

**COMPREHENSIVE
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING:
TAKING ACTION IN BOSTON'S
SOUTH END**

Introduction: Three Issues for Discussion

- Planning Traditions-as background to master planning
- The Boston Master Plans
- Urban Renewal Planning in the South End and the Planning Dilemmas

PLANNING TRADITIONS

- **The Design Tradition:** [Aesthetics] the use and organization of built space
- **The Rational Tradition:** [Efficiency] the use of technical knowledge, “facts”
- **The Reform Tradition:** [Equity] social, political and institutional accountability for the poor, marginalized and excluded
- **The Power Tradition:** [Effectiveness] getting things done, implementation, political clout
- **The Environmental Tradition:** the emerging awareness of and concern for the natural environment as an integral part of the planning process (NEW KID ON THE BLOCK)

THE BOSTON MASTER PLANS – A COMPARISON: A. Vision

- 1950 Plan

"A proper city plan as a powerful influence upon the mental and moral development of the people. It is the firm basis for the building of a healthy and happy community"

- Logue Plan

tension between Utopian and Pragmatic: only limitations are "willingness of the people themselves to carry it out and the everyday requirements for getting things done"

THE BOSTON MASTER PLANS – A COMPARISON:

B. Concept of Blight

- 1950 Plan

“land uses have to be rationalized to wipe out those extremes of blight that levy severe social and economic costs upon the balance of the city”

one can know by analysis of “Scientific facts” (taking into account condition and age, and rent of residential buildings)

- Logue Plan

- issue of blight avoided by creating 2 categories:

- structural : "held in check" because of variegated neighborhood pattern, relative lack of overcrowding, basic structural soundness of most of the city's buildings

- environmental: “real issue”: incompatible land use, changing economic character of neighborhoods, lack of basic public services in those neighborhoods

THE BOSTON MASTER PLANS – A COMPARISON:

C. Time Horizon

- 1950 Plan

"...a realistic plan looks only to the predictable future, a relatively short time in this dynamic age, possibly twenty-five years."

- Logue Plan

Ten years

THE BOSTON MASTER PLANS – A COMPARISON:

D. Degree of Detail and connection to specific programs

- 1950 Plan

“I understand that only the essential or key planning elements are dealt with in this report leaving refinements to be studied and detailed progressively as the work continues”

- Logue Plan

Emphasis on tying it to federal dollars and specific programs.

“The Plan attempts to give explicit direction to the ideals that underlie the development program”

- action oriented
- use of federal dollars all over public action for private change
- orchestrate public investment–capital web
- focus on land use NOT residential demolition
- focus on healing neighborhoods and connecting them

THE BOSTON MASTER PLANS – A COMPARISON:

E. Meaning of comprehensiveness / Equity issues

- 1950 Plan

Not mentioned

- Logue Plan

Central element on paper:

“From its inception the Development Program has assumed that the elimination of physical blight can only be accomplished if it is accompanied by the elimination of its social counterparts: poverty, racial injustice, insufficient schooling and unemployment”

Both Comprehensive Plans are concerned to see Boston in a regional context

Both know that decisions there are outside the control of the city

DILEMMAS IN PLANNING PRACTICE

- Government regulation vs. reliance on markets
- Equity vs efficiency vs. effectiveness
- Comprehensive vs. incremental
- Bottom up vs. top down
- Utopian vs. Pragmatic
- Public Interest vs. Pluralism

DILEMMAS IN PLANNING PRACTICE:

Government regulation vs. reliance on markets

- not regulation as much as creating a market
- federal government expected to leverage energize the private sector
- The Feds” as partner and patron

DILEMMAS IN PLANNING PRACTICE:

Equity vs efficiency vs. effectiveness

- have to see it triangulated with efficacy-
i.e. getting things done
- importance of time and timetable

DILEMMAS IN PLANNING PRACTICE: Comprehensive vs. incremental

- what is the meaning of comprehensive?
i.e. how much social planning?
 - how much wait for social planning?
 - how tie social planning to physical?
 - how deal with skid row in the South End?
- part of the planning process:
Who plans for it and how?

DILEMMAS IN PLANNING PRACTICE:

Bottom up vs. top down

- Logue the master builder BUT slogan of “planning with people” -- issue becomes “which people”?
- Dependent on approval in the neighborhoods
- Middle range-i.e. many neighborhoods aggregated:

what SCALE constitutes the bottom and top?

DILEMMAS IN PLANNING PRACTICE:

Utopian vs. pragmatic

- can be utopian both in terms of what plan for and how plan i.e. inclusionary idea
- South End should not be a shiny new place but not a museum either
- Tightly bound into renewal funding and presumption of federal dollars
- so what is "utopian in planning"? getting approval at the renewal

DILEMMAS IN PLANNING PRACTICE:

Public interest vs. pluralism

- public vs. private

regarding the "vocabulary of the times" what constitutes the public interest -- giving up your house?

- problem of spatial distribution vs. "interest"

Lodging house owners vs. block association -- i.e. importance of "Place/space"

- people don't sort out by "place"
- What is the public interest in the South End?

OTHER PRACTICE DILEMMAS:

Role of the planner

- normative view of what decision rules are
- what the local system allows-i.e. the politics of neighborhood-who has power?
- caught between demands of the neighborhood and demands of city hall (may not be the same)
- "will of the people" vs/ what will fly in renewal process/city hall etc. how much to intervene?

OTHER PRACTICE DILEMMAS:

Scale

- master plans talks about city and region as well as neighborhood

what are issues that rise above "neighborhood level" ?

- what is the “neighborhood”-given 16 neighborhood associations in the South End
- Groups don't sort out by spatial location. What is the meaning of “scale” when don't have a physical place as base?