

# Journal of Comparative Urban Law and Policy

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Volume 5

Issue 1 *A Festschrift in Honor of Arthur C. Nelson on the Occasion of his Retirement - Agenda for Building a Changing World Responsibly: Commentaries and Reflections by Leaders in Urban Planning, Policy, and Design*

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Article 12

2022

## Planning as if People Mattered

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### Recommended Citation

Nelson, Arthur C. (2022) "Planning as if People Mattered," *Journal of Comparative Urban Law and Policy*. Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 12, 93-94.

Available at: <https://readingroom.law.gsu.edu/jculp/vol5/iss1/12>

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## PLANNING AS IF PEOPLE MATTERED

It seems easy for planners to become preoccupied with creating better physical places with better transportation systems, parks, neighborhoods, commercial districts and so forth. Using planning to make people's lives better ought to be the higher calling. But that is far more challenging than building back better infrastructure systems. This part of the festschrift identifies just a few of those challenges along with approaches to address them.

David A. Johnson starts with "A Policy Agenda for Addressing the Homeless Problem." While homelessness has always been with us, the floodgates were opened during the Reagan Administration when it cut housing, mental health, and related funding. States followed by "mainstreaming" institutionalized people. Popular wisdom had families and friends pitching in to care for formerly institutionalized people but that did not happen. Homelessness has since become a mainstream phenomenon for millions of Americans who cannot afford housing in large part because not enough of it is being built where it is needed at affordable prices, or whose skills are in declining demand, or who simply fall onto hard times because of health, wellness, and family issues with no safety net. Johnson outlines sweeping changes to policy, pointing out that if we committed the same level of resources to homelessness and related efforts today as we did half a century ago, then maybe the scale of homelessness would have remained unchanged.

Marc Brenman and Tom Sanchez follow with "The Influence of Civil Rights and Anti-Discrimination Laws on Shaping Our Transportation System." Noting that segregated rail cars of the 1880s and segregated buses into the middle of the last century (remember Rosa Parks?) helped spark the modern civil rights movement, Brenman and Sanchez outline the numerous ways in which civil rights and anti-discrimination laws shape our current transportation system. They then offer a suite of approaches to move toward transportation equity broadly speaking.

Don Elliott then asks: "Do Planners Always Have to Make the Neighborhood 'Better?'" He argues for "Rethinking the Disturbing Tensions Between Redevelopment and Equity." He observes that America's public sector planners are constantly trying to 'make things better' and, in fact, that's their job. This is done through comprehensive neighborhood, sector, and corridor plans. Unanswered is the question, 'make it better for whom?' The problem is that if the plan succeeds in improving the physical environment, the current residents may not be the ones who benefit. Elliott addresses the disturbing tensions between redevelopment planning and social equity. For instance, he suggests that maybe it is time for a 'don't invest here' overlay zone.

In “Planning for An Aging Population: The Sustainability Conundrum,” Sandi Rosenbloom examines the extent to which aging is addressed in leading planning journals and presented at mainstream planning conferences. Rosenbloom concludes that “planners are fairly ignorant about older people and their needs, that there is substantial ageism and sexism in these discussions, and that planners face a conundrum because seniors often make important lifestyle decisions that defy a variety of planners’ sustainability objectives.” Rosenbloom implores planners to assemble “an arsenal of tools to help seniors safely and securely live in their communities, continuing to make valuable contributions to their family, friends, and community.” If this is not done, predictable societal changes will overwhelm planners, rendering much of what they do irrelevant.

George C. Galster continues this part with “Planning the Opportunity Metropolis: An Agenda for an Era of Intensifying Technology, Climate, and Health Challenges.” He argues that “metropolitan opportunity structure theory” can guide a progressive planning agenda for a changing world. Galster’s metropolitan opportunity structure theory is a way to understand how geographic variations in the residences, businesses, institutions, infrastructure and human-built amenities at various scales arise, become spatially differentiated, and then shape opportunities for personal development, schooling, health, work, and socioeconomic advancement. After describing details of the theory, Galster outlines key emerging “changes in technology, climate and health and how they will affect how and where we work, play, reside, and access public services in ways that will further spatial inequalities.” Unfortunately, he sees these outcomes getting worse. In the final section, Galster advances a bold agenda for slowing if not reversing undesirable consequences of spatial segregation.

Planning as if People Mattered concludes with Paul Knox’s “Telos and Techne.” Planning’s telos creates “functional, efficient, and sustainable physical environments” that embraces society’s material aspirations of what it means to live well. It is then planning’s techne—its “armory of tactics, practices, concepts, approaches, and methods”—that effects the change needed to promote human flourishing. Unfortunately, grand visions of “human flourishing, social, economic, and environmental justice, and the public interest were lost” when plans and the planners implementing them used planning techne to take away the life and vitality of cities and places while at the same time “freezing the existing social order in physical form.” Knox challenges whether such planning fads as growth management, smart growth, new urbanism, and the like have lost touch with planning’s telos. He worries further that the institutions of planning education and practice perpetuate techne over telos.