

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

PART 1

(Title):

The New Metropolis
Reimagining the Region:
Building a New Detroit Metropolis

(Ponsella Hardaway): Hello and welcome. I'm Ponsella Hardaway and you are at the Emagine Theatre in Royal Oak, here tonight to "Reimagine our Region." How can the cities and suburbs work together to build a vibrant and equitable new Detroit Metropolis.

(Ponsella Hardaway): Thank you for being here tonight and participating in this event. Let me tell you what is going to happen this evening. We're going to start by watching some clips from Andrea Torrice's new award-winning film, *The New Metropolis*, which focuses on the challenges and opportunities facing America's first suburbs like Royal Oak. The film will then kick start a conversation with a group of distinguished panelists, moderated by Mr. Stephen Henderson. There will be a Q & A with the audience. The audience mic will be placed over there at that aisle, that far aisle. We ask that you keep your questions short and to the point. Please note some important things. Detroit Public Television is streaming this live on www.dptv.org. If you do not wish to be filmed, please move to the back of the theatre. Too late, you're here.

(Ponsella Hardaway): Also, please note that in your programs there is an important survey. We would like you to fill out and return to us at the end of the evening in the boxes by the doors and the back of the theatre. We have many people here tonight to thank for making this event possible. The Michigan Suburbs Alliance, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, and my own organization, Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength also know as MOSES. We also want to thank Detroit Public Television, Model D Media, and Andrea Torrice Productions. And Special Thanks to the Ford and Surdna Foundations for supporting this event. Last but not least, a special thanks to all the volunteers who have worked in some capacity over the past few months and even tonight. Many thanks to all of you for making this critical conversation a priority in your schedule. But we don't want to stop....we want to start a conversation that will lead to concrete actions that will deliver solutions. One thing, please right now, go in your pockets and turn off your phones. Okay, let's begin.

(Ponsella Hardaway): Now, it is my pleasure that I introduce to you, our host for this evening, Mr. Stephen Henderson. He is a distinguished award-winning journalist and is the host of American Black Journal and Editorial Page Editor of *Detroit Free Press*. Again, welcome and enjoy.

(Stephen Henderson): Thank you Ponsella. Welcome to Reimagining the Region, Building a New Detroit Metropolis. I love that phrase by the way, a New Detroit Metropolis. Every time I say that, I sort of get a chill running down the back of my back. I mean, we don't talk very much about those kind of things around here, and that kind of hopeful phrase is something I think we ought to try and capture, brand, and sort of stick on everything we are doing.

(Stephen Henderson): When Andrea asked me to be part of this event, I got really excited, because I thought to would give us a chance in the community to address three pretty critical

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis

Event Transcript

September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

questions that I think are very important here in metro Detroit. One is, where we live. The second is why we live there. And then the third is, how do we start making rational, sustainable sense of the answer to those first two questions so that we can all live better together. So hopefully, after we see the film, those are some of the things we will get to. But first, we are very lucky to have Andrea Torrice here with us tonight. She is the producer and director of this film and has been an award-winning producer of documentary films for nearly 20 years. So let's welcome Andrea to Detroit.

(Andrea Torrice): Hi, thank you so much. I am so honored and thrilled to be here. I have been traveling the country for the last year showing these films, which have been airing on Public Television stations all across the country. When I first made these films, I thought of them as small little poems in a series of films about cities, suburbs, and rural communities, and the issues that all of these communities were facing. But these films that really focus on first suburbs, and use the stories from first suburbs to kind of talk about what is happening in our regions, it's been amazing how many communities have similar issues, similar problems, and are all searching for new ways to reimagine their communities.

(Andrea Torrice): So, you are not alone in this discussion. You are, I'm actually going to tell you...I've been to California, I've been to Chicago, I've been a lot on the east coast. Many, many places, we've had 120 community screenings of this film. Now this film is not about Detroit, and it is about some small suburbs in Ohio and New Jersey and Minnesota, but I do think they will speak to you, I hope they will. And I also want to tell you that when I was in Minnesota showing these films, I said I am going to Detroit next, and they said "Detroit, oh it so depressing there. Why are you going to Detroit?" And so in the last few months I've been coming here and organizing these and I have to say, I had not been to Detroit before, and I have been completely amazed and inspired by all of you, and the great people that are here, and all the great work you are doing. It has really been wonderful. I want to come back and make a film about Detroit now, because I think the media has a really bad, bad...you know, gives you guys bad press, no offence Stephen. There is really great stuff. You are leading the nation I think, because you have big challenges, huge challenges, I don't want to diminish that, but I really feel that, in a way, you are really on the cutting edge and have some great opportunities, if you can work together, that's the critical part. So reimagine your region. I'm really glad to be part of this. Let me tell you what you are going to see quickly. There are two episodes. They already aired on Detroit Public Television, I think they are going to re-air. We're selling them if you want to see the full versions. We'll see 15 minutes from each clip, the first is called "A Crack in the Pavement" which looks at the tax infrastructure, public policy crisis, and mass transit. Each film has a little bit about the crisis and the solution. And the second one which was narrated by Ruby Dee, who was wonderful to work with, um, is called "The New Neighbors" and it's about how a first suburban town outside of Philadelphia was able to revitalize themselves through a very unique program, what's called intentional integration. I also want you to know that tonight, we are streaming live and there are organizations in California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and North Carolina that are watching here tonight. So please think about that you are, while this is not a national show, people are watching and listening to you because we want your ideas. Thank you very much and enjoy the films, 15 minutes from each one. Thanks.

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

PART 3

(Stephen Henderson): Okay, well, we're going to have about a thirty-minute panel discussion here. But while they are getting mic-ed, very powerful stuff on both of those films. Obviously, as Andrea said, neither one of those is filmed here, and is not specifically about Detroit, but there were a lot of familiar themes there. I, for one, started chuckling when Myron Orfield in the first film starts talking about coordinated regional planning. We don't have that here. And then in the second film, Pennshauken could be Royal Oak Township, Pennshauken could be Southfield. These are issues that we hear about and think about an awful lot here in Detroit, but tonight we want to lead you guys into talking about them.

(Stephen Henderson): So, we've got a great panel here to do that. Starting immediately to my, well your right, my left, Rev. John Hice is the Senior Pastor at First United Methodist Church in Royal Oak and a member of the Metropolitan Pastoral Leadership. Let's give him a hand.

(Stephen Henderson): Dr. Karen Majewski is serving her second term as mayor of Hamtramck and is a vice-president of the Michigan Municipal League and is a board member of the Michigan Suburbs Alliance.

(Stephen Henderson): Melanie Piana is a Ferndale city councilwoman and works with the Michigan Suburbs Alliance on the Redevelopment Communities Program.

(Stephen Henderson): Dr. John Powell is the Executive Director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University.

(Stephen Henderson): And State Representative Jim Townsend is the first term representative for the 26th House District. He is the co-chair of the Bipartisan Southeast Michigan Legislative Caucus, which is focusing on collaborating economic development and fiscal services, water quality and transportation.

(Stephen Henderson): So, I thought I might start with you Melanie. You know, when I was a kid growing up in Detroit in the 1980's, Ferndale was a place we all made fun of. We all laughed about Ferndale, it was not a cool place at all. Now, of course, it's the place, it's a hip place. You've got people moving in, you've got businesses sprouting up all over the place. Talk to me about how you guys turned that corner. It seems like you are a model for the cities that we are seeing in the films here. Both in terms of rehabbing the physical look and feel of your city and also in terms of integration.

(Melanie Piana): Well, I just wanted to start with, first of all I grew up further out in the suburbs, I grew up in the exsurbs so I really didn't have a reference point for Ferndale or Detroit until I graduated from college. So, my discovery of the urban center of Ferndale was, uh, didn't start until the late 90's. But Ferndale, how you describe it, is one of the reasons why my husband and I moved there. I think, uh, a few policies that the city has put into place, is really having a strong economic development strategy about how to revitalize the downtown. It's been a key component of the changing and evolution of the health of the downtown, of why new entrepreneurs are coming in and setting up retail shops. I also think that this city invested with tax dollar support on changing how the design of our downtown looked. We went on a road diet. We decreased our main street from four lanes to two, and that was sort of a rejuvenation of bringing back attention and walk ability to our downtown and I think that is a core element of why people choose to invest in Ferndale. But I think the other strong part is the people, Ferndale

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis

Event Transcript

September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

is know for its strong gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community, and it was the residents there that fought for those rights and created that atmosphere there where being different, being diverse, is accepted. And so that is, those two elements put together has brought a very strong, unique community that I think people feel and sense when they hear about us and when they come visit our downtown.

(Stephen Henderson): Jim, the Suburbs Alliance you have been part of and now you are big part of regional collaboration caucus in the state legislature, you're focused on, I assume, trying to get some of what Ferndale has for everybody else and trying to get people to work together and create that in all inner ring suburbs, right?

(Jim Townsend): Stephen, absolutely. Good public investment leads to private investment. I think that is the story of Ferndale and that's true on a state-wide basis. It's true, as Myron Orfield points out and as John has written about, we have not a single-state economy, we have a series of metropolitan economies. And the Southeast Michigan Caucus which we have created in the legislature, is all about getting Democrats and Republicans to recognize that we share one economy and we've got to make these smart investments in our infrastructure, in our education systems, in protecting our natural resources. And if we do those things, we can build a new Michigan, and it will be based of success stories like Ferndale and Royal Oak quite frankly, I have to say this, I represent Royal Oaks...No, Royal Oak is another example of a great community that has really reinvented itself, so it can be done, it's just got to be done much faster and on a much bigger scale.

(Stephen Henderson): Dr. Powell, you've written a lot about the racial issues we saw, particularly highlighted in the second film. Talk to me about how we get past those issues. We don't talk very much about them in this community, we act like they don't exist, that the history of the racial problems we have, how do use that and try to spin that forward and say here's how we fix that and how we go forward together as opposed to in separate little bags here.

(Dr. Powell): Well, one thing is to talk about it, but we need a new language. The language that we use is largely the language of the 50's and 60's. The country is a very different country, some things are better and some things are worse. But we know if we kick something under the bed, it doesn't go away, you know it just hangs out under the bed and then one day it might come out and grab us. What we see is the dynamics of race playing out, so if you watch almost in any community, the people that live at the most extreme exsurbs of the region are the whitest part of the population. And no one likes to talk about that because it makes us a little uncomfortable. And people do it for a lot of reasons, some of them may be that they are uncomfortable with people of color but part of it as was demonstrated in the film and suggested by Jim and Melanie is that we have policies that actually facilitate this. And so if you are buying a house and you can buy it here and for the same amount of money further out you get a house where you have 3 more bedrooms, where you have a better school system, or better shopping, and again it has a racial undertone. And so part of it is to actually learn to talk about it in very real terms. Oftentimes we think that a conversation about race quickly degenerates into, he's a racist, no I'm not, yes you are, and there is a much richer and deeper conversation to have. The last think I will say on this for now, we crossed the rubicon in this country, half the children born in the United States today are children who are not white. Half the children entering kindergarten today, not five years from now, are not white, and that is going to only increase. So, if we are going to be a

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

vibrant country, you have to learn to embrace the diversity, it's already here and it's only going to grow.

(Stephen Henderson): Mayor Majewski, I want to ask you first of all, and I asked you this when you came to see me at the Free Press, I asked you to address this question but we'll start somewhere else real quickly. It seems to me in the first film, we heard the mayor in a suburban town in Ohio talk about the need to rebuild their infrastructure and the lack of resources and the lack of ability to get those resources, I was thinking expressly about you. I mean, Hamtramck having a very hard time right now and has been for a while. Talk about that and then talk about what you think the solution is and then address the question that addressed to you when you came to see me, which is why does Hamtramck exist.

(Karen Majewski): Well, for those of you folks watching from all over the country, let me say that Hamtramck is an inner ring suburb in the real sense of the word because we are completely ringed, surrounded by the city of Detroit. You ask about the financial struggles, and the struggles for infrastructure and I think it really goes back to the previous comments that we need public policies and legislation that redirects resources to the inner ring suburbs, to the inner cities, and that stops favoring disinvestment out to the exurbs and it's as simple as that. And honestly I think that Hamtramck's problems, financial problems and infrastructure issues, are really no different anymore than the problems that a Ferndale has, that a Southfield has, that the world has changed around us, and in many ways, I think both culturally and financially we have been kind of a bell weather for the whole nation, certainly for the region, but probably for the nation in the kinds of problems that cities face. And, we've had to struggle with, maybe a source of our strength is that we've had to struggle with them for a longer time, and we have survived that struggle and I think that that is a source of strength and inspiration that this can happen. And the reason that I think it can happen gets to your last question, and that is, that why any place exists, is because it has its own identity, it has its own history, and then to ask why one place should exist is really the wrong question, I think what we need to ask is what do all these distinct places have, that makes them a place, that makes them survive, that gives them an identity? What are the strengths and assets that that place has? And then, and those strengths may be different in Hamtramck than they are in Ferndale, or that they are in Grosse Point Woods and than they are in Detroit. So how do we, with respect for and recognition of, all of those, of all of our diverse assets, how do take those qualities and bring them together in order to cooperate in such a way that recognizes the integrity of each of our places and also helps us build something together.

(Stephen Henderson): Rev. Hice, you would think that the churches would be the places where all these things might get solved, salvation right? Talk about the role though, that the religious community is playing in these conversations about where we live, why we live there, and how we can live better together.

(Rev. Hice): Well, of course, within any church, you don't find monolithic posture. You have some people who are filled with vision, and hopes and are so open to forming relationships with people whom they don't know, and you have other people who by their experiences, or lack of experiences, who are filled with fears, and are reluctant to engage in those. I think that what you find in the wider community, you will find in just about any congregation in any faith community, no matter what denomination or faith you happen to be talking about. And so in some ways, we become a test ground, because this is a first point of engagement with each other,

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

to be able to get to know somebody that I didn't know before, who comes from a different part of the country or another part of the city, than I grew up and that I am familiar with. And if I can build a bridge and discover friendship with somebody that I didn't know before, it gives me a platform that will provide some courage and some experience to build other bridges to other people further away. I was so inspired by the story of Pennshauken, because it was a clear example of the real necessity of to work on policy, to create programs to alleviate suffering and those impediments that exist in any community, to create social justice, but the third component is what they worked on first, and I think it what we so often avoid, though policy building and program creation have their own challenges and their own pitfalls, there is something to easy about creating a program and even being involved in it over there. It's easy to try and get a hold of a quick fix and it's always easy to be a voice of advocacy to say the government should do this, or should do that, those are essential. But until we do the hard work of building relationships, we miss it, and we lose the passion that is necessary to give impetuous to both the policy and the program that we need to create.

(Stephen Henderson): Now, I want to open this up now to the whole panel, feel free to jump in where you see it is necessary. Let's talk some about these policy questions here, this is a very tough place to do some of the things that you are all talking about. Sharing of services, consolidation of government, but...you were just talking about the separation of government doing it and people being enthusiastic about it. Is that really what our problem is? What holds us back from consolidating more, from sharing more services?

(Jim Townsend): Well...I think Rev. Hice hit part of it, which is the human side of it, the part of it, our unwillingness, our hesitancy to have conversations that are hard, to talk about uncomfortable subjects, but I also think it is a tendency to not embrace sort of, the future. You know, we have tendency to look back at the way our communities have always been, we have a tendency to see the suburbs and the way they developed, and the movie described that, as the way it is always going to be, and clearly that is not the case. I mean, we don't have the resource and no one is bringing bagfuls of money, the federal government isn't bringing us bagfuls of money to solve these problems, so we've got to find some new ways to work together. When you hear things, say, Minneapolis, Greater Saint Paul saved 27 billion dollars by just say rationally planning the way they invest in things like roads, sewers, and how they develop their land, well, that is a big number, imagine what we could do in Southeast Michigan, which is quite a bit bigger than Minneapolis, Greater Saint Paul area. So I think there are some big opportunities and now is the time.

(Stephen Henderson): Is transportation one of those opportunities?

(Jim Townsend): I think it is a huge opportunity.

(Melanie Piana): I think our past is not who we are, and that the past, how we grew in the past, is definitely not going to be how we grow and build a prosperous future. And I think that is definitely the way you can describe how our region has dealt with transportation. We have largely built one mode in our region and that is for cars. While we do have a bus system and a light rail system, I think a lot of advocates would say it is woefully inadequate. And I think we need to stop believing that these invisible policy force fields that end at our boundaries are effective because people live beyond your boundaries. And with transportation, how I am trying to affect that change regionally at the local level is really working with the communities along

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis

Event Transcript

September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

the corridors that we share. These are the communities north of Ferndale, which there are six of them and we share seven miles, so six cities on seven miles and Ferndale borders Detroit south of us. So, the six communities are working together on how to improve connectivity, how to improve how we work together on land use development, which is going to drive our economic development for all of our...for all of the six cities. And that will help us connect better with Detroit. So, it is important that these things are going on at the same time. So, it is a multi-approach to addressing our infrastructure problem.

(Stephen Henderson): We've got an exciting project on the board for Detroit transit, and closer than ever to reality, but the stumbling block still is and I think even in the city when people are talking about this, no one is acknowledging this, that the big stumbling block there is regional authority to manage that. You cannot manage that in the city of Detroit, DDOT can't do it, but that means we have to create that authority, not you and not Mr. Powell, but all of you have to be able to work together, to be able to figure out how to raise taxes to pay for that, to figure out how to manage it. What's the step, what's the step that we've got to jump over to get there.

(Dr. Powell): Let me comment on that, I think what we've been saying, everything we've been saying is right on that but there are a couple of other pieces. The Detroit Metro, you know, I am a native Detroiter, my family is still here, my father still lives where I went to high school, and I have watched Detroit become emptied out since I left in 1965, and it continues to lose population. Most of that population actually relocates in the metropolitan area but not all of them. The sprawl of the city, of the region continues. So, yes we have fewer resources, I completely agree with what Jim said, but we are using those resources to build new developments, which are not only sucking resources from Detroit, but also sucking resources from the inner ring suburbs and pretty soon it will be the next suburbs. Because we have fewer resources, it is all the more important that we use those resources in a very judicious way. So, transportation is a good example. Transportation is very important, but some people would say, well you don't need a light rail line because you're too sprawled, transportation works best when you have density. Well, density is the opposite of sprawl, so one of the things is to actually have policies that actually incentivize building in the built environment. So you saw in the film, okay, we invested an infrastructure, sewers, waters, now they are decaying, what do we do? Well, we could go build a new one, and let that old one die, but people are using that old one, so its not just letting infrastructure die, it is letting communities die. So part of it is really reorienting the region, and the last thing I'll say on this is back to your question, is that someone is winning or doing okay for now, so the people who are getting the new, there is no incentive really for them to say, well, we want to reinvest in Hamtramck or Ferndale or Detroit, we're getting a brand new whatever.

(Stephen Henderson): That raises the question, which is can you ever imagine in this area that you would have, what you're talking about essentially would be enacted through government policy of some shared tax burden, in other words that in some way we pooled all of our resources and directed them more towards the city and less towards the exburbs. I have a hard time getting the Oakland county executive and the mayor of Detroit to sit at a table together and talk together, as good as a relationship as the current people have, as soon as that subject comes up, it is a non-starter. Is that something that we can even imagine in Southeast Michigan?

(Dr. Powell): We've already done it once right, fix it first. MOSES was very involved in that, so

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

I think you may have to start with some smaller things, and the majority of people 80-90% of people are actually losing in this arrangement of building out to the exburbs. It's not sustainable, it hurts the environment, it hurts the economy, it hurts race relationship. So, and you do need leadership, you need political leadership, you need spiritual, religious leadership, you need business leadership. So, you need people stepping up saying this, and you need people to say, yes that might mean that you're neighbor will be of a different race than you are.

(Stephen Henderson): I spent a long time living in Maryland, which is organized very different from Michigan, we don't have municipal government for the most part in Maryland, the lowest level of government is county, and so for example, every county has it's own school district. If that were true here in Michigan, instead of 500 school districts, we would have 83. There aren't cities, cities exist only in terms of a post office, there is no mayor of Towson Maryland, for example, or anything like that. I wonder a lot of times, I know there is a history to why we grew up as a different kind of state than that, but I wonder if that's not a model that would serve us a little better here, especially now that the resources are so tight.

(Karen Majewski): Well, I would just say what I said before, and that is that, we can talk about different ways to organize, whether we want to talk about actually organizing or re-organizing municipalities boundaries, and we have a very specific procedure for doing that, that is available at any time to our cities, and we may ask ourselves why that is not taken advantage of more often and I think there are very good answers as to why that's not. But, you can talk about reorganizing municipal boundaries, but I think probably a more workable solution for us is to...because we do have a different history, we are not Maryland, and you know, we have our own structures, but that we do think about other kinds of reorganizations, whether that's school districts, whether that's transportation authority, whether that is a water authority.

(Stephen Henderson): Don't talk about the water...you cannot have the water

(Karen Majewski): You know, I mean, I think we are able to have conversations about these possibilities that five years ago, we could not have had.

(Stephen Henderson): I think we are being forced to.

(Jim Townsend): Yeah, I mean, I think that the austerity that we are experiencing, the economic stress, opens up conversations about that would not have happened before, I think that people need to understand, if they live anywhere in this region that the further we build out, the higher our taxes are really going to be...think of it this way, there is probably no place other in the country that has more freeways per person than Southeast Michigan, I mean, you can name them off. I mean if that we're correlated with wealth, this would be Dubai or someplace, you know, we would be incredibly wealthy, so continuing the pattern of building that we have sort of engaged in, just is, is a non-starter. We need a more invigorated, fix-it first policy and we have opportunities. The legislature is going to be considering a rewrite of how we fund transportation, our roads and bridges, and I am going to do everything I can to see that transit is in that conversation. And I think there are huge savings that we could realize if we went to a system where we insisted on much more coordinated planning and reused, and...made the decision about where we spend the money, not on some sort of political calculation, but on what is the return on investment for our economy, and that would tell us we would have a lot more incentive and a lot more reward if we investing in fixing the roads and bridges and inspiring people to live closer together, closer to work and have the density that transit makes possible.

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis

Event Transcript

September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

(Stephen Henderson): Of course, we're sitting here talking about policy but the real grist here for the mill is you guys, people who live here in this region, we all need to be doing more and thinking more about these problems and so for the next part of the panel, I wanted to have us answer questions from the audience, so if you have a question you can line up over there, there is a microphone on this side of the auditorium, but I see there is somebody there already.

(Stephen Henderson): Hi, I am Michael Bridges, a member of the Farmington Hills city council, the issue of mass transit has been an issue of my concern for some time, we talked about the recalcitrant public policy in regards to mass transit. Mr. Henderson spoke about county executive Brooks Patterson and the mayor of Detroit. County executive Brooks Patterson in my viewpoint, is an obstacle to mass transit in this region, he's been an obstacle from the standpoint of cooperation, specifically in the area of mass transit. I talked to him in his office about a month ago, in regards to him not allowing any community in Oakland county to opt out of the smart system. He was against it, citing issues of local control. For example a person that works at 12 Oaks Mall in Novi, takes a bus, has to get off at 12 Mile and Haggerty, has to walk through Novi to get to the mall there, 3 miles, so that's the kind of recalcitrant we have in the region here. And we all know the benefit of mass transit would be tremendous from the standpoint of social and economic integration and development, so what I am asking the audience to do, is if you are interested in mass transit, write letters to the editor, call county executive Brooks Patterson, get involved in this issue, because we are very close to having a mass transit system, the M-1 system coming to Detroit, the M-1 light rail, so we need more activism.

(Stephen Henderson): But, I'll push back a little bit on that, I wanna say, I don't think Brooks is the only obstacle, I think it is sort of a cop out to say he is the reason we don't have good regional transit. I think he is one of the reasons, because he is opposed to it, but I think there is a deeper answer there about us as residents here as to why these things don't work.

(Melanie Piana): To specifically answer that question, there is a group called transform Woodward and I had talked about the six cities coming together to see how we could improve the Woodward corridor to recalling the central Woodward communities, and this was really brought together by elected officials of each community. And I think the power to this group is that we have attracted public and private interest, so the Detroit Zoo, Beaumont Hospital, they realize that an investment in transit is an investment in their own self-interest for their employees, for their customers they serve, and so there are ways around obstacles, you need to find them and build coalitions with common partners to make progress. And I think that is what the power, I have learned, from working with colleagues in these other communities. We share the same values about how we want to grow, about the type of communities we want to have, and provide for our residents and businesses, and there is a lot of energy there in which to build upon these opportunities, and I think we are seeing some results from them, people are paying attention and we are making progress. Is it solving the big, barrier issues? No, but we are making steps forward.

(Stephen Henderson): Next question

(Audience): I was going to ask you to please address a question that seems to have been ignored and that is the flight of our industrial base out of the country, overseas, where they can paint with lead paint and not get sued, where they can pay a dollar an hour to underage kids and not get in trouble for. What are we going to do about bringing an industrial base back so people do have

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

jobs.

(Stephen Henderson): Jobs is the #1 issue here in Michigan obviously. It has been for the past 10 years, we still have one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation. Is jobs something we can come together on in terms of city and suburb, inner ring and exburbs, to try and...

(Jim Townsend): Yeah, I like to relate it to the first question, I like to, statistics can be very compelling, if they are true...one thing you can find statistically in the census bureau about where people work and where people live, typically, only about 20% of us work in our hometown. In other words, all most all of us commute to other communities to do our work. And so the idea that we can tolerate opt-out communities and still have a really functioning economy here is crazy. We are interdependent economically, and that goes right to the tax base. So communities are concerned about their tax base, but you know what the tax base is really what you bring home in your paycheck, because you turn around and pay your rent, mortgage and property tax, and that's what funds our communities. So, if 80% of that is really coming from other communities, we have a huge reason to come together and the issue around needing an industrial policy and needing to go back to, or find a way to start making things in this country again, I mean you know, the images that we're on the wall or on the screen here, we start walking away from manufacturing and making things just about the time the flight started to happen, that we started to lose jobs in the urban area. I think we are at a turning point now, where people are discovering the need to make things, we can't make money out of money anymore, we've got to start making money out of creating value in the marketplace.

(Stephen Henderson): Next question

(Audience): Yes, I come from Ferndale and I wonder if Hamtramck has a similar situation, Rep. Townsend was talking about the interdependence but we have residents who are isolationists, feeling very insular to stay that way, maybe we need those statistics that 80% of our town income is coming in from other places and are interdependent. Is there a way to explain this to people who really want to stay in the small little cozy corner, or don't realize that we don't have this corner.

(Stephen Henderson): I think that is a good question for Rev. Hice to address. That gets to that question of people not realizing what role they play in the communities they are in or want opportunities there are for them to play a different role in the communities and I think that is a religious issue in some ways.

(Rev Hice): Well it is because I believe all of our faith based communities embrace a tradition and believe that as God guides so we are to realize the beloved community where there is truly justice, where there is truly equity, where we are helping each other rather than just benefitting from the sacrifice of others. And when you directed an earlier question, which was a policy question, to some of the other panelists, I breathed a little bit of a sigh of relief, because he said that was a matter of governance, but in truth, when you just leave government to those who are in office, you leave it to persons who have little else to draw from than their own ideologies, and if we don't galvanize ourselves and recognize that we are not finally just residents of 240 some odd communities that happen to be in close proximity to each other, but truly are members of the same communities, and I don't just breath a sigh of relief, that somebody else has a particular problem, or that the issues of, for instance, transportation, don't really have to effect me because I'm doing all right, we've missed the point. We've stopped being good neighbors to each other

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis

Event Transcript

September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

and we've stopped, well, refused to be friends, and we don't ever get to realize what Martin Luther King, Jr. called beloved community. And to be a beloved community we have to recognize that it is really our metropolitan area that is a community and that we belong to each other, and that what happens to somebody on the Southside of Detroit matters to somebody who lives in Royal Oak finally. And so, we need to raise our voices and offer those who have been elected to positions of decision making to have something more than ideology and that is will. And it means that we have to collaborate. It means that we have to listen to each other, and no one ideology is going to win out then, then it is going to be the will of the people that is going to emerge in our dialogue.

(Stephen Henderson): Next question.

(Audience): Hello, I am Rev. Carter Gramet, I am a lifetime resident of the city of Detroit and I guess what I would like to know is, what can we do in this region, because I know we have a lot of issues to overcome, but one of the major issues deals with how we are able to finance and how we are able to develop the kind of financial infrastructure that will allow us to develop what we need to develop and one of the biggest stumbling blocks that has existed for the last 40 years, actually last 50 years, that's redlining. Redlining is a process in which financial institutions designate certain areas as undesirable for investment. Whether it is true or not, if they make the determination, everyone goes along with it and it makes it impossible to develop or grow that area. What are we doing as a region to address that, and I understand we are talking about the rims, the suburban rims, but the reality is, the way Detroit goes, so the rest goes, I've seen a lot going out of the city but nothing coming in. True enough, we spend our money in areas where we live with the exception of Detroit because there is no major infrastructure in Detroit in terms of support services. So what are we going to do about redlining in helping that development?

(Dr. Powell): Redlining, as the speaker suggested, as the question suggested, is a very important question. It's little bit complicated, but let me say a couple things. One, let me take a little exception to some of the things you said in there in terms of - we all have distinct communities and distinct histories. But a crises is when the old has died and the new has not yet been born. And a crises actually causes us to actually look for something new. And the tendency is to hold on to the old. In fact sometimes a crises sends us into holding on to the old even harder. The very fact that we're in a crises is saying what worked before doesn't work anymore, and it's not going to work. And the more quickly we figure that out and move to the future, the better off we will be. So a lot of the rationale for total local control may have made sense in the 40s or even the 50s, it doesn't make sense today.

We are a region. We're in a world where economies are organized on a regional level. You're competing not just with Germany and Japan, you're competing with China and India and Brazil. It's a very different world. The world that I grew up in as a kid is not the world that my granddaughter will grow up in. And so in term as redlining, I guess I would say this. And I just came from a meeting at the Federal Reserve Board. They make rules.

Banks borrow money from the Federal Reserve at a discount and they set credit rules. The original national redlining was instituted by the United States government. It wasn't individual realtors that actually instituted it. It was the United States government that basically said, we need a system for insuring the money that we're going to guarantee for mortgages, so we need an appraisal system. This is how you do it. And actually, it was explicit - - they talked about it a

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

little bit in the film.

We could flip that. We could say, we actually want to have money go to a certain type of community. Communities where people are reinvesting. Communities that already exist, they did this in Maryland. Communities that are integrated. Communities. . . And so we can direct that money. This is not just the market. The money that banks get is actually insured by the federal government, which means you are insuring them. You are insuring the monies that banks get, and those monies should be used to reflect the policies and values and profit the policies and values that we say we hold dear. And we don't believe in redlining anymore. We don't believe in segregation anymore. Then we need to actually direct money affirmatively. And there's actually something in the federal legislation right now that says the government is supposed to affirmatively promote integration. They've never done it. This was passed initially under Johnson, it was strengthened under Reagan, and we're still talking to HUD about – is anybody ever going to do it? The politics of it are fierce, though. People are afraid. There's still – there's that race thing. And people are going to get mad. But we do have to have different policies. And do have to have policies that support our core values. Not have our values over here and then have policies that completely undermine our values.

(Stephen Henderson): Okay the two people standing now will be the last two questions.

(Audience): Davis, as a lifetime resident of Michigan, current student at Eastern Michigan University, what policy do you have in place short term and long term to keep us, the young people, in Michigan – in Michigan?

(Stephen Henderson): That's a great question. (applause) Why don't we quickly. We don't have too much time, but I'd like each of the panelists to give a pretty quick answer to what we can do. . . something specific we can do to keep young people who we need to be the talent to be of the future here, in Michigan.

(Jim Townsend): I think building a transit system. Building a system that would foster great communities. People choose places to live certainly based on where there is a job. But they'll also increasingly, especially young people coming out of college, they're choosing places where they think they can lead a great life, and meet other people in their age group and enjoy themselves. And you've got to have density, and a transit is a big part of that. So we've got to build a transit system. We've got to get on the road to creating it as soon as possible or we're going to continue to lose more young people than any other state in the country.

(Stephen Henderson): Dr. powell.

(Dr. Powell): Very quickly, Richard Florida wrote something called Creative Community. He talks about young people are the creative class. They like things that are hip. They like things that are open after 9:00 when many of us are going to bed. (laughter) So you need to actually have the kind of density, the kind of nightlife, the kind of support, and the kind of opportunity that young people need, especially young people who leave. The people who leave, especially young people, are the most talent with opportunity. And so they, some of you may know is a computer company. . .

Large computer company. It was based in South Dakota. It was the most successful computer companies in the country. And it couldn't get young people to come there. They could come for the job, What are we going to do at night? And that computer company eventually moved to L.A., which was very expensive where all the young people what to go. So you need to create a

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

buzz. And I know you are trying to do that in places like Ferndale and also in downtown Detroit.

(Melanie Piana): Well. I'm going to echo on that, but state it a little differently. The young people want to have great experiences. They want to have new experiences and adventures, and where they find those types of choices and experiences are in places that have great quality of what we call "place-making". And that's what cities in Michigan are trying to do, is revitalize and regenerate how they grew into something where those millenials want to stay. It would be awesome if we could overlay that with a great transit system. (laughter)

(Stephen Henderson): Karen?

(Dr. Karen Majewski): Yeah, I'm with Melanie. And really I want to again underscore what the other panelists have said and talk about that in terms of making a place that people want to live. And I think that young people, they want density. Hamtramck is the densist city in Michigan. Over 10,000 people per square mile. Where will you find that anywhere else in the State of Michigan? They want places that are walkable, that have a human scale, that have a sense of community, and that have diversity. We have over 26 languages spoken in our school of two square miles. So I think that we have all the qualities that a community would want to attract young people. But it's a matter of quality of life on the small scale, on the community scale, combined with that support system, that larger support system, for instance transit, that makes life livable, that makes life enjoyable.

(Stephen Henderson): Reverend?

(Rev. John Hice): Like they said. . . (laughter) And also. . .(laughter) I believe also we need to be able to tell the story. What is the story of Detroit? Of Metropolitan Detroit. Who we are. To be able to frame ourselves as community so that they know what they're a part of. And to let them know that this is not a story in which we're sitting in the last chapter, but we're really in the middle of the book. And to be able to anticipate the future chapters. And to be able to tell that story in our faith communities, in our schools, and in other forms where they may be found.

And in addition to that, to give them meeting places. Because more important than just about anything else for Millenials is to be interrelated with each other. I'm told by Millenials that Facebook and Twitter are not sufficient. They're used, maybe overused, but they're not sufficient. And we've moved into an era in which about anything that comes to a Millenial is information that has the same value, no matter what media it comes through. Newspapers, television, radio, scripture, textbooks, the latest e-mail forward. All of it is just plain information until they get together and they listen to what their friends believe. And it is in their community, in their meeting places that they forge out who they are. Now if that's right, even more so, we need a places where interrelating can take place and where hope can develop. I'm not going to leave a place where my friends are, but if my friends are leaving, I'm going to go.

(Stephen Henderson): Last question.

(Audience): Good evening, My name is John Goleshevksi with the Michigan Dept. of Civil Rights. First of all, we'd like to thank the Suburbs Alliance, MOSES, Torrice Productions, Karen Bolsen who did a lot of work on this, for allowing us to be a co-sponsor in this. The question has to do with, and Jim Townsend talked about the legislative next steps. We have esteemed

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

municipal state leaders, faith based leaders on the panel. Dr. Powell's the quintessential expert across the country, but we'd like to talk about engaged into what next steps means. Cause we'd be happy to continue the conversation on a municipal level. And this is Detroit, but this is all over the state really. This could have been filmed anywhere, as I think we all know. But as Detroit goes, so goes the state, as some of us think. And we'd like to continue that conversation. And we'd like more concrete direction as to, what do you recommend? Cause we'd like to continue it. Thanks.

(Stephen Henderson): That's actually a great last question for us. (applause) If we could get each panelist to rattle off one or two, maybe one 'cause we're going to run out of time. . . But one thing that we can do, one thing that people sitting here can take away from here and go do in their communities to move the ball on these issues. I'll start at this end this time.

(Rev. John Hice): Tell the story of our evening tonight, and the points of inspiration that you've had, and don't let the conversation drop here, but share it with friends, share it in your faith communities and other forums where you work and in your neighborhoods, and also in your communication with your elected leaders.

(Dr. Karen Majewski): And if I could add to that of what we were saying before: we are in control of this story. Like you said, it's not the last chapter. Who is writing the last chapter? We have to be the ones to write it. So if you know where you want that next chapter to go, then you need to be working with your legislators, with your community leaders, being a community leader, even simply among your friends to make sure that next page gets turned.

(Stephen Henderson): Melanie?

(Melanie Piana): The 2nd part of the documentary spoke to me about strengthening your neighborhoods in order to strengthen your community. I ask everybody here over the next month. Go meet five new neighbors on your street. If they're out raking their lawn or walking their dog, just go up to them and say, "Hi! Where do you live? What do you like about our neighborhood? Great to meet you, and I think that's the first step of building those relationships which is going to be the foundation for creating change in the region." (applause)

(Stephen Henderson): Dr. Powell?

(Dr. Powell): I think this is extremely important. And it's been important for a long time. I watch the boarded up and vacant houses in Detroit have sat there for 30 years. They're not new. People have known that. I think that's what's different is people have a sense of urgency that allows the issue to move beyond Detroit. I think Andrea should be congratulated for basically saying it's no longer a city problem. It never was. It's a regional problem. But now it's showing up in the suburbs. First rung suburbs. If we don't do anything, it will show up in the 2nd ring suburbs. So the urgency becomes even greater.

So what I want to suggest is that we take that urgency and harness it in some way, in an organized way. So you can do a number of things. You could say, you could have a series of conversations across the region and then come back in six months and share.

You could say that in that series of conversation, you're gonna get the esteemed editorial board at the Free Press to actually cover it and talk about what's going on.

You're also going to meet with the legislative caucus that's looking at the same problems

Reimagining the Region: Building New Detroit Metropolis
Event Transcript
September 15, 2011

DIALOGUE

periodically to sort of look and be future oriented.

You have esteemed researchers here in the audience, some of them I know, who could say, how did other places turn around?

And I'll end just with this: Detroit is different. Every place is different, but not. I've gone all around the county and each time I go someplace someone says, "You could do that there, but you couldn't do it here."

And then they have a whole bunch of reasons: You can't do it in New Jersey. You can't do it in Maryland. You can't. . .

And even when you look at places that have been highly successful –like a Portland, or like a Seattle, or like a Minneapolis. We don't look at the fights they went through. We don't look at the struggle they went through. It was never easy. So I would suggest having some organized way of continuing the conversation. MOSES is here. You could use the film. But I would say, don't just go back to private conversations with one or two people. To link with each other and the larger region.

(Rep. Jim Townsend): John really, really stole my thunder. I was going to suggest that all of you take advantage of the media that's been created here. Use the wonderful films and the conversation that's followed. Because it's all free. You can get this information and share it with your friends. And, I want the SE Michigan Caucus to meet and convene around this kind of conversation. We have members from all over SE Michigan- - from Wayne, Oakland, Malcomb, Washtenaw and counties even further out.

And you know, everybody wants to be effective. Everybody wants to be powerful in their own way. And the only way you can be really effective is to set aside the resistance. It was so inspiring to hear particularly the woman in Pennsauken, because she didn't know. She had no idea what she was up against, and so she went ahead. And I think we all should sort of put that veil of ignorance over ourselves and just go ahead and charge into it, because you'll surprise yourself with what you can accomplish if you do that, and I know all of us in here - we'll do everything in our capacities to meet you and fight with you. (applause)

(Stephen Henderson): Okay, that's a great way to end the film. (applause) I want to thank the members of the panel for coming out tonight and sharing their thoughts. Be sure to fill out the surveys that you have. There are volunteers at the door who will collect them for you. I also want to make sure we thank Andrea for her wonderful films and for sharing them here with us. I want to encourage everyone to stay tuned to Detroit Public Television where we are always doing interesting things like this with issues in the region. So, thank you very much for coming tonight.