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Defining Gentrification
Multicultural Metropolis
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Defining Gentrification
The term gentrification is the source of much discussion conflict and contention. In fact, the term has become so widely used that in November 2017, representatives from Merriam-Webster, the dictionary, tweeted that that online searches for the term increased by 2500%, as a result of media coverage of a Denver-based coffee shop posting a "happily gentrifying the community since 2014" sign outside of its store.[1] Prior to enrolling in the Multi-Cultural Metropolis course at the University of Maryland, I wondered if gentrification could be a good thing.

During a ONE DC gentrification and displacement walking tour, I believed that gentrification helped to create more stable, mixed-income communities, where there are added job opportunities, improved housing, better transportation options, more tax revenues for better schools and improved amenities for residents.

This question of the hurt or help of gentrification was also something that I wrestled with in my initial personal statement to the University of Maryland, when describing the experience of viewing an art exhibition in Havana, Cuba that paralleled with my experience of working in community planning:

> Gentrification is often spoken of with a certainty of vile at community meetings. Loaded with valid concerns of residential displacement, cultural loss, and high property taxes, contemporary analyses of the process often focuses on how the outcome is discriminatory. In theory, gentrification is a means through which land-use policies and economic stimulation mechanisms are commingled to improve the overall quality of life for residents and community stakeholders. However, in practice community revitalization often becomes exclusionary discrimination.

To understand gentrification, it is helpful to first consider how the term was initially used. Ruth Glass, an urban sociologist, first used the term "gentrification" to describe the conditions of in-migration and displacement happening in working-class communities in London.[2] In the report *London: Aspects of Change in 1964*, Glass observed gentrification as process by which:

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[1] Merriam-Webster, ""Happily Gentrifying" Denver Cafe Faces Rebuke - Trending 11/27/2017," Merriam-Webster, November 27, 2017, , accessed October 20, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/news-trend-watch/happily-gentrifying-denver-cafe-faces-rebuke-20171 127.

[2] Next City, "Gentrification: A Timeline," Next City, 2014, , accessed October 20, 2018, https://nextcity.org/gentrificationtimeline#intro.

One by one, many of the working class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower … Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed.[3]

In *Race, Class and Politics in the Cappuccino City*, a book that explores economic development and gentrification in Washington, DC, describes two types of gentrification -- typical and atypical. Typical gentrification being defined as young white artists moving into a community and setting the stage for wealthier white professionals and atypical gentrification being where black culture becomes a commodity and is marketed and sold to white professionals as an "authentic urban experience." These definitions are clearer and provide a framework for how contemporary gentrification happens differently, but it does not capture reasons as to why there is a market demand for disinvested communities.

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity at The Ohio State University, uses the Brookings Institution's definition as a platform to define gentrification as:

… the process of permanently changing a distressed community into an exclusive upper income community and does not simply equate with community reinvestment.[4]

It is debatable whether the changes to distressed communities are permanent, as history reveals that the built environment and investment in communities are generational and can change. For that reason, it is difficult to wholly embrace the Kirwan Institute's definition of gentrification, as permanency implies there is a finality to the socio-economic status of the community. While these definitions clearly articulate what gentrification is and how it impacts communities, these definitions do not go far enough in identifying the who or what is responsible for the process of gentrification.

Using the above as a framework, I define gentrification as a government-supported initiative that seeks to increase economic value and economic utility in residential neighborhoods that have systematically and historically been deprived government investment. This investment can be in the form of political power, physical or social infrastructure, or financial capital. Intrinsic in Glass' observation and later definition of gentrification is a caste system that describes the "middle-class" as presumably having access to more power -- through financial means or political means -- than the "working-class." As the former group can change the positioning of the latter group through displacement from the community.

[3] UCL Urban Laboratory, "How Ruth Glass Shaped the Way We Approach Our Cities," How Ruth Glass Shaped the Way We Approach Our Cities, January 13, 2015, , accessed October 18, 2018, http://www.ucl.ac.uk/urbanlab/news/ruth-glass-seminar.

[4] Jason Reece, Technical Memorandum on Gentrification Issues, report, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity, The Ohio State University, July 28, 2004, , accessed October 19, 2018, http://www.kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2004/07_2004_Gentrification and Revitalization.pdf.

In the United States, race and class are inextricably linked because of structural racism.[5] The forced and government mandated enslavement of people of African descent and the subsequent denial and abjection of their descendants' full participation in the American economic and political system. As a result, gentrification is most commonly race-based, although there are anomalies where Black Americans or Latinx families serve as the gentrifiers.

Long-term residential segregation practices like redlining, unenforced fair housing policies, permitted discrimination in real estate practices, racially motivated state-sanctioned violence, and subprime mortgage lending, has specifically targeted individuals of color, confining them to underinvested communities. This history has resulted in communities of color being vulnerable to downswings in the economy and susceptible to gentrification. These neighborhoods are specifically targeted for investment because of their proximity to the heart of the city and because they have the basic components for the type neighborhood that is desired by the intended market.[6]

Gentrification is coordinated by the local, state, or national governments through targeted planning policies, tax incentives or credits, or through targeted government-funded improvements to a neighborhoods-built environment. In 2018, RentCafe, a digital multifamily-residential focused marketing team, produced a report analyzing the top 20 most gentrified communities in the United States from 2000-2016. The analysis looked at increased changes in educational attainment, home values, and household income changes to determine which zip codes were the most extreme in gentrifying. The results concluded that two Washington, DC zip codes (20010 and 20001) were ranked as top gentrifying neighborhoods nationally.

During 2000 - 2016, the city invested a significant amount of resources to economic development and revitalizing the city. In 1998, city officials implemented Tax Incremental Financing that would subside new development projects in the city.[7] That year, the number of individuals living in poverty in the District was 114,000 or 22.3% of the total population.[8] By 1999, the city's total population had increased by 35,000 to 545,000 and the number of

[5] Urban Edge Team, "Who's Really Getting the Benefit? The Impact of Gentrification on Health," Who's Really Getting the Benefit? The Impact of Gentrification on Health, September 29, 2017, , accessed October 24, 2018, https://kinder.rice.edu/2017/09/29/whos-really-getting-the-benefit-the-impact-of-gentrification-on-health/.

[6] Miriam Zuk et al., "Gentrification, Displacement, and the Role of Public Investment," *Journal of Planning Literature* 33, no. 1 (2017): , accessed October 21, 2018, doi:10.1177/0885412217716439.

[7] Good Jobs First, report, Good Jobs First, , November 2002, accessed October 18, 2018, https://www.goodjobsfirst.org/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/dc.pdf.

[8] U.S. Census Bureau, comp., "Table 21. Number of Poor and Poverty Rate, by State," chart, Historical Poverty Tables: People and Families - 1959 to 2017, August 28, 2018, accessed October 21, 2018, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-people.html.

individuals living in poverty decreased by 34,000.[9,10] In 2003, the District Mayor Anthony Williams launched a the Neighborhood 10: Ten Strategies for a Stronger DC, which looked at increasing the population of residents in the city by 100,000 by 2013. Select neighborhoods in the city were targeted for this redevelopment initiative.[11] In 2000, African American residents comprised of 61 percent of the District's total population. By the end of 2017 the African American population was estimated to be 47 percent resulting in a net decrease of 24,289 residents, although the city's total population increased.[12]

In the report "Economic Development in Washington DC: High Costs, Unclear Benefits and Missing Safeguards", dated November 2002, the Good Jobs First organization concluded that recent development projects supported by the city did not benefit city residents or their ability to remain in the city in the future.

> The District's Tax Increment Financing program (TIF) does not require any new jobs to be created in return for the subsidies.

Or

> The District's economic development programs are not generally used in areas that have the greatest need for public stimulus to encourage private reinvestment. They are not tied to the construction of low- and moderate-income housing so desperately needed to address the City's affordable-housing crisis.[13]

In other instances, government agencies fail to provide appropriate political remedies to mitigate the effects of gentrification, prior to displacement, like tenant protection rights, affordable housing, or safe and accessible public transit. Furthermore, government entities are reluctant to address externalities or reluctantly implement policies to remedy these negative effects. In an article in Urban Edge, Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University in Houston, Texas digital magazine, about the health impacts of gentrification, Columbia University Urban Studies Professor Lance Freeman is quoted as saying:

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[9] U.S. Census Bureau, comp., "Table 21. Number of Poor and Poverty Rate, by State," chart, Historical Poverty Tables: People and Families - 1959 to 2017

[10] It is unclear why the number of individuals in poverty in Washington, DC dropped so drastically during this year. The data did not distinguish if there were changes in the way the Census Bureau calculated or estimated poverty. During a conversation with Valecia Wilson, a Neighborhood Planner with Washington, DC's Office of Planning there were There were several HOPEIV-related public housing demolitions around that time, including Ellen Wilson, Frederick Douglas, Stanton Dwellings, and Wheeler Creek public housing facilities.

[11] Anthony Williams, *Neighborhood 10: Ten Strategies for a Stronger Washington*, PowerPoint Presentation, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, April 2003.

[12] "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: District of Columbia," Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2017, , accessed October 20, 2018, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/dc.

[13] Good Jobs First, report, Good Jobs First

"Policymakers have been eager to promote gentrification because they oftentimes see it as a way to alleviate issues like declining tax bases, concentrated poverty," [14]

Providing remedies to alleviate ails of gentrification is contrary to the intent of initiating plans or investment projects that begins to gentrify a community. If the goal is to increase economic utility of a space in the city, then rapidly displacing lower earning individuals could be an efficient manner to achieve this goal. To this extent, gentrification is urban renewal by another name.

Gentrification as a Means to Define Neighborhood Change
The term gentrification is not helpful in describing neighborhood change in the 21st century for several reasons. Like the multiple definitions of gentrification that were presented earlier, the term has been used to describe many phenomena, decisions, and interactions in changing urban neighborhoods. Connotatively, the term holds and elicits different emotional responses. These disparities on thought can prevent or limit a necessary conversation about how a neighborhood is changing or how communities that have been historically under-resourced can receive external investment or leverage internal capacity to increase the number and type of desired amenities in that place.

Secondly, the term gentrification serves as a blanket that covers and groups private individuals as the sole fault for the negative impacts of gentrification. In Richard Rothstein's' book *The Color of Law*, he describes the concept of housing segregation by choice or de facto racial housing segregation as a myth -- the reality being that federal, state and local government policies supported and underwrote racially segregated neighborhoods.[15] Similar to Rothstein's' argument about the difference between de facto and de jure segregation, the use of the term gentrification places the blame of negative externalities of revitalization on middle-income households, not the government institutions that advocated for the policies, implemented initiatives, and refused to enact solutions to protect the rights of working-class individuals.

Finally, the term gentrification has no established time-bound or time frame that can be used to establish a reference to determine who is the community that is being gentrified and when the process of gentrification began. How long must an individual or group of neighbors live in a community before an influx of new residents of a different economic class move in, that now warrants this exchange in residency to be titled gentrification? Alternatively, how far back must planners, government officials, or community members look back in history to determine an initial starting point for measuring the migration and displacement of people? Should planners only look at this change post the 1968-riots? Or pre-industrial revolution? Or should the linear time measurement of gentrification start with the European migration and settlement on the indigenous lands in the western hemisphere? From this perspective, gentrification can be considered a form of localized-colonization, making a vast majority of individuals residing in the United States gentrifiers.

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[14] Urban Edge Team. "Who's Really Getting the Benefit? The Impact of Gentrification on Health."
[15] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).

Gentrification: Helpful or Harmful

Like my beliefs prior to this course, arguments highlighting the benefits of gentrification typically include increased political advocacy for disinvested neighborhoods; improved school quality; increased housing values; and increased tax revenues that can be used for additional reinvestment back into a community. Additionally, communities may become more racially and ethnically integrated.[16] While there are positive effects, gentrification (which includes its externalities) are overall harmful to communities, as gentrification is implemented in a manner that quickly infuses resources -- social capital, financial capital, political capital and other infrastructure into a community, while dismissing or dismantling the existing social, cultural and economic infrastructure.

In the book, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, And What We Can Do About It*, Mindi Thompson Fullilove uses the metaphor of an uprooted plant to describes a concept called "root shock" as the "…the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one's emotional ecosystem," to explain the physiological state that an individual or group of people endure when uprooted or displaced from their neighborhoods.[17] Continuing with this metaphor, plants also experience root shock when they receive vital resources, like water, too quickly. This process effectively drowns the plants root system, likewise, victims of gentrification can also experience root shock when they remain, but the added amenities and improved infrastructure, and overall neighborhoods are no longer welcoming or designed for their needs and desires.

Additional burdens of gentrification include housing displacement, financial insecurity, increased policing, and dismantling of existing social networks.[18] Finally, gentrification reinforces the idea that working-class or lower-income individuals are not as valuable to society and that their neighborhoods are valueless to the broader society. The benefits of gentrification should not then allow gentrification to be seen as the solution for improving neighborhoods that have been systematically disinvested or for reducing concentrated poverty. Gentrification does nothing to address issues of residential housing segregation, and the entanglement of race, class, and housing, as residents are often relocated to communities that are equally as segregated. While gentrification is a process for revitalizing a community, I do not believe that it is the most effective or helpful way to assist in a community's regeneration.

Issues of Gentrification to explore

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[16] Vincent Geloso and Jasmin Guenette, *The Widespread Benefits of Gentification,* issue brief, IDEM - MEI, July 2016, , accessed October 15, 2018, http://www.iedm.org/files/lepoint1116_en.pdf.

[17] Mindy Thompson Fullilove, *ROOT SHOCK: How Tearing up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do about It* (S.l.: NEW VILLAGE PRESS, 2016).

[18] Barry Plunkett, Joe Novak, and William Lee, "Impacts of Gentrification: A Policy Primer," Impacts of Gentrification: A Policy Primer, November 21, 2016, , accessed October 18, 2018, https://publicpolicy.wharton.upenn.edu/live/news/1581-impacts-of-gentrification-a-policy-primer/for-students/blog/news.php.

An issue that is critical to explore with gentrification is the intangible cultural heritage[19] of African Americans; the criminalization and later commodification of this culture in order to create safe, yet exciting spaces for wealthy, white individuals. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, intangible cultural heritage is the cultural practice of "...oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts."[20]

Often, public spaces, like the stoop, corner, local church, a local park, and sometimes even the street, are spaces where intangible cultural heritage is practiced, exchanged, and engaged. In gentrifying communities these areas are key battlegrounds for maintaining or acquiring power and claiming a sense of belonging or ownership. As wealthy residents move into the gentrifying community, there is a lack of understanding, and respect for the existing culture heritage. This discomfort leads to increased reporting to police officers for things as simple as black people existing in space. A 2018 BuzzFeedNews article noted an increased police response to 311, or non-emergency calls, once a neighborhood had become gentrified. These calls were frequently reported against black men.[21] A report by *Science vs*. podcast member Meryl Horn concluded that phone calls to 311 in gentrifying communities, rose at a 70 percent faster rate in non-gentrifying communities in Washington, DC.[22]

Because gentrification is government-supported and seeks to rapidly increase the economic output of a community, other government resources are also targeted to these communities to regulate black bodies for the protection of white or wealthy residents. Other policies like stop and frisk, or banning specific land-uses, or noise ordinances also help reinforce the criminalization of this heritage. In Washington, DC the City Council nearly voted to approve a measure that was intended to crack down on the level of noise that DC street performers could emit and could potentially result in jail time.[23] In Washington, DC, many gogo[24] groups launched

[19] The term "intangible cultural heritage" was first presented to me by Ellen Pratt, during a course session for the Multicultural Metropolis course at the University of Maryland.

[20] United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, "What Is Intangible Cultural Heritage?" What Is Intangible Cultural Heritage? - Intangible Heritage - Culture Sector - UNESCO, , accessed October 20, 2018, https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003.

[21] Lam Thuy Vo, "They Played Dominoes Outside Their Apartment For Decades. Then The White People Moved In And Police Started Showing Up.," BuzzFeed News, June 29, 2018, , accessed October 21, 2018, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lamvo/gentrification-complaints-311-new-york.

[22] Tanvi Misra, "Yes, 311 Nuisance Calls Are Climbing in Gentrifying Neighborhoods," CityLab, October 19, 2018, , accessed October 22, 2018, https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/10/yes-311-nuisance-calls-are-climbing-gentrifying-neighborhoods/573271/.

[23] Sam Ford and Erin Danielle Jones/ABC7, "Street Performers Fight Back against Proposed Noise Restriction Bill," WJLA, , accessed October 21, 2018, https://wjla.com/news/local/dc-street-performers-noise-legislation.

their career at outdoor parties and neighborhood concerts. In Prince George's County, food trucks were banned because they were perceived as blighted and unsanitary. They were only re-permitted in the County once the national market trend made food trucks popular. If gentrification, is the urban renewal of the 21st century, then the policing of black bodies in public spaces are the metaphoric bulldozers that are used dismantle the elaborate social infrastructure that communities created in response to being ignored by government agencies and external investors.

Black Branding is a practice that Derek Hyra explored in *Race, Class and Politics in the Cappuccino City*. This is the practice where black culture is commodified and sold as a component of a marketing strategy in gentrifying neighborhoods. This practice occurs frequently in Washington, DC. Local bars, like Sign of the Wale, display old gogo posters, play gogo musical recordings, and market its venue to young white professionals, while black bands who create the music are blamed and scapegoated for community violence.[25] Stephan Paschalides, a self-proclaimed "cultural insight consultant" made a career of hosting tours of inner-ring suburbs or urban areas for large corporations, as a way for them to better understand the market of millennial shoppers.[26]

Planning Challenge
The challenge now is, how do planners and communities create vibrant places that are no longer vulnerable to the whims of external investment dollars; allow people to authenticate their own cultural heritage; and uphold this aesthetics as the benchmark for their ideal community. The following are several proposed policies and initiatives that can be implemented to help to redefine culture in the planning sense and address the negative impacts of revitalization due to gentrification. The following policies or initiatives would serve as ways to provide residents, especially those whose communities have been most adversely impacted by the lack of investment or structural racism. These policy recommendations focus less on land use outcomes, and more so identify ways disrupt and reframe how and why public planners plan. Furthermore, these policies are complementary and must be adopted, enacted, and enforced comprehensively.

First, the establishment and funding a People's Planner position, similar to a People's Zoning Counsel or a People's Counsel, that serves as an advocate for residents in response to new development proposals, land-use recommendations. The People's Planner would be government-funded, but independent professional planner, whose role would be to research and advocate on behalf of the residents of the community, especially those that have been significantly disinvested. Functionally, this position operates differently than a traditional public

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[24] Gogo is a local genre of music performed by African American musicians in Washington, DC.

[25] Lori Montgomery, "D.C. Police Blame Go-Go For Violence at NW Club," The Washington Post, February 20, 2005, , accessed October 22, 2018, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-2534.html?refid=easy_hf.

[26] Krissy Clark, "Lowe's Takes a Magical Millennial Bus Tour," Marketplace, August 13, 2015, , accessed October 20, 2018, https://www.marketplace.org/2015/08/13/wealth-poverty/york-fig/lowes-takes-magical-millennial-bus-tour.

planner, as the traditional public planner works on behalf of the government and is required to consider and reconcile all perspectives, and to further the intended outcomes of political leadership. The People's Planner would represent the ideas and desires of a community. However, while this program can be beneficial in the short-term it does not address structural issues with the planning process, and why certain communities have access to more power and more influence in the decision-making process.

During public planning processes, there are often a few actors or a few groups, who are frequently represented, because they have more institutional knowledge or social capital to navigate the bureaucracy. To better balance power dynamics in a community planning discussion, in the long-term, it would be helpful to implement a policy that mandates planning agencies to establish a community planning and zoning academy for residents. This program should use the framework of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to educate residents, on an ongoing basis, about locally-relevant public policy issues; the history of these public policy issues; and tools that can be used to better advocate for their positions. If leveraged, this can serve as an opportunity to generate more creative solutions to issues of revitalization and neighborhood change. Similar programs have been initiated in Baltimore City and Philadelphia.[27] These programs should provide transportation, food, and childcare for participants and compensate participants for their time. In Baltimore, the program is specially designed and marketed for communities that have historically received the least government investment.[28] This policy would not address the interactions, perceptions, and biases of staff, or elected officials, therefore it is also critical that government decision makers are also trained alongside the public.

Inclusionary zoning provisions and policies that mandate that new development in targeted investment areas can help to retain affordable housing in a neighborhood. However, this policy can be exploited as recent college-graduates may also qualify for this housing, furthering displacement for long-term residents who may not hold as much power or privilege. Furthermore, it does not address the impacts of displacement during redevelopment or protect long-term homeowners who may no longer be able to afford the drastic increases in property taxes. Affordable housing provisions and tenants' rights still relegate communities to being non-owners of a community and susceptible to the whims of property owners.

To address the issue of displacement due to redevelopment of rental properties, a local policy should look at redistributing government resources, either through a land donation or start-up capital, for the development of an independently-community operated land trust, cooperative housing corporation, and a cooperative commercial corporation. This strategy will take time to implement and become effective, which is why other policies to retain affordable housing is also critical. This policy can help individuals who are currently tenants become owners of their

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[27] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "Citizens Planning Institute," Citizens Planning Institute, 2016, , accessed October 22, 2018, https://citizensplanninginstitute.org/.

[28] Stephanie Smith and Elina Bravve, "Integrating Equity Into Planning: A Dialogue" (lecture, National Capital Area Chapter - American Planning Association Annual Conference, George Washington University's Marvin Center, Washington, DC, October 18, 2018).

neighborhood. To address issues of homeowner displacement, municipalities like the Town of Seat Pleasant, Maryland have proposed policies that holds personal property taxes constant for homeowners who have had their primary residence in the neighborhood for more than a decade. [29] While it is unknown the effectiveness of this policy, it seems like a rational response to homeowners being displaced as due to increasing property taxes as property values raise in a redeveloping community. It is important to note however, that depending on when this strategy is deployed it could limit redevelopment or significantly limit the amount of tax revenues a community receives for reinvestment.

Finally, financing and supporting the activation of public spaces where residents from different backgrounds can build meaningful interactions with one another and become more familiar with each other can facilitate integrated discussions about cultural differences and help to reduce negative police interactions in public spaces in the short-term. In the long-term communities should look toward building alternative models for community restitution to prevent criminalizing culture that is different than the current white normalcy.

Conclusion
Gentrification is a form of neighborhood revitalization, but generally is harmful to a community because government agencies coordinate to criminalize one cultural heritage to create safe spaces for wealthier, generally whiter individuals. With this, local economies are encouraged to repackage and resell the existing culture to wealthier markets or demographics. The rapid influx of residents, who have increased social and political power because of their wealth, are given specific attention and government institutions designed to support "newcomers" create, while rendering existing neighbors valueless. To have community revitalization without gentrification, there must be a willingness of planners and political leaders to acknowledge and respect that there is not one uniformed cultural aesthetic to which all places should subscribe. Rather, communities should work cooperatively to ensure they every member of society is has access to dignity. To do this, planners should consider and study alternative methods of community planning that may not exist solely as a product of government reform, but through spiritual institutions, community organizing, and other communal forms of exchange.

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[29] Seat City of Seat Pleasant, YouTube, February 14, 2018, , accessed October 20, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGVZ1dm737U&t=1s.

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