far less housing vacancy and a significantly higher median income. Once again, though Boston neighborhoods reign supreme it is important to note the relative success of the Hill neighborhood *within* New Haven. Its median income is higher, and its poverty and unemployment rates are lower than the city of New Haven as a whole. The only New Haven neighborhood whose residents possess a higher median income than Hill is Wooster Square.

Observation of neighborhoods in New Haven and Boston presents a clear pattern. Urban renewal has succeeded, but it comes with the obvious side effect of gentrification. This leads to the hotly contested question, "does gentrification harm the poor?" From

[45] Rae, p. 334.

one perspective, as neighborhoods affected by urban renewal began to experience gentrification, disadvantaged families relocated to non-gentrifying neighborhoods in order to achieve affordable housing costs; those that did not relocate were forced to decrease consumption. Existing analysis by the American Housing Survey (AHS) and various academics has failed to prove decisively that gentrification in fact causes this displacement and harm.[46] In fact, many analysts contend that gentrification can *increase* disadvantaged families' quality of life. After evaluating both standpoints, no conclusion is readily available and the reasonable causal assumption is that gentrification displaced *some, but not all* families of low socioeconomic status. The displacements that did occur likely contributed to poverty concentrations and increased usage of public housing. In Boston, the neighborhood receiving the majority of displaced residents would likely have been Roxbury. In New Haven, the Dwight neighborhood fits these criteria. Table 1 illustrates these non-gentrifying neighborhoods' current socioeconomically disadvantaged state of affairs.

Conclusions

Only after the complex analysis above can one draw conclusions about the success or failure of urban renewal in Boston and New Haven. A number of facts have emerged: (1) Edward Logue, with help from mayoral leadership became the backbone of renewal in both Boston and New Haven, helping to create centralized, efficient programs that accomplished monumental tasks. (2) Three factors were necessary for any urban renewal program to be effective: centralized top-down leadership, avoiding complete neighborhood clearance, and democratic involvement of citizens and community leaders.

[46] Vigdor, p. 135.

Though upheld under the Constitution's principle of Eminent Domain, the spiteful wrecking ball has only proven to lead to failure. (3) Urban renewal provided the Boston economy with the boost it needed to regain its composure and reinvent itself as an eminent city in the United States. (4) Urban renewal *did not* provide a similar supplement to New Haven's economy. (5) Boston neighborhoods that underwent urban renewal are performing very well, with the obvious exceptions of the West End and New York Streets, which were cleared completely. (6) Though not as successful as the Boston version, neighborhood urban renewal in New Haven appears to have mitigated neighborhood decline. It may have produced better results if social programs such as the Ford Foundation's CPI were effectively applied throughout the entire renewal period. (7) Urban renewal and gentrification in both cities may have contributed to area concentrations of poverty in non-renewed neighborhoods, and clustering of impoverished citizens living in public housing.

Why did urban renewal fail in New Haven?

A number of factors contributed to the failure of urban renewal in New Haven. Douglas Rae attributed the lack of success to a convergence of forces pressing against industrial-era urbanism, with strong impediments specific to New Haven. These forces included the abandonment of manufacturing, expansion of the AC electrical grid and resultant boundless accessibility, automobile related expansion, declining immigration, the suburban stigmatization of city neighborhoods, and the surge of African American migration from southern states and concurrent disappearance of manufacturing jobs.[47] Though these hindrances were important, they were common to most American cities of

[47] Rae, p. 313.

this era. Through analysis of existing literature, two crucial factors that unmistakably impacted New Haven's urban renewal have emerged. Renewal in New Haven led to replacement of the urban, historic infrastructure with modernistic buildings and direct, automobile-focused road patterns.[48] Yale architectural historian Vincent Scully, Jr. denounces these strategies as "fallacies" of urban redevelopment. Scully castigated New Haven's cataclysmic clearance of land in order to make way for the hegemonic technology of automobiles.[49] In Boston, despite modernistic architectural additions, much of the historical urbanism and winding roadways were preserved. This fact, coupled with Boston's successful urban renewal may provide impetus for further studies into the effects of modernism in present day city planning. The final, and most clearly apparent impediment to New Haven's urban renewal program rests with Yale University. Goals of urban renewal include reducing blight, increasing land value, and improving living conditions. As was the case in Boston, "Increasing land values, along with more intensive development, are positive developments for property-tax dependent local governments."[50] As Boston's land values increased, municipal tax revenue increased in kind. Increased tax revenue led to improved city services and better neighborhood care. Unlike Boston, **over 36% of New Haven's total land falls under tax exemption**; the majority of this land is owned by Yale University.[51] This large percentage of non-taxable property reduced the benefit New Haven's neighborhoods garnered from initial renewal

[48] Rae, pp. 331-332.
[49] Scully, Vincent. "The Threat and the Promise of Urban Redevelopment in New Haven," Zodiac 17, no. 1 (1967)
[50] Vigdor, p. 146.
[51] City of New Haven. Housing and Land Use. New Haven: 2004. p. 11.

and later gentrification. Fortunately, the city has since become conscious of the dilemma and pioneered a PILOT program, designed to correct the tax-exempt imbalance.[52]

Was urban renewal worthwhile?

One enigmatic question still remains, and begs to be answered. Did urban renewal work, and was it a worthwhile endeavor? This question is most difficult to answer; a quantitative outcome is impossible to achieve. One must place a value on human sacrifice and compare it to statistical results in order to reach a decision – which will always be subjective. As well, it is impossible to empirically state what *would have happened* had urban renewal not occurred. Therefore, what follows is an educated estimate. It is based on scholarly writings, statistical data, historical accounts, interviews, and my personal experience having grown up in the city of Boston.

The city of New Haven's decline was not moderated by urban renewal. Its present day economic and commercial infrastructure is in tatters, and its decay continues unabated. Callous demolition of the Oak Street, Church Street and downtown areas displaced residents and created citywide tension with no beneficial result. *Urban renewal was not worthwhile in New Haven's central business district.* In contrast, urban renewal of Boston's downtown and nearby areas reversed an ongoing economic downturn. It infused investors with hope and confidence, and directly contributed to Boston's reemergence as a vastly successful 21st century city. Despite inherent injustices and decidedly questionable motivations, *the city of Boston completed a feat that was worthy of the social price it paid* to *revitalize its commercial infrastructure.*

[52] Rae, p. 404.

In both cities, *neighborhood urban renewal has proven to be successful*. Moreover, neighborhoods revitalized with tact rather than the wrecking ball have continually outperformed others. Significant outside factors hindered the New Haven process, while Boston was not impeded in these respects and was more successful. Though a social price was paid within all renewed neighborhoods, their remarkable recovery justifies the temporary discomfort.

Unfortunately, neighborhood renewal has side effects. The first issue puts the New Haven and Boston municipalities at fault; often they did not follow through on promised construction. As a New Haven interviewee stated above, when you knock something down you've got to put something in its place. Many times – especially in Boston, promised affordable housing gradually materialized as moderate, then high-income housing. These unfulfilled promises and questionable tactics served only to reinforce displaced citizens' feelings of injustice and sorrow. The second side effect involves the highly contested issues that accompany gentrification, which is generally accepted to be a common result of urban renewal. Those not directly displaced by renovations and demolition *may* not be able to afford housing when land value increases. If these individuals choose to relocate to areas within their price range, poverty can become concentrated and social segregation issues may arise. More research on gentrification must be completed to properly quantify its effects.

The urban renewal era was a time of extraordinary politics, and marked an evolution in city government. Astonishing power structures emerged under democratic principles that may never be seen again. Municipalities committed major errors in the process; sometimes they were corrected, and sometimes they were not. Many residents

were left homeless, despondent, and slighted while others can view the glorious city of Boston for its eminence today, and only ponder what it may have become. As the city undergoes yet another transformation, I can say that despite the hardships and tribulations of urban renewal I, for one am grateful that the mayoral leadership of its past exhibited such genuine care and compassion for the once great, and now illustrious city of Boston.

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[44] Vigdor, p. 135.

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