

Lemons into Lemonade: Materializing Utopian Planning in Providence, Rhode Island (RI)

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Abstract

Utopian planning is uncommon. Powerful and long-lasting urban visions are difficult to conceive. Fruitful collaborations are required to implement components of utopian visions. The US city of Providence, Rhode Island (RI), has redeveloped its downtown over the last three decades in hopes of making the city more attractive and competitive. The city's urban renaissance was envisioned by, among others, Mayor Vincenti Cianci and accomplished through the collaborations of numerous stakeholder agencies and individuals. How can community members work together to materialize a revitalization vision? In this paper I analyze three propositions on utopian and collaborative planning and place making. I argue that the scale of the revitalization strategy, the individual commitment and the responsibilities of various stakeholders influence the results of collaborations to a great extent. The Providence case demonstrates that coordinated planning and continued efforts are required to materialize the utopian vision of a revitalized city.

Keywords: Utopian planning, urban revitalization, public-private partnerships, territorial equity, Providence, RI.