

Food Access & Community Development

Urban Commercial Revitalization graduate course

VCU Workshop on Sustainable Food Access
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Background: Planning Commercial Revitalization

- Bringing commercial life back to downtowns, neighborhoods, small towns, corridors & rural areas in the wake of economic change.
- *A spatial* approach to development
- Primarily in low-wealth communities

Causes of Economic Change in Low-Wealth Communities *include* (but are not limited to)

- Retail *sector*

- Increasing economies of scale in production, logistics, & merchandising
- Increasing corporate concentration domestically, but also increasing globalization, and global competition

(drivers include technological change, public policy, etc.)

Forces of Economic Change in Low-Wealth Communities *include (cont'd)*

- Population
 - Outmigration of population with more wealth into less dense, automobile-dependent suburbs
 - Polarization of incomes into more wealth and more poverty, exacerbated by racial discrimination
 - Increasing segmentation of consumer markets

Community-Based Development

- Does not solve the structural & sectoral causes of change
- But community & proximity are vitally important
 - The world is not really flat, although it is increasingly digitally connected (especially for those with wealth)
 - Geographic proximity & social cohesion are essential for human health and quality of life. We still live in through spatial communities
 - Spatial community is a “third place”

Community-Based Development *(cont'd)*

- Easy access to goods & services for daily needs is essential for well-being

Graduate Urban Commercial Revitalization Course

- One aspect of community-based development (*current form since 1989*)
- Pedagogical purposes *include*
 - Learn how to conduct retail market analyses & create innovative solutions in challenging situations
 - Understand some of the larger sectoral problems, but still act to improve communities today
 - Develop skills in melding quantitative analyses with up-close community engagement to produce implementable, action-oriented strategies

Approach

- Invitation by local government, close collaboration w/ neighborhood & civic associations, non-profits, churches, etc.
- Usually one district, sometimes one site, sometimes one city -
 - Last fall:
 - King & Queen County identified one site
 - Petersburg asked us to consider northeast quadrant of city
 - This fall:
 - Hopewell asked us to consider five sites throughout city

3 Essential Analytical Components

- Site & Neighborhood & Surroundings
- Demand Side - what do people want, what dollars are available
- Supply Side - what's there now, what could possibly work there
- Quantitative & qualitative analyses - wide range, such as
 - government stats, GIS drive-time analyses, trade area mapping, store revenue threshold analyses,
 - surveys, observation, face-to-face interviews & focus groups w/ residents,
 - interviews w/ existing stores and w/ operators of potential new stores, etc.

Goal

- Potential New Uses - What new or enhanced suppliers could meet unmet demand and what, if anything, must be improved (by public sector) to enhance site and surroundings?
- Development Concept - Building upon new & existing uses, how can this site become a more complete place that enhances the community?
- Self-Sustaining - Public sector & foundation \$ may be needed to set it up. Can it become self-sustaining?

Food Supply is Now Primary Course Focus

- Until recently, focus was all potential new retail & services, including food
- Now primarily food
 - Complicated enough on its own & requires detailed analyses
 - In most communities food anchors other retail and services
- PowerPoint Presentations from last year's class and previous classes available; this year's will be ready in December

Some Issues for Discussion?

- Housing density and retail food supply
- Income polarization, market segments & retail food store viability
- Dollar stores as a possible solution??!

Thank You