



Congratulations, Graduates, You've Inherited a Crisis...

by Maisha Tyler

Development: the word has many meanings. However, my favorite is the “process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced.” This meaning makes clear that “development” is synonymous with growth, and growth with advancement. There is no distinguishment between positive or negative growth but, if society agrees that advancement is a collective goal, the latter is preferable.

Despite growth in per capita wealth, the U.S. has extreme wealth disparity.¹ Why is good development — that which promotes upward mobility — still elusive for many?

As a recent graduate of planning school (who will be, most likely, tasked with solving some of these issues), these are questions that keep me up at night. They are particularly relevant now that the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest have exposed deep racial and socioeconomic disparities which have exacerbated (and complicated) full recovery.

Yet, the calendar says it is officially summer, and we have reached important medical milestones allowing a greater feeling of safety to return. After nearly 18 months of Zoom meetings, masking, social distancing, and isolation, our nation is slowly emerging from its pandemic bubble. According to some news

outlets, we have “turned the corner,” coming closer to that over-idealized, pre-pandemic “normal.” With greater confidence we are now once again gathering to celebrate the season’s holidays, milestones, and rites of passage: college graduations, celebratory barbecues for Memorial Day, Juneteenth, and the Fourth of July.

However, in our rush to re-embrace normalcy, we risk repeating the mistakes of our recent past. We risk embracing the very status quo which contributed to the dual pandemics which caused so much pain and devastation — COVID-19 and racism. The pandemic also included a wave of police-involved murders of African-Americans, exposing long present racial tensions

— giving rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. This period of upheaval and turmoil was one of tremendous loss of life, but it also exposed the socioeconomic and racial inequities plaguing our society. These problems persisted because the status quo was veiled in an artificial “normal” — the pandemic pierced that veil, exposing the lack of equity in access (within our healthcare, housing, criminal justice, education, and transportation systems).



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Notes From The Chair

Back to the Future

by Sean M. Maguire, AICP CEcD
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When a colleague first introduced the concept of futurism to me, all I could picture was a cloudy crystal ball. So much of my training as a planner has been steeped in heavy reliance on objective, demonstrable data and looking into the past. Data about the

past does help us understand how we got here. But thinking back over the past year, I've become less concerned about how we got here and more concerned with where we are going. I've allowed myself to plan by thinking about what will happen, rather than being bold and visionary about what could happen. And it was thinking about what will happen that has caused me to get stuck at times. Getting unstuck has required me to start dreaming again of possibilities and that optimism and creativity is what excites me about the work we do as planning + economic development professionals.

You know the old adage that if we don't learn about the past, we are bound to repeat it. It is an idea that I have allowed to over-influence me for far too long. History is important, but sometimes it can act like an anchor pulling you back against a current that wants to move forward. Relying too much on the past — *what will happen* — without looking to the future ignores all of the hope and possibilities — *what could happen* — that we as planners and economic developers should bring to our communities. Remember how you got here, but don't dwell on

it too much. Take the next step. So, what happened to me? Where did I lose that ability to be a future thinker?

And that's where we get stuck. Instead of being inspired to thinking about what could happen, my immediate response is to look backwards instead of forwards. Why? Because my initial response is to examine the past to understand what will happen in the future. Instead, I think I can be better served by

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paying careful attention to what happens, when it happens, and put more effort in envisioning future possibilities. Why does this matter to us as planners, as economic developers? It matters because we are coming out of a situation that demands our immediate attention and we are limited in access to information about this recent pandemic experience that will allow us to dissect what happened and how it will happen again. If you find yourself dwelling too much on the past, get back to the future.

— Sean M. Maguire, AICP CEcD is Chair of the Economic Development Division. He's the Director of Planning and Economic Development for the Town of Colonie, New York and is an adjunct professor of planning and public administration at the University at Albany, SUNY.

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Call for Articles — Fall edition of *News & Views*

Do you have a new economic development project or recent research that you would like to highlight? We are seeking articles on the latest trends in economic development and urban planning. Please contact us at vicki@greenlep.com if you have a potential topic that would be interesting for the APA-EDD membership. **Submission deadline: September 15, 2021.**

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES, CONT. FROM P. 1

That said, graduating during a pandemic has its perks. During my studies, I learned that nothing is impossible — solving homelessness, creating housing for all, designing a fair and inclusive society. We can solve any problem if we work together — and design the systems which guide us with equity (for all) in mind. So, what can planners, new and veteran alike, do to address much needed change?

1. We need to act, boldly, as change agents to ensure the entire community is incorporated, included, and actively engaged in planning.
2. Community development should include all members of the community. It should be a collaborative and inclusionary, not exclusionary.
3. Economic development is collaborative — community-wide and across all strata means all facets — economic, mobility, and housing.

Adaptive Reuse for Buildings — and People

Adaptive reuse is typically a term used solely for the built environment (i.e., old homes, factories, industrial areas, and dead malls). For example, “adaptive reuse” is used for conversions of retail centers (single-tenant assets and obsolete anchor stores) in micro-fulfillment centers. However, we need to also apply the term for building our collective social capital. The Biden Administration referred to this as “human infrastructure.”

Development cannot be lop-sided, and it has to include investments in education, training for jobs in new and emerging technology and R&D. Displaced workers need to be incorporated into redevelopment plans as well — not just the abandoned buildings they leave behind.

Equity as Integral to Economic Justice

In addition to providing access to education and (re)-training, addressing our underlying lack of equity can community-wide upward mobility. In short, addressing a lack of access in marginalized communities can function as restorative economic justice. Consider the goal of increasing Black homeownership, which according to 2021 NAREB Shiba Report, is roughly half that of white Americans. More efforts are possible to strengthen Black homeownership: evaluating inclusionary zoning programs and their effects on the African-American communities and creating a Renaissance Neighborhood Program in historically redlined neighborhoods.²

If economic development is to be successful for marginalized communities, it must (a) acknowledge the

root causes (i.e., historic and systemic exclusion from pathways to social mobility) and (b) rectify them. An example of this would be urban expressway removal projects. Many were constructed through Black and Brown communities, destroying vibrant Main Streets within the urban core — as well as geographically segregating communities. Interestingly, many urban

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expressways share the same boundaries as those defined in Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) Redlining Maps. Removing the remnants of exclusionary transportation policy may also aid in rectifying exclusionary housing policy by creating areas within the city center where additional housing could be built.

Incorporating Climate Justice Into Economic Development Plans

Climate change presents a growing problem for many communities — particularly those along coastlines and ports. Communities need to plan for resiliency and equity in climate initiatives. How are we building the cities of the future to withstand more devastating natural disasters, flooding, and severe weather events? Are the marginalized, those without resources disproportionately impacted? How can those same stakeholders be empowered within resiliency plans to create viable and sustainable change?

Housing and Broadband as Critical Infrastructure

According to a recent report released by the National Association of Realtors (NAR), the U.S. has a deficit of between “5.5 to 6.8 million housing units.”³

When we think of “home,” we think of our physical space (i.e., our house, apartment, four walls and a roof). Rarely do we conceive of it within the context of place — our city, state, or regional. We also don’t think of the components of home — of place — the infrastructure (transportation, sewer, waste disposal, access to work, educational opportunities, shopping, and recreation). These things are part and parcel to where (and how we live).

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Importance of home was abundantly clear during the pandemic; if lucky enough to have one, we were confined it. If not, like many homeless and housing insecure, that need was even more pronounced. According to a 2020 report from the Coalition for the Homeless, the number “of COVID-19-related deaths among homeless New Yorkers in shelters in April 2020 was 157 percent higher than the number of deaths from all causes during an average month in 2019.”⁴ Not having a home was the difference between life and death.

The pandemic helped to clarify the importance of housing from simply a vehicle of wealth-creation to an essential to delivery of healthcare. If your home had access to reliable and stable broadband service, it also functioned as the de facto workplace (and educational center). If one of the millions without broadband, you most likely suffered disparate socioeconomic impacts due to COVID-19 closures.

The pandemic made clear: housing and broadband are infrastructure. They are as integral to our modern society as roads, bridges, and tunnels, and complimentary to the built environment. Economic development crucial to maintaining our collective and social infrastructure — built and otherwise.

As a child of Upstate New York (which, depending on where you live, was that vast region north of the Five Boroughs and Long Island), I grew up dreaming of The Big Apple. Growing up here, the City was my inspiration for becoming an urban planner. Its skyline loomed large — the epitome of everything cosmopolitan and exciting. Kingston’s economy, like many Hudson Valley river towns, was reliant on a single firm (at the time, IBM). When the single firm left it took most of the economy with it. Residents had to pick up the proverbial pieces and try to reassemble them into a functional economic ecosystem.

My younger self responded to the inevitable decline after IBM closed by feverishly reading Jane Jacobs and brainstorming ideas about how to rescue my small, path dependent, exurban city from obscurity. However, after becoming a planning student (and now, thankfully, graduate) I came to realize that, although New York City was/is/always will be the nucleus of our regional atom, the periphery has a purpose. I understand that the City’s development and regional dominance was aided by proximity and access to abundant natural resources. In that way, the Hudson Valley, the periphery — Upstate — contributed to New York City’s growth.

I mention all of this because everything — even crises — has a function. We learn from it, and we grow. Looking back at the last year and a half, the worst thing

we can wish for is a return to “normal.” Rather, we should stop viewing crises solely through the lens of mitigation and instead focus on solving, and preventing, further crises.

Planners need to become unapologetic visionaries — and advocates — for their communities and those who live in them. When looking at “dead malls” and underutilized retail, stop following the same strategies or “reinventing” the same, tired use. Perhaps the “problem retail” is actually the solution to a housing crisis? Perhaps it could be transformed into the elusive “Third Space” Viktor Gruen originally envisioned? Museums? Planetariums? Observatories? For planners (both new to the field and experienced) to be successful in addressing large scale problems, we cannot be afraid of big ideas.

References

¹ Ewing, J. (2020, September 23). “United States is the richest country in the world, and it has the biggest wealth gap.” Retrieved from The New York Times: www.nytimes.com/2020/09/23/business/united-states-is-the-richest-country-in-the-world-and-it-has-the-biggest-wealth-gap.html.

² National Association of Real Estate Brokers. (2020). *The State of Black America (SHIBA)*. Lanham, MD: NAREB.

³ National Association of Realtors (NAR). (2021). *Housing is Critical Infrastructure: Social and Economic Benefits of Building More Units*. Berkeley, CA: Rosen Consulting Group (RCG).

⁴ Nortz, S. (2020). *Testimony on the Disparate Impact of COVID-19 on the Homeless in New York City*. New York, NY: Coalition for the Homeless.

— Maisha Tyler holds a baccalaureate degree in political science and public policy from Marist College, and is a graduate of the University of Southern California’s Price School of Public Policy and the University of Albany’s Department of Geography and Planning, earning Masters degrees (MUP, MRP) in Urban and Regional Planning. She has served on her city’s Zoning Taskforce, as well as her association’s (HGAR) Legislative Policy and Fair Housing Committee(s). She is a member of the American Planning Association (APA), Urban Land Institute (ULI), National Association of Realtors (NAR), and National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB). Maisha was elected and is currently serving as the Lower Hudson Valley West representative (2021-23) for the APA Metro NY Chapter. A lover of “big plans,” she is interested in understanding the intersection of urban planning, policy, engineering, real estate, and development — with the goal of ending homelessness and housing insecurity. Eventually, Maisha’s goal is to plan and develop affordable, equitable, sustainable, and resilient communities for ALL.

Communities across the country will be able to apply for \$3 billion in funding immediately

On July 22, U.S. Secretary of Commerce [Gina M. Raimondo](#) announced six programs, collectively called Investing in America’s Communities, that the Economic Development Administration (EDA) will execute to equitably invest the \$3 billion it received from President Biden’s American Rescue Plan.

This EDA investment is the largest economic development initiative from the Department of Commerce in decades and will help communities across the country build back better. Investing in America’s Communities includes:

- [Build Back Better Regional Challenge](#) (\$1 billion) will capitalize on American ingenuity and American workers by providing a transformational investment to regions across the country to revitalize their economies.
- [Good Jobs Challenge](#) (\$500 million) is designed to help get Americans back in good-paying jobs. The program will develop and strengthen regional workforce training systems and sector-based partnerships with a focus on programs targeted at women, people of color and historically under-served communities.
- [Economic Adjustment Assistance](#) (\$500 million) grants will help hundreds of communities across the nation plan, build, innovate, and put people back to work through projects tailored to meet local needs.
- [Indigenous Communities](#) (\$100 million) program will work hand-in-hand with Tribal Governments and Indigenous communities to develop and execute economic development projects they need to recover from the pandemic and build economies for the future.
- [Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation](#) (\$750 million) program will focus on revitalizing

the hard-hit travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries and accelerate the recovery of communities that rely on these sectors.

- [Statewide Planning, Research and Networks](#) (\$90 million) grants include funding for state planning efforts as well as grants to build Communities of Practice to extend technical assistance to support EDA’s work with grantees.

As part of the six programs, EDA is making a [Coal Communities Commitment](#), allocating \$300 million to ensure support for these communities as they recover from the pandemic and create new jobs and opportunities, including through the creation or expansion of a new industry sector.

For more information, visit www.eda.gov/ARPA for the latest news on EDA’s implementation plans. Sign up for the [EDA newsletter](#) and follow EDA on social media: [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

Watch Secretary Raimondo make the announcement at the White House on July 22:



Save The Date!

The Economic Development Division will host new-member orientations and member meet-ups on Thurs., September 23 and Thurs., December 16 (both will start at 4:00 p.m. ET). Check the Division website and our social media sites for information on registration in the coming weeks. (Note that summer vacation season and the general bounce-back from the pandemic distracted us from hosting a June session.)

These mostly-social events allow members to network and learn about ongoing and upcoming Division initiatives. We hope you will plan to attend. Mark that calendar now!



American Planning Association
Economic Development Division

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Resources News

- Findings:** We will be starting a “Findings” column in the next issue of *News & Views*. This recurring column will feature a summary and commentary on a recent academic study on economic development. We hope this forum will assist urban planners and economic development professionals in applying the latest research to their communities.

If you are interested in authoring a future “Findings” column, please reach out to Dr. Greg Schrock, Assoc. Professor at Portland State University, at gschrock@pdx.edu.

- PAS Reports online:** The APA has a treasure trove of PAS reports that are free for APA members. The most recent PAS report is on economic development, *Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Strategies*. At the last Texas APA Conference that I attended in 2019, there was a session on corridor redevelopment and the room was packed with attendees. I think that many communities are grappling with how to revitalize aging corridors into vibrant areas that attract economic activity. This PAS report gives practical information on how to approach corridors in your communities. Visit the APA PAS Reports website: www.planning.org/pas/reports and download PAS Report 598.

Please submit any relevant resources for the EDD to feature in our email newsletters or *News & Views* to Vicki Oppenheim, AICP, EDD Communications Chair, at vicki@greenlep.com.



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Mark Your Calendars!

The APA-EDD will host a panel discussion on **Equitable Economic Development** on **October 29** from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. (EST). The program is under review for 1.5 CM. The following topics will be included:

1. Historical context of the practice
2. What is wrong with the definition, policy and practice of Economic Development?
3. What is your definition of Equity?
4. What is your definition of “Economic Development”?
5. Context of Development versus Growth
6. Have a Case Study *(Individual Examples)
 - a. Ending slide with references
7. Context of Development versus Growth
 - a. Actors
 - b. Target Audience — intended and unintended
 - c. Policy Impact
 - d. Financial Impact
 - i. Community
 - ii. Economically

Moderator: **David Noble**, EDD Diversity Committee Chair

Panel: **Dr. David A. Lewis**, University at Albany, SUNY (Albany, NY)
Dr. Elsie Harper-Anderson, Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond, VA)
Brian H. Hurd, Rise Community Development (St. Louis, MO)
Arlene Way, Arbor Hill Development Corporation (Albany, NY)

APA Economic Development Division Survey

Every two years, the Economic Development Division of the American Planning Association surveys its members to determine how its members assess the Division’s performance and preferences.

Your response is important to the Division and its leadership. Please take a few minutes to complete this brief survey: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfyW1Cyfd0gBNY-Q6pL5wDKtv1bDp3CKl-l2Rtn8To5C3GkO6A/viewform>. Thank you!

— Emi Thériault, AICP, EDD Division Chair-Elect

Volunteer Opportunities with the Economic Development Division

A team of volunteers keeps the Economic Development Division going. If you’ve always wanted to “get involved,” this is your opportunity to help the planning profession.

Our committees (awards, communications, membership, website, programming, etc.) welcome enthusiastic hands — volunteer your skills for the greater good!

Contact us at info_EDD@planning.org if you are interested in helping out and getting more involved.



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Economic Development Division

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