

Buffalo Law Review

Volume 39
Number 2 *Buffalo Change & Community*

Article 12

4-1-1991

Introduction

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Recommended Citation

Peter Pitegoff, *Introduction*, 39 Buff. L. Rev. 507 (1991).

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/buffalolawreview/vol39/iss2/12>

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Introduction

Cover Page Footnote

Illustrations: Things are just fine the way they are . . . and Pilot Field's back on track . . . by Tom Toles

Part IV. Community Capacity

INTRODUCTION

BUFFALO has the capacity to do better, to capture a moment of opportunity for change. Throughout this journal, within a critical perspective, is a thread of optimism — from Indian communities as laboratories for new economic models to organized labor as a player in progressive change to the increasing immobility of capital as opening opportunity for new alliances. This final section weaves that thread into a more explicit and expanded sense of community capacity.

In the area of affordable housing, George Hezel sees the potential for a network of community based organizations to undertake low income housing development and thus enhance the stock of critically needed housing. Hezel documents a staggering reduction recently in affordable housing for low-income residents of Buffalo. Yet, despite the availability of state government subsidy programs, few of Buffalo's not-for-profit community organizations have engaged in subsidized housing development.

Hezel explains some of the structural reasons that Buffalo's infrastructure of community organizations is so weak with respect to housing development. One factor is the demand placed by government funders on these organizations to provide service oriented housing programs, leaving little staff time or other resources for development activity. Another factor is the failure of most of the not-for-profit housing organizations to move comfortably and credibly among the financial institutions, trade associations, and construction industry that comprise the world of housing development. In addition, a field crowded with a fragmented array of organizations, community based and otherwise, has led to a thin spread of public administrative funds and a balkanization of the geographical opportunities for development.

Finally, the complexity of housing finance and development requires a sophistication and expertise not currently present in most community based organizations nor sufficiently available to them from affordable technical assistance organizations. Hezel sees potential nonetheless, and draws confidence in part from his work in low-income housing development through the UB School of Law development clinics. Hezel's article presents the limiting issues as a framework for his proposal to strengthen

the role of community organizations in creating affordable housing in Buffalo.

Catherine Armitage follows with an optimistic assessment of the potential for public-private partnerships, with emphasis on community involvement. Her article documents the aggressive program of Buffalo's Department of Community Development to rebuild the central business district downtown, using federal funding programs to leverage private capital. Through interviews with all members of the Common Council, she examines a divided leadership and a government distracted by internal disputes. But Armitage also identifies some common ground among the Councilmembers — all acknowledge the need for private sector involvement in public economic development projects, and also admit to the need for community and citizen participation. She sees in this the potential for public-private partnerships with neighborhoods, a "neighborhood growth" model of economic development that might cut across political factions.

Henry Taylor describes the sort of neighborhood, or group of neighborhoods, on the east side of Buffalo ideally suited for such community based development. He challenges the notion that the African American community in the east side of Buffalo has become a physical ghetto, isolated and blighted. Instead, despite a hard hit from structural economic changes to Buffalo, the east side is still a cross-class community and vibrant cultural center, even for African Americans living elsewhere in the region. Taylor posits Buffalo as an ideal site for study of black residential development in the post-industrial city. He presents his variation on social transformation theory, with a note of optimism for medium sized smokestack cities like Buffalo.

In closing, Michael Frisch reflects on the April 1990 conference on Buffalo Change and Community and on the goal of reconstructing the relationship of change and community. We must avoid getting stuck, he reminds us, in well worn metaphors and ideas about Buffalo. He sees Buffalo virtually littered with possibilities for innovation. But we cannot reach nor even see these new avenues without freeing ourselves from lockstep imitation of other cities and from conventional assumptions. The conference and this journal, by clearing and reclaiming space for some constructive new approaches, has moved us further toward breaking ground for progressive change and community.

PETER PITEGOFF

THINGS ARE FINE JUST THE WAY THEY ARE

DOWNTOWN IS ON THE MOVE

DOWNTOWN RETAIL IS STILL MOVING TO THE SUBURBS. AND POTENTIAL DOWNTOWN HOUSING, WHICH COULD SUPPORT DOWNTOWN RETAIL, IS MOVING TO THE WATERFRONT.

PLANNING

CRIME & POLICE

CRIME MAY NOT BE UNDER CONTROL, BUT POLICE CERTAINLY ARE.

RACE RELATIONS

"THE CITY OF GOOD FENCES."

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

THE ONLY RELIC LEFT STANDING IS THE ONE PICTURED HERE.

HEY, THE WATERFRONT

AN INDUSTRIAL WASTELAND BEING TRANSFORMED INTO AN OVERBUILT, FENCED OFF, PRIVATIZED SPECIAL-INTEREST WASTELAND.



THE ECONOMY

MAYBE CAN'T TAKE CREDIT FOR THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC BOOM, BUT CAN STILL POINT TO SOME OF THE HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT IN NEW YORK STATE.

DON'T FORGET EDUCATION

GIVING OUR KIDS THE KIND OF EDUCATION THEY NEED FOR THE FACTORY JOBS THAT AREN'T HERE ANYMORE.

ENVIRONMENT

WAITED 11 YEARS UNTIL THE COKE OVENS FINALLY GOT A CLEANUP PLAN, THEN ASKED THEM TO GET OUT OF TOWN.

ABORTION

FEELS FULLY QUALIFIED TO MAKE YOUR DECISION FOR YOU.

PERSONALITY

DOES NOT BEAT UP ANYBODY IN AN ELECTION YEAR.

TUES

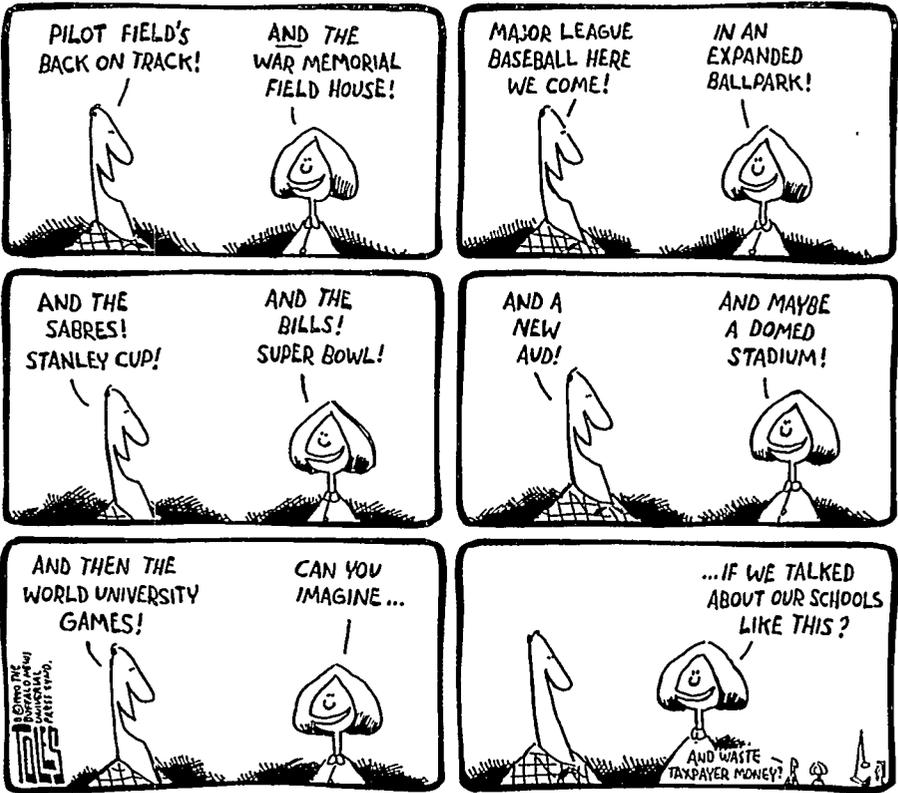
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HE MUST BE FOR HOYT



THAT'S WHAT I SAID!





August 6, 1990

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