

A DIAMOND IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN:  
STADIUM-DRIVEN URBAN RENEWAL, 1955-2000

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## ABSTRACT

### A DIAMOND IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN: STADIUM-DRIVEN URBAN RENEWAL, 1955-2000

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This dissertation analyzes the processes behind post-World War II stadium-driven urban renewal in three major American cities: Los Angeles, Chicago and Detroit. The historical and political contexts varied dramatically within these cities, allowing for an analysis of similarities and reoccurring trends in the processes of stadium-driven urban renewal that transcend the limitations inherent in an analysis of one particular place or time in history. This historical analysis of stadium construction provides a lens through which we can better understand the processes behind postwar urban renewal over the second half of the twentieth century. Previous scholarship on stadium construction, as discussed in the introduction, has demonstrated the well-documented motives of Major League Baseball owners who see publicly-funded stadiums as a means to dramatically increase revenues while catering to an increasingly upper-class clientele. And yet, even with more than three decades of scholarship that has definitively shown stadium construction to be a poor investment of public dollars, public officials all over the country continue to find ways to invest public money into private enterprise with little, if any, tangible return on investment for taxpayers.

American cities are complex organisms made up of multiple clusters of associated people whose reasons for association vary as widely as kinship, race, gender, community, faith, employment, commercial partnership, or political affiliation. These clusters, which yield very different levels of influence and power, have competing visions and interests regarding the

development of the city. And when it comes to stadium construction, or any other form of urban redevelopment, there are varying levels of personal impact; some clusters have more at stake. Losing a baseball team is extremely painful for local fans. The loss of local homes, businesses, and entire communities in the process of stadium development has adversely impacted the lives of local citizens. Major League Baseball owners always profit from the construction of a new stadium. But for this unequal return on investment to have continued successfully for so long, there must be clusters of association within the urban power structures that also, as they say, “make a killing” in these deals.

This dissertation examines the clusters, or the connected associated interests, involved in the process of stadium construction. The term coalition is often used in public discussion and scholarship in the field, but there are some associated interests involved in these processes that are not overtly named (often intentionally) in the public presentation of these clusters. Moreover, one often finds “stadium coalitions” working with “pro-growth coalitions” with connections to “political coalitions” all simultaneously involved in these processes. This dissertation will first identify, and then articulate, the general processes and interests that form and influence those larger clusters of urban power and demonstrate that urban power nexuses continue to be shaped primarily by race, political connections and ultimately, and the will of the private sector. The history of postwar stadium-driven urban renewal demonstrates that the American city has been, and continues to be, refashioned for those willing to spend their discretionary income in rising urban tourist economies, often to the detriment of a once proud and increasingly displaced urban working class.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my incredibly supportive lover, Natalie, and to our three beautiful children, Harley, Jack and Wesley. I love you all.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Stadium-Driven Urban Development

*Cities' willingness to believe the claims of these stadium boosters, despite all evidence to the contrary, reminds Robert Baade of Pascal's Wager. "The idea was somebody asked if [French philosopher Blaise Pascal] believed in God, and he said, 'Yes, I believe in God because I can't take a chance that there isn't one.'" Baade says, "I think in some ways that resembles city attitudes with regard to this thing. I think that people who make decisions about these things say to themselves that we believe there is an economic impact because we really can't take the chance that there isn't one. In part I think that's a reflection of the state of urban America."*<sup>1</sup>

Stadium construction is a process of producing semi-public space, a process that began in earnest during the first decades of the twentieth century. Originally, stadiums were privately developed structures built by wealthy, politically connected entrepreneurs seeking to capitalize on the growing public interest in organized sport.<sup>2</sup> Between 1955 and 2000, developers, city officials, and team owners in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit engaged in the process of stadium development with varying results. These processes offer concrete historical examples of the forces that shaped the policy and practice of postwar urban development and renewal programs that contributed to the production of urban semi-public social spaces.<sup>3</sup> Studied together as comparative urban history, the examples of stadium construction in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit elucidate the power nexuses behind baseball stadium-driven urban development in American cities.

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<sup>1</sup> Joanna Cagan and Neil DeMause, *Field of Schemes: How the Great Stadium Swindle Turns Public Money into Private Profit* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1998), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Steven A. Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 227.

<sup>3</sup> In *City Games* Riess defines semi-public spaces as "privately owned but open for a fee to the general public" (38). That was true of the stadiums built around the turn of the twentieth century; however, the stadiums built after World War II were increasingly funded by public tax dollars and other municipal government subsidies. A clearer definition of the term within the context of this study would be "publicly owned spaces open for a fee to the general public," constructed to generate profits for private team owners, increase commercial activity in areas surrounding the stadium, and provide entertainment for large public audiences. Seemingly an exception, privately funded Dodger Stadium was built on municipally owned land, prepared at the city's expense.

The stadium-driven urban redevelopment model, in conjunction with racialized urban planning (described, for example, by Thomas Sugrue for Detroit, and by Bradford Hunt, by Arnold Hirsch, and by Gregory Squires and colleagues for Chicago)<sup>4</sup> directly affected the residents of neighborhoods, particularly in relation to employment, housing, changes in public transportation, and increasing commercialization. The stadiums built in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit faced significant, if not ultimately effective, opposition from city residents. In fiercely contested battles over urban property rights, the proper municipal use of that property, and the symbolically powerful cultural meanings ascribed to urban property, coalitions of city politicians, business interests, and civic boosters built monuments to civic pride and the immense (private) profitability of socially produced, privately controlled, semi-public spaces. For just like towering skyscrapers, housing projects, and mass-transit, baseball stadiums are powerful urban symbols. For pro-growth urban coalitions (made up of team owners, the press, and the local business interests and politicians that stand to profit from the construction of new stadiums), these stadiums symbolize urban renewal, economic prosperity, and the internationally recognized prestige afforded to “Major League Cities.” However, for the small businesses and residents displaced by new stadium projects, they often symbolize the corrupt urban political processes that serve powerful commercial interests, to the detriment of the tax-paying residents forced to fund stadium development and the poor communities of racial minorities targeted for slum clearance.

On one level, municipal authorities, in their efforts to redevelop failing commercial districts or develop areas with untapped commercial potential, have capitulated to the

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Gregory D. Squires et al., *Race, Class and the Response to Urban Decline* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

manipulation of baseball owners who threaten to relocate their team unless their demands for a publicly funded new stadium and extensive tax subsidies are met. City politicians and boosters who are fearful of losing their status as a “Major League City” sell these stadium projects to the public through the dissemination of overly optimistic financial projections. Such reports, presented by a financially and politically controlled local media, promise urban renewal and a boost to the local economy through the creation of additional jobs and commercial investment. This economic model, driven by Major League Baseball’s antitrust monopoly which perpetually maintains an environment where the demand always exceeds the supply, fosters intercity competition for teams that can prove to be detrimental to residents and businesses located in areas targeted for stadium construction.

At the same time urban development of any kind involves incredibly complex processes and a vast web of urban power coalitions, often with competing interests. A thorough examination of those processes demonstrates that changes in the economic and political conditions of major cities have proven to affect stadium-driven urban development policies as significantly (if not more so) than Major League Baseball’s profit-driven ownership. As American cities have transitioned from industrial and manufacturing economies to economies dominated by the service and entertainment sectors, municipal leaders have looked at stadium development as an attractive way to boost both the cities’ emerging tourist economies and their symbolic status as “Major League Cities.”<sup>5</sup> And when the boosters finally succeed, there are always (what one scholar calls) “Major League Losers,”<sup>6</sup> often the poor racial and ethnic

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<sup>5</sup> For the most part, professional sports stadiums tap into and help form regional rather than national tourist economies, such as national parks, Disney World and historic landmarks.

<sup>6</sup> Mark S. Rosentraub, *Major League Losers: The Real Cost of Sports and Who’s Paying for It* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

minorities living in older neighborhoods targeted by city officials as areas of urban blight in need of renewal.

Race was a dominant thread in the history of postwar urban development efforts in what scholars have called “the age of white flight.”<sup>7</sup> Suburbanization gave those living in increasingly crowded and racially diversified big cities a way to get out and form their own communities. Of course, that typically only applied to whites who had the financial means to buy newly developed suburban homes. Racial minorities with the means to buy homes in or near white suburban communities were regularly denied access through the use of racial covenants and intimidation.<sup>8</sup> Poor Southern African Americans, Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican Americans, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and other “colored” ethnic groups migrating into cities of the North to find manufacturing jobs were left to fight over the scraps of older, decaying inner-city neighborhoods. In *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*, Eric Avila cites this particularly relevant example from an oral history given by a Brooklyn native who suggests that the decision of Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley to move the Dodgers out of Brooklyn was a part of that “white flight” process: “I guess O’Malley was like everyone else in Brooklyn. As long as you’re not my neighbor . . . it was okay. But once [Puerto Ricans and African Americans] started to live in the neighborhood . . . it was time to move out.”<sup>9</sup> From the nation’s founding, America’s development both at the local and national level have been shaped

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of recent scholarship dealing with the problems of “white flight” include: Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Rachael A. Woldoff, *White Flight/Black Flight: The Dynamics of Racial Change in an American Neighborhood* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Don Parson, *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005); Robert M. Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870–1930* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920–1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Roger Biles, *Richard J. Daley: Politics, Race, and the Governing of Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 151.

by migration, racial difference, and conquest justified on the basis of that difference. The story of Los Angeles (presented in chapter 1) articulates the transnational development of that process from Spain to Mexico to Los Angeles over the span of a century.

In the 1950s, many of the older industrial manufacturing cities in the Rust Belt had begun extensive urban renewal programs centered on slum clearance. Urban planners and municipal leaders argued that the best way to revive cities suffering from the centripetal forces of white flight and commercial disinvestment was to demolish sections of the city suffering from “urban blight.” In his seminal work on the crisis in postwar Detroit, Thomas Sugrue argued, “City officials expected that the eradication of ‘blight’ would increase city tax revenue, revitalize the decaying urban core, and improve the living conditions of the poorest slum dwellers.”<sup>10</sup> These assumptions were at the core of urban renewal policies in cities throughout the nation, such as Chicago, Camden, Boston, and New York.<sup>11</sup> Municipal leaders and boosters looking to generate public support for the construction of new stadiums in the urban core have continued to work from these assumptions. Thus, over the second half of the twentieth century, stadium construction has increasingly become part of the broader discourse of post–World War II urban renewal policies.

When the Dodgers left Brooklyn in 1958, Los Angeles was still a relatively young metropolis with growing manufacturing and entertainment economies. One of the great advantages available to the developers of metropolitan Los Angeles was vast tracts of open land, a luxury that many of the older cities located in the northeast corridor of the country had long

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<sup>10</sup> Sugrue, *Orgins of the Urban Crisis*, 48–49.

<sup>11</sup> Biles, *Richard J. Daley*; Howard Gillette Jr., *Camden after the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Alexander Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block: The Rebirth of America’s Urban Neighborhoods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940–1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

since exhausted. Moreover, O'Malley, who moved the Dodgers from Brooklyn to Los Angeles, benefited from the good luck of historical timing. The leaders of Los Angeles were looking to redevelop their "downtown" right at the moment when the United States began to dramatically expand its infrastructure to accommodate automobiles and the suburbanites who preferred cars to public transportation by rail. Ironically, although O'Malley sought to follow his "preferred customers" out to the suburbs, his deal with Los Angeles put him on the northern edge of downtown—right on the site of what was formerly a working-class neighborhood of Mexican and Mexican American migrants. Conveniently, the site also happened to be located at the intersection of California's new and growing highway system.

In a discussion about race and attendance at baseball games in his work on the development of American sports and cities, sports historian Steven A. Riess points to research by economist Roger G. Noll, who in 1974 "found a negative correlation between attendance at baseball games . . . and the presence of a large black population" near the stadium. Riess continued, noting that "Noll did not identify a direct linkage between urban decay and racial composition but pointed out that cities which have . . . old baseball parks in undesirable neighborhoods were mainly in large northern and Midwestern cities with relatively large black populations."<sup>12</sup> In this respect the owners of baseball teams in these older cities—like Boston's Lou Perini, as well as O'Malley and Horace Stoneham in New York—were no different than other business owners trying to find a solution to white flight from America's cities after the Second World War.

In *It's Hardly Sportin': Stadiums, Neighborhoods and the New Chicago*, authors Costas Spirou and Larry Bennett suggest that even as late as the mid-1980s, the same concerns over the

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<sup>12</sup> Riess, *City Games*, 248; Roger G. Noll, *Government and the Sports Business: Papers Prepared for a Conference of Experts, with an Introduction and Summary* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1974), 128–30, 140.

racial composition of the neighborhoods were shared by Chicago White Sox owners Jerry Reinsdorf and Eddie Einhorn. Citing an article written by Phil Hersh for the *Chicago Tribune*, the authors point to a growing perception that the predominantly African American neighborhoods surrounding Comiskey Park on Chicago's South Side were increasingly viewed by fans as poor and dangerous, particularly after the riots of the late 1960s.<sup>13</sup> And the numbers backed up the view that this was an area of poor people. According to data cited by Spirou and Bennett from a 1995 study of South Armour Square:

In 1989, the neighborhood's median family income was \$7,000, and the majority of the households were headed by women (82%). Most of the households received public aid or Social Security. The population was also aged: 43 percent were more than fifty-five years old.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning with Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles, and throughout the second half of the twentieth century, stadiums built as part of urban redevelopment projects often were part of larger gentrification plans. As is the case with any form of urban development, there are competing interests with very different ideas about how the targeted public space should be utilized and who should benefit or profit from its redevelopment. As the extensive scholarship in urban history has clearly demonstrated, in the end, those coalitions with the most power and the most to gain financially always win. The profitable city always trumps the livable city.<sup>15</sup>

With relatively few exceptions<sup>16</sup> the extant literature on stadium construction focuses on the power of Major League Baseball's antitrust exemption as the central force behind stadium-

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<sup>13</sup> Costas Spirou and Larry Bennett, *It's Hardly Sportin': Stadiums, Neighborhoods, and the New Chicago* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 65; Phil Hersh, "Comiskey Park Bears Skid Mark of White Flight," *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1986.

<sup>14</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It's Hardly Sportin'*, 32; Voorhees Neighborhood Center, "South Armour Square Neighborhood Coalition Redevelopment Project Report" (Chicago: Voorhees Neighborhood Center, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Maureen A. Flanagan, *Seeing with Their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). See Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*, 135, for one example of post-WWII use of federal housing funds for private gain.

<sup>16</sup> Notable exceptions include: Riess, *Stadium Games*; Robert C. Trumbour, *The New Cathedrals: Politics And Media in the History of Stadium Construction* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006); Jay Weiner,



driven urban renewal. That is not to suggest that scholars in the field overlook the role of urban politicians and growth coalitions in the process of stadium construction. They often present the actions of urban leaders, however, as a defensive reaction to the threat of relocation by baseball owners who have monopoly control over the territorial structures of Major League Baseball (MLB). But as John Mollenkopf clearly articulates in his study on urban political economy, *The Contested City*, “Progrowth political coalitions . . . provide a framework for the creation and exercise of power. They are not a transmission belt by which outside interests manipulate or directly control government.”<sup>17</sup> Stadium-driven urban renewal, then, is a result of the dialectic between the economic and political forces at work in urban development. A clear understanding of the stadium-driven urban renewal process must elucidate the political power nexuses working *in concert* with outside commercial interests in their efforts to build a new stadium. An over-emphasis on the economic factors behind stadium construction neglects the very political structures that make such development possible.

Critical studies specifically dealing with the effects of stadium construction and relocation first entered into the historiography of American sports with the 1974 publication of a Brookings Institution study entitled *Government and the Sports Business*, which seriously addressed the policy of publicly subsidized stadiums.<sup>18</sup> There were a handful of publications released in the mid-to-late 1980s dealing with stadium construction,<sup>19</sup> but as Steven A. Riess suggests, it was not until the stadium boom of the 1990s that the issues of public subsidies and

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*Stadium Games: Fifty Years of Big League Greed and Bush League Boondoggles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 4.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin A. Okner, “Subsidies of Stadiums and Arenas,” in *Government and the Sports Business*, ed. Roger G. Noll (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1974), 325–48.

<sup>19</sup> Notable examples include: George Lipsitz, “Sports Stadia and Urban Development: A Tale of Three Cities,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 8 (1984): 1–18; and Neil Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Steven A. Riess also briefly commented on stadium construction in *City Games* (1989).

the role of government in stadium construction “became a cottage industry among economists.”<sup>20</sup> With the exception of a few historical studies about individual stadiums (for example, Bruce Kuklick’s *To Every Thing a Season: Shibe Park and Urban Philadelphia, 1909–1976*), the flood of literature on stadiums published during the previous decade has focused almost exclusively on what many of those scholars have labeled “corporate welfare.”<sup>21</sup> Some of these works will be discussed in greater detail later in an effort to contextualize my own research within what has become, more or less, the generally accepted understanding within the field regarding how stadium economics work in a largely one-sided manner.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, case studies on individual stadiums or cities became an increasingly common methodological approach in the scholarship on stadium construction, which began to expand its scope beyond public subsidies (though that issue is still dominant in the literature). As stadium-driven urban redevelopment models were pushed by local politicians and boosters with the assurance that the new stadiums would prove economically beneficial to city residents and surrounding businesses, scholars released a steady flow of evidence to the contrary. More recent scholarship on the role of the media in stadium development, most notably the work of communications professor Robert C. Trumpbour, demonstrates that financial interests most often dictated how the stadium construction projects were presented by the press. Moreover, the nostalgic, or retro, designs of the new stadiums themselves have been presented to the public in a manner that articulates a mythic American past in an effort to justify the economic interests of those in positions of power. Baseball in particular has a long and successful history

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<sup>20</sup> Steven A. Riess, “Historical Perspectives on Sports and Public Policy,” *The Economics and Politics of Sports Facilities*, ed. Wilbur C. Rich (Westport: Quorum Books, 2000), 13–52, 14.

<sup>21</sup> A short list of some of the titles released over that time span clearly underscores the dominance of works of that nature: *Baseball and Billions: A Probing Look Inside the Big Business of Our National Pastime* (1994); *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (1997); *Sports, Jobs, and Taxes: The Economic Impact of Sports Teams and Stadiums* (1997); *Major League Losers: The Real Cost of Sports and Who’s Paying for It* (1999).

of invoking artificial myths—created by the entrepreneurs and controllers of the game—as the sport’s dominant promotional vehicle.<sup>22</sup>

In his review of Daniel Rosenweig’s *Retro Ball Parks: Instant History, Baseball, and the New American City* (2005), Trumpbour states that “Rosenweig offers compelling evidence that the stadium experience of both early and contemporary baseball was and still is rife with artifice. Control and freedom are at the core of what he uses as indicators.”<sup>23</sup> Discussing the lingering persistence of racial and ethnic differences following the Progressive Era—despite claims by reformers who lauded the socially unifying effect of the shared stadium experience—Stephen Hardy suggests that only the literature of baseball history has turned a blind eye to such criticisms.

For some reason, scholars love to wax romantic about the national pastime. For some, it is the lure of the stadium itself. According to Bruce Kuklick, a place like Philadelphia’s Shibe Park (built in 1909, razed in 1976) acts as a medium of collective memory: “Meaning and the items that bear it are fragile. The meanings accrue over time in their visible embodiments, artifacts like Shibe Park.”<sup>24</sup>

According to Trumpbour, “The push to build new retro stadiums has been fueled by what Eric Hobsbawm (1983) has identified as ‘the invention of tradition,’ what he argues are ‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly set rules . . . of a ritual or symbolic nature . . . which automatically implies continuity with...a suitable past.’”<sup>25</sup> Kuklick’s suggestion that Shibe Park was capable of unifying “generations, races, and ethnic groups in the collective memory of a special place ‘where uncommon deeds gave people a sense of commonality,’”<sup>26</sup> posits the

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<sup>22</sup> One example would be Albert G. Spalding’s elaborate “origin” myth about baseball’s American founding by Abner Doubleday. See James A. Vlasich, *A Legend for the Legendary: The Origin of the Baseball Hall of Fame* (Bowling Green, KY: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Robert C. Trumpbour, “Sport and the Urban Landscape,” *Journal of Urban History* 33 (2007): 848–56, 853.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Hardy, “Sport in Urbanizing America: A Historical Review,” *Journal of Urban History* 23, no. 6 (1997): 687.

<sup>25</sup> Robert C. Trumpbour, “Rituals, Invented Traditions, and Shifting Power: The Role of Communication in the History of Stadium Construction,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 31, no. 4 (2007): 325.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce Kuklick quoted in Hardy, “Sport in Urbanizing America,” 687.

mythos of the stadium squarely within the tradition of the early twentieth-century boosters of America's "national pastime." Moreover, the "invention of tradition" in urban development is not confined to the construction of retro ballparks. As demonstrated by urban scholarship such as Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Fainstein's *The Tourist City*, since the end of World War II, many urban planners and civic leaders have sought to revitalize American cities by commodifying historic sites (both real and contrived) and developing tourism-based economies.<sup>27</sup>

As private, unregulated businesses, however, MLB teams are not required to open their books to public scrutiny. And as the revelation of their legitimate book and operating revenues could seriously undermine their leverage with cities in stadium negotiations, there is no reason to expect disclosure. As such, the majority of scholarly work on the economics of MLB and stadium construction must work from carefully qualified estimates. After presenting a summary of their data on stadium subsidies in *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports*, James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort remark, "The point that has to be kept in mind is that these figures *underestimate* the amounts of subsidies provided by the stadiums and arenas, because data were not available for all investments in the facilities subsequent to original construction." Nonetheless, due to the shocking results of their *conservative* estimates, Quirk and Fort point out that "if the data here reported are in fact typical of publicly owned arenas and stadiums in general, then such facilities housing major league sports teams would have been providing around \$500 million in subsidies to tenants in 1989."<sup>28</sup>

Given the size of the subsidies that these and other scholars have estimated, it seems relatively clear that the subject demands attention even in the face of such limitations. Some

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<sup>27</sup> Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Fainstein, eds., *The Tourist City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999). See also Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) for other examples.

<sup>28</sup> James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 171.

scholars, such as Kevin J. Delaney and Rick Eckstein, have even gone so far as to employ the reporter's tactic of "not naming names" in an attempt to gain insider access to individuals who can offer insight into the complex processes and power struggles that go into stadium development and construction.<sup>29</sup> While this somewhat unorthodox approach makes it difficult (if not impossible) to check references, it does offer a fresh perspective to use in conjunction with the more traditional economic analyses from scholars like Andrew Zimbalist, Mark Rosentraub, and Quirk and Fort, upon whose work Delaney and Eckstein build.

Still other scholars, such as urban economist Charles Santo, have questioned some of the assumptions from which many recent scholars of stadium construction have worked. Santo challenged the utility of a frequently cited study by arguably one of the most influential scholars in the field, Robert Baade, because of the inherent problems of criticizing stadiums built today based on his 1989 data. Baade and Richard Dye found primarily negative impacts associated with stadium development, which they briefly explained as follows:

Stadiums divert economic development toward labor-intensive, relatively low unskilled labor (low-wage) activities. To the extent that this developmental path diverges from less labor-intensive, more highly skilled (high-wage) activities characteristic of other economies within the region, it would be expected that the sports-minded area would experience a falling share of regional income.<sup>30</sup>

In his own work, Santo suggests that "the stadiums of the recent construction boom have been built amidst a very different context than those of the previous generation. The new findings reported here, along with a closer examination of previous analyses, indicate that context matters."<sup>31</sup> And while I am no economist, there would seem to be merit to that argument. Using

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<sup>29</sup> Kevin J. Delaney and Rick Eckstein, *Public Dollars, Private Stadiums: The Battle over Building Sports Stadiums* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Robert Baade and Richard Dye, "The Impact of Stadiums and Professional Sports on Metropolitan Area Development," *Growth and Change* 21 (Spring 1990): 10.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Santo, "The Economic Impact of Sports Stadiums: Recasting the Analysis in Context," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 27, no. 2 (2005): 190.

data from 1984 to 2001, Santo found what he termed “sports-related variables”—gaining or losing an NFL or MLB franchise or stadium construction—“to be positively correlated with regional income share for eight of . . . nineteen metropolitan areas.”<sup>32</sup>

Santo’s work would seem to go against prevailing attitudes among scholars regarding the now near universally assumed negative impact of stadium construction. And given that we are looking at less than a 50 percent positive impact rate among the nineteen metropolitan areas studied, this evidence hardly overturns the general consensus among scholars like Zimbalist, Rosentraub, etc. But it is worth noting here before we start sifting through pessimistic titles like *Major League Losers*, *Field of Schemes*, and *It’s Hardly Sportin’*. Even Zimbalist, discussing new subsidies provided by MLB for stadium construction costs, has recently suggested that “if baseball still uses its monopoly power to leverage public subsidies for stadium deals, it seems to be practicing a more benevolent form of monopoly these days.”<sup>33</sup> This may be so, but the taxpayers of New York who were taken for roughly \$1.8 *billion* dollars in tax-free bonds as new stadiums opened for both the Yankees and the Mets in 2009 might not see the \$230 million that Zimbalist estimates MLB contributed to the construction of the new Yankee Stadium as all that benevolent. So long as MLB retains its antitrust exemption, the monopoly is secure. The argument that new sports stadiums have a positive and substantial economic impact has largely been dispelled, or at least heavily qualified. As my research focuses on other factors in stadium-driven urban development, I assume (along with the majority of scholars in the field) that the economic benefits of stadium construction to their host cities are largely negligible.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Zimbalist, “More Benevolence in Stadium Games,” *The Bottom Line: Observations and Arguments on the Sports Business* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 165.

## Building the Monopoly

Professional baseball in the United States has been commercially monopolized since the end of the nineteenth century. Despite several challenges in court and the threat of Congressional hearings, the commercial monopoly held by Major League Baseball has been legally exempt from antitrust laws since 1914 when the New York Supreme Court ruled that baseball was “not a commodity or an article of merchandise.”<sup>34</sup> This legally sanctioned monopoly gives Major League Baseball owners incredible leverage over urban leaders during the process of stadium-driven urban development and renewal.

Contrary to the popular myth espoused by Major League Baseball and countless fans of an older generation, organized professional baseball has always been about the money. Zimbalist even suggests that money “was already a significant part of the game when the first professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, was formed in 1869.”<sup>35</sup> In the preface to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of Alan Trachtenberg’s seminal work, *The Incorporation of America*, the author describes the process of incorporation that took place at the end of the nineteenth century: a process driven by new notions of professionalism and efficiency that forever changed American culture.

Measured on a scale of material well-being, incorporation has seemed a spectacular success. But the same process that has raised the standard of living for most (not all, by a long shot) Americans also installed top-down hierarchies, inequalities of wealth and power threatening the values of democracy.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Andrew Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions: A Probing Look Inside the Big Business of Our National Pastime*, updated ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 9.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, twenty-fifth anniv. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), xi.

The parallels to the development of professional baseball in the United States are striking. As baseball steadily grew in popularity after the Civil War, savvy entrepreneurs began to realize that there could be money made from this “pastime.”

According to Zimbalist, “teams began to enclose their ballparks and charge 10 to 25 cents admission to see their games.”<sup>37</sup> In 1871 the National Association of Professional Baseball Players (NAPBP) was established with ten teams, but just five years later, William Hulbert, the owner of the Chicago White Stockings, induced the best pitcher of the era, Albert (A. G.) Spalding, to break his contract and bring three teammates with him from the Boston Red Stockings. Once Hulbert had successfully built the strongest team in the league, he pulled out of the NAPBP and established the National League of Professional Baseball clubs in 1876. Zimbalist explains that Hulbert’s plan was “based on territorial monopolies and a restricted number of financially solid franchises. Among other things, the reduction in the number of teams would limit the demand for players, reduce salaries, and enhance profits.”

With this consolidation “baseball became a business with distinct, separate roles for players and owners.”<sup>38</sup> The incorporation that Trachtenberg describes as changing US culture at the turn of the twentieth century was clearly evident in the development of professional baseball as well. And it knew no limits. As thanks for Spalding’s role in establishing the NL, Hulbert awarded an exclusive contract to him (who with his brother conveniently opened a sporting goods store in 1876) as the league’s supplier of goods.<sup>39</sup>

Beginning in 1879, at the suggestion of Boston owner Arthur Soden, the NL secretly agreed to reserve five players. By 1890, the “reserve clause” was extended to cover all players. The establishment of the reserve clause led to the periodic formation of rival leagues that

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<sup>37</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 3.



promised better contracts to players and freedom of movement from team to team. Between 1882 with the formation of the American Association (AA) and the 1903 agreement that brought the rival American and National leagues together under Major League Baseball, four attempts were made to create leagues that could rival the NL. In each case, the NL was able to fend off the competitors by incorporating new teams into the league, generally headed by wealthy owners happy to get a piece of the action.<sup>40</sup>

By the time of the 1903 agreement between Ban Johnson's American League (AL) and the NL, the monopoly had been once again firmly established, along with a universally accepted reserve clause. It wasn't until 1913 that the creation of another league, the Federal League (FL), once again threatened to shake up the monopoly of professional baseball, and to the incredible good fortune of MLB owners, the courts stepped in and legally secured their monopoly. Beginning with the 1914 case of Hal Chase, one of the players who defected to the FL, the New York State Supreme Court ruled that baseball was not subject to antitrust laws because it was "an amusement, a sport, a game . . . not a commodity or an article of merchandise." By 1915, MLB had succeeded once again in squashing the rebellion by paying off FL owners with almost \$600,000 in compensation and by incorporating two of the FL owners into Major League Baseball. Unhappy with the settlement, the owners of the Baltimore Terrapins filed an antitrust suit against MLB in 1916.<sup>41</sup> After a string of appeals, the case went before the US Supreme Court in 1922, led by Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, which upheld a ruling in a 1921 appeal that said that as a sport, baseball was not trade and thereby not subject to antitrust legislation.<sup>42</sup> And with that final decision, Major League Baseball became the United States' only legally sanctioned, completely unregulated monopoly. With the help of the US Congress

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 4-7

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>42</sup> Rosentraub, *Major League Losers*, 84-86.

and the courts, professional sports teams have been given the power to create an artificial scarcity of teams, control market territories, and retard the development of competing leagues. In stadium development projects, then, urban leaders are dealing in a fixed rather than a free market.<sup>43</sup>

Major League Baseball's antitrust exemption has played a longstanding and integral role in American society, particularly within the context of urban development. Federally supported postwar urban renewal programs gave urban leaders the funding and political capital necessary to entice owners to rebuild or relocate. As cities in the South and West experienced massive growth as a result of increased wartime production and the development of interstate highways, the politicians who represented those regions in Washington, DC, began to pressure Major League Baseball to expand for the first time since professional baseball's "National Agreement" in 1903. In 1951 the Subcommittee on the Study of Monopoly Power of the House of Representatives began hearings on baseball's special status. Zimbalist reports that "when the hearings opened in July, no less than eight antitrust cases were pending against MLB as well as three bills that would have legislated antitrust exemption to baseball and other sports."<sup>44</sup> Over the next ten years, baseball's special status would be challenged in repeated congressional hearings, proposed bills, and court challenges. Yet, the 1953 US Supreme Court case *Toolson v. New York Yankees* made it clear that the court had no intention of overruling the federal baseball case from 1922 and that any further action on the matter should be taken up by Congress:

In Federal Baseball . . . this Court held that . . . professional baseball . . . was not within the scope of the federal antitrust laws. Congress had the ruling under consideration but has not seen fit to bring such business under these laws by legislation. . . . We think that if there are evils in this field which now warrant application to it of the antitrust laws it should be by legislation.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>44</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Rosentraub, *Major League Losers*, 86–87; Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 15.

The owners clearly knew what was at stake. Representative Emanuel Celler, who headed the subcommittee, acknowledged: “I want to say . . . that I have never known, in my 35 years of experience, of as great a lobby that descended upon the House than the organized baseball lobby. . . . They came upon Washington like locusts.”<sup>46</sup> With the courts and Congress refusing to act, MLB has been able to stave off antitrust regulations through various compromises over time that, while producing significant changes in the economic structure of the league, have left their monopoly status largely unchallenged to this day.

### **Maintaining the Cartel: Managing the Economic Structure**

According to Zimbalist, Major League Baseball has “three main sources of revenue: broadcasting revenues, gate and stadium revenues, and licensing revenues.”<sup>47</sup> MLB owners have monopoly power in negotiations over each of these sources of revenue. With the advent of free agency for players beginning with the 1976 basic agreement between the owners and the players union, however, player salaries naturally began to rise. Although the fairly steady and evenly distributed licensing revenue that helped to cover rising costs, gate receipts and broadcasting revenues were tricky and subject to forces beyond the owners’ control. The sudden burst of franchise relocations that began with Lou Perini’s move of his Boston Braves to Milwaukee in 1953 painfully demonstrated the importance of gate revenue to MLB owners.<sup>48</sup> And the promise of increased broadcasting revenue led the same franchise to relocate to Atlanta just thirteen years later.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Celler quoted in Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>48</sup> In 1953 Lou Perini moved the Boston Braves into Milwaukee County Municipal Stadium, the first ballpark in the United States to be financed with public funds. This began what is now standard practice for financing stadium construction.

<sup>49</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 128. MLB’s national media contracts are shared across the league, but their local contracts are not. As such, teams in smaller markets have been able to point to the economic disparity caused by huge local media contracts (like the Yankees YES network, or NESN for the Red Sox) as evidence of their inability

Since the Braves moved to Milwaukee in 1953, small-market teams have been using the great disparities in local broadcasting revenue as leverage to increase their other primary source of revenue: gate and stadium revenues. The Brooklyn Dodgers' and New York Giants' stadiums were deteriorating, and both stadiums were in neighborhoods dealing with the white flight and disinvestment of postwar suburbanization. The experiences of relocation taught other owners in the league that their monopoly control over the number and location of franchises could be used to play cities against each other. The owners have help in this process, however, beyond even the protections provided by the courts and Congress.

City governments have been in the business of subsidizing private investment for decades. In a feverish attempt to stave off the flood of postwar capital from the cities to the suburbs, explains Joanna Cagan and Neil DeMause, "city governments large and small have made tax breaks and other subsidies a part of their regular repertoire in the drive to keep businesses in town—or lure them to relocate from elsewhere." They further report that "in 1977, less than half of all states provided tax incentives or public loans for private development; fifteen years later, hardly a state was without them."<sup>50</sup> During the early 1950s, the first attempts at renewing the area just south of the Loop in downtown Chicago were undertaken by the private sector. Led by the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and Michael Reese Hospital, a coalition made up of urban housing authorities, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, the AFL-CIO, and private businesses formed the South Side Redevelopment Agency, which worked in concert with local government to develop the Lake Meadows housing project that opened in 1953. The project was intended to create racially integrated affordable housing, an effort praised nationally as "a pioneering experiment in urban renewal." Undertaking what would become standard practice in

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to sustain a competitive roster. Stadium boosters in small markets often argue that team owners need the increased revenues generated by a new stadium to field a competitive team.

<sup>50</sup> Cagan and DeMause, *Field of Schemes*, 30.

postwar urban renewal programs, the city bought up the real estate, relocated the displaced African American inhabitants, and then sold the land at a discount to private investors.<sup>51</sup> Four decades later, the same processes were in motion when city officials worked with Jerry Reinsdorf to build new stadiums for the Chicago White Sox south of the Loop near IIT, and for the Chicago Bulls on the Near West Side. As was the case with the Lake Meadows housing development, the city also built middle-class housing that priced the original residents out of the area.<sup>52</sup>

Cities looking to attract a team or sell a new stadium to the public often develop “growth coalitions” that Rosentraub describes as being “comprised of individuals and businesses (newspapers, land developers, etc.) in the local community that will benefit from the team’s presence.”<sup>53</sup> One example would be the coalition of politicians, journalists, Hollywood celebrities, and business magnates like Howard Hughes who lured the Dodgers to Los Angeles. Another example is the purchase of the Cleveland Indians by local real estate moguls, Richard and David Jacobs, who used the Central Market Gateway Project formed in 1990 to push the construction of new stadiums for the Indians and the Cavaliers of the NBA in an area they were already developing downtown.<sup>54</sup>

With the flurry of franchise moves that took place in the 1950s, MLB had more or less made it clear that city leaders looking to attract a team had to include “a stadium (at favorable rental terms) as part of the bargain.” By 1960, “mayors and city managers got the point,” and “began to invest in stadiums to replace the older facilities owned by existing major league teams,

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<sup>51</sup> Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 11–12.

<sup>52</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It’s Hardly Sportin’*; Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*, 144–53.

<sup>53</sup> Rosentraub, *Major League Losers*, 9.

<sup>54</sup> Michael D’Antonio, *Forever Blue: The True Story of Walter O’Malley, Baseball’s Most Controversial Owner, and the Dodgers of Brooklyn and Los Angeles* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), 193; Cagan and DeMause, *Field of Schemes*, 14–15.

in order to keep the teams in town.”<sup>55</sup> Given the postwar urban crisis clearly articulated in Sugrue’s analysis of Detroit,<sup>56</sup> owners in older cities like Brooklyn (Ebbets Field), New York (the Polo Grounds) and Philadelphia (Shibe Park) could point to the deteriorating neighborhoods and demand that cities take some responsibility for making their environment profitable. On the other hand, emerging metropolitan areas like the Twin Cities in Minnesota could offer owners fresh starts in new stadiums with the potential for greater media contracts. But even with newly constructed Metropolitan Stadium just outside of Minneapolis in 1956, it took the threat of a new league (the Continental League) headed by Branch Rickey toward the end of the 1950s to force MLB to agree to expansion before Minnesota got their team. What is interesting to note, is that even with the expansion of four teams for the 1962 season, MLB clung tightly to their territorial monopoly with only Minnesota and Houston representing new markets. The other two expansion teams (Angels and Mets) were placed in California and New York respectively.

The story of Minnesota’s quest for a major league team, thoroughly described in Jay Weiner’s *Stadium Games*, powerfully demonstrates the ability of MLB teams to use desperate cities as bargaining chips in their search for higher revenues. Prior to moving to the West Coast with Walter O’Malley’s Dodgers in 1958, Horace Stoneman, owner of the Giants, had both privately and publicly committed to moving his team to Minneapolis. In the early stages of Minnesota’s hunt for a baseball team, St. Paul and Minneapolis were competing with each other for the right to host the new franchise. While Stoneman was buying property in Minneapolis for a potential new stadium, St. Paul was building their own, which was inspected by none other than Walter O’Malley, who had yet to commit to Los Angeles and was still exploring his options. As if these two historic franchises weren’t enough to whip local Twin Cities boosters into a

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<sup>55</sup> Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 135.

<sup>56</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

frenzy, at various times, they were also courted by the Washington Senators (whom they would eventually land with expansion in 1962) and the Cleveland Indians. Weiner aptly describes the process as follows: “The Twin Cities became ‘a joke. . .’ Met Stadium, built to attract a team, had been used to gain leverage for teams elsewhere.”<sup>57</sup>

Revenues continued to rise for baseball clubs thanks to new media contracts with the emergent television market and increasing profits in light of decreased stadium expenses. Quirk and Fort report that on average between 1960 and 1982, baseball teams “moving into a new stadium increased attendance by 62 percent—over 600,000 per year—during the first five years a team was in a new stadium, as compared to the previous five-year period.”<sup>58</sup> The massive spike in gate receipts is exponentially multiplied when one considers additional revenues from the beneficial rent contracts teams are able to secure from cities as a result of their monopoly status. Quirk and Fort describe the typical pattern of stadium contracts in baseball as follows:

The stadium gets most or all of the revenue from parking, teams get most or all of the revenue from the sale of programs and novelties, and food and drink revenues are split, with between one-third and one-half going to the stadium and the rest to the team . . . luxury box revenues . . . generally . . . go mainly to the team.<sup>59</sup>

Zimbalist explains that “the more modern the stadium, the more important are luxury boxes in generating gate revenue for a franchise.” By way of demonstration he points out that “the new Orioles stadium at Camden Yards raised franchise profits by upwards of \$25 million in 1992, its first year of operation.”<sup>60</sup> He also points out that neither the AL nor the NL share luxury box nor concession revenue.<sup>61</sup> But the most significant returns generated by the baseball monopoly come from franchise sales, which are obviously affected by the presence of new state-

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<sup>57</sup> Weiner, *Stadium Games*, 38.

<sup>58</sup> Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 138.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 145, 148.

<sup>60</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 55.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

of-the-art stadiums. Between 1980 and 1990, the average annual rate of increase for franchise profits was 23.5 percent.<sup>62</sup> And while baseball owners continue to moan about losing money (particularly those in small-market cities), Zimbalist reminds us that “in 112 years of major league baseball, there has been only one bankruptcy filing.”<sup>63</sup> So the baseball teams are clearly profiting handsomely from their monopoly. The same cannot be said of their host cities.

With the massive direct (free land) and indirect (tax abatements) subsidies that cities are providing to MLB teams, the argument forcefully pushed by growth coalitions is that the team’s presence will improve their city’s status, both economically and symbolically. But the consensus among scholars in the field is that “stadium activity brings mostly low-wage, part-time jobs.”<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, there is the matter of limited discretionary spending for fans. Assuming fans are buying hot dogs and merchandise at the park, after the additional cost of tickets and parking, how much can actually be expected to be spent in the surrounding area? Stadiums like Denver’s Coors Field (opened in 1995) have attempted to deal with this by supplying limited parking near the stadium, forcing fans to take a short walk through the recently revitalized LoDo (lower downtown) district. But the majority of new stadiums are designed with additional revenue streams like team stores, restaurants, and even hotels, so that the fans’ discretionary income is funneled directly into the pockets of the owners. Moreover, as Quirk and Fort highlight (echoed by others), recent scholarship has suggested that “it is difficult for cities funding stadiums to capture whatever benefits occur because of the stadium. Instead, whatever benefits are generated by a stadium tend to be spread over an entire region.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 56.

<sup>63</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 72.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 137; Cagan and DeMause, *Field of Schemes*, 38.

<sup>65</sup> Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 176; Rosentraub, *Major League Losers*, 286.



Finally, there is the matter of whether that money could have been spent in a more fruitful, if not profitable, manner. Quirk and Fort suggest that “in an era in which local governments are under intense budgetary pressures, this raises the question of whether it is possible to find an economic justification for stadium subsidies [in 1989] of \$500 million per year.”<sup>66</sup> Speaking about the potential influx of “jobs” created by a new stadium in Cleveland, one activist said, “None of them are jobs that the mayor hugs his [own] kids and says, ‘I hope you can get one of those jobs someday.’”<sup>67</sup> Cagan and DeMause go so far as to claim that the stadium construction process is similar to the way in which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund treat developing nations:

Devote ever-decreasing amounts of public wealth to support the services needed by the poor and helpless, and invest more and more in ways that will return increasing profits to the small numbers of rich and privileged. Oftentimes in the Third World that has meant an emphasis on the tourist and export economy over more indigenous industrial or agricultural solutions.<sup>68</sup>

If we’re at the point where we are comparing cities in their relationship with MLB owners to developing nations, clearly, then, the economic justifications do not stand up to reason.

There can be little economic justification for the public/private “partnerships” that exist for the purpose of constructing stadiums. Even when scholars like Charles Santo suggest that fifty percent of teams involved in stadium construction create a positive economic impact for a region, it is important to note that there are other factors that also go into the growth of a region, and oftentimes we cannot attribute that growth solely to stadium construction. Furthermore, as I stated before, when dealing with overall subsidies in excess of \$500 million annually, cities ought to be after better than 50-50 odds that their investment will pay off. The scholars briefly discussed here have clearly demonstrated over the past two or three decades that Major League

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<sup>66</sup> Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*, 172.

<sup>67</sup> Cagan and DeMause, *Field of Schemes*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

Baseball has a government-sanctioned monopoly that allows it to leverage cities for ever-increasing profits, little to no expense, and zero risk. Unfortunately, as the latest construction boom ending with Yankee Stadium and Citi Field has demonstrated, cities are still willing to spend (or as is the case for the team owners, defer) tax-funded revenues for the right to be “Major League Cities.”

Major League Baseball’s owners are profiting immensely from their collaboration with politicians and commercial partners in the media through promotional efforts for publicly financed stadiums that invoke baseball’s mythic past while creating the artifice of instant history in the design of retro stadiums. Stephen Hardy has lamented the notable absence of the largely silent majority of laborers and unions in the historiography of stadium construction.<sup>69</sup> I would include the taxpayers in that group of citizens who have been silenced in an era of profit, politics, and journalism that has completely disregarded democratic representation. To date, research on this issue has not included a study driven by the perspective of the taxpayers, laborers, and small businesses who are sold on these myths. While the primary focus of this dissertation will be to examine the urban power coalitions responsible for stadium-driven urban development and renewal policies and the roles that race and migration have played in that development, it will also give voice to the equally determined, though generally powerless, coalitions of citizens working together to oppose stadium construction.

I chose three stadiums as examples of stadium-driven urban development taking place within cities of various size, economic and social vitality, and historical context. I have contextually connected the cities using an analytical narrative attempting to discover particular generalizations, or patterns, which can be derived from different urban power nexuses over time

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<sup>69</sup> Stephen Hardy, “The City and the Rise of American Sport: 1820–1920,” *Exercise and Sports Sciences Reviews* 9 (1981): 183–219.

and space.<sup>70</sup> For example, just as the Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act and the Relocation Act adopted by the Illinois General Assembly in 1947 provided a framework for future post–World War II federal urban renewal and housing legislation, so too the Collier Burns Highway Act passed by California state legislators (also in 1947) influenced the 1956 National Interstate and Defense Highways Act and the companion 1956 Highway Revenue Act.<sup>71</sup> The pattern of locally driven, federally supported development has dramatically altered the shape of American cities and has had a direct impact on the construction of each of the stadiums discussed in these pages. There are similarities of association, urban development policy, and public/private partnership in these particular examples of stadium-driven urban development that suggest the possibility of uncovering more general urban power structures and processes in American cities.

Analyzing the urban processes behind stadium construction in major cities will be an essential part of this dissertation. The motives of Major League Baseball owners are well documented and obvious. Cities, on the other hand, are complex organisms made up of multiple clusters of associated people whose reasons for association vary as widely as kinship, race, gender, community, faith, employment, commercial partnership, and political affiliation. These clusters, which yield very different levels of influence and power, have competing visions and interests regarding the development of the city. And when it comes to stadium construction, or any other form of urban redevelopment, there are varying levels of personal impact; some clusters have more at stake. Losing a baseball team is extremely painful for local fans. The loss of local homes, businesses, and entire communities in the process of stadium development has

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<sup>70</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Gaddis has described these patterns as “fractals.” In chap. 2 below, those fractals are examined within the context of Paul Starr’s “constitutive choices” and “mechanisms of entrenchment” framework to articulate the processes that led to the decision to build a new stadium for the Chicago White Sox. See Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

<sup>71</sup> Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 198; Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 119.

adversely impacted the lives of local citizens. Major League Baseball owners always profit from the construction of a new stadium. But for this unequal return on investment to have continued successfully for so long, there must be clusters of association within the urban power structures that also, as they say, “make a killing” in these deals. If nothing less, they might be seen as accessories to the owners’ self-interests, and as demonstrated in the previous section, urban power structures reach as high as the federal government.

I have used the term *clusters* in the last few paragraphs purposely distinct from the term *association* because it better describes the *connected* associated interests involved in the process of stadium construction. The term *coalition* is often used in public discussion and scholarship in the field as well, but there are some associated interests involved in these processes that are not overtly named (often intentionally) in the public presentation of these clusters. Moreover, one often finds “stadium coalitions” working with “pro-growth coalitions” with connections to “political coalitions” all simultaneously involved in these processes. This dissertation will first identify, and then articulate, the general processes and interests that form and influence those larger clusters of urban power. Postwar stadium construction can serve as a powerful focusing lens for studying the processes of urban development.

## **Los Angeles**

In chapter 1, I present the story of Los Angeles stretching back to the middle part of the nineteenth century, as power and dominance in the Southwest rapidly changed, moving from Spanish to Mexican to American control and leaving a violent legacy of migration and racial as well as territorial conquest. Between 1829 and 1875, a migrant of the lineage of Spanish Conquistadors made his way from New Mexico Territory to Los Angeles, eventually becoming one of the city’s most prominent citizens and political figures during the transition from Mexican

to American rule. Though Julian A. Chavez was essential to easing that transition, ultimately he was left landless at the hands of Anglo American conquest. All that remained of his legacy was roughly 300 acres of mostly undeveloped land on the northern part of downtown around a ravine that bore his name. After the eviction of hundreds of Mexican American migrants and a decade of legal battles, the city of Los Angeles agreed to sell that land to a professional baseball team from Brooklyn, New York.

The opening of Dodgers Stadium on April 10, 1962, was a pivotal moment for stadium-driven urban development on several levels. It was the first baseball stadium to be built with 100 percent private financing since the original Yankee Stadium in 1923. It was also the last, until the San Francisco Giants opened the 2000 Major League Baseball season in their new home, Pacific Bell Park (now AT&T Park). Then *Brooklyn* Dodgers owner, Walter O'Malley, was the first baseball magnate to try to pressure local government officials to invoke their powers of eminent domain to secure property large enough for a stadium and parking with direct access to multiple forms of public transportation. When his efforts were rebuffed by urban planner Robert Moses in New York, who argued that baseball stadiums could hardly be considered "public use," O'Malley found a willing and powerful coalition of political, business, and civic leaders in Los Angeles, led by recently elected mayor Norris Poulson.

Boston Braves owner, Lou Perini, was the first to relocate a Major League Baseball franchise when he moved the Braves to Milwaukee in 1953. But Boston also had the Red Sox, and while "New Yorkers" by incorporation, residents in the proud borough of Brooklyn found the Yankees a pale substitute for "Dem Bums." This was partially due to the manner in which Ebbets Field was architecturally built into the urban fabric of the borough. Their original name was Trolley Dodgers, a reference to the dangers that fans faced making their way through the

intense concentration of foot and trolley traffic around the stadium. Furthermore, the interior design of the stadium put the fans right on top of the action, creating an intimacy between players and fans that few other stadiums matched. With the move from Brooklyn to Los Angeles, the Dodgers set a painful precedent which led to what can essentially be viewed as ransoming the community identity of baseball cities for publicly subsidized stadiums. The pain felt by the residents of Brooklyn who lost their Dodgers has been well documented. Moreover, newer cities in the southern and western sections of the country, long denied access to the game, could finally compete with cities in the east to lure Major League Baseball teams with the promise of publicly funded stadiums and tax subsidies.

When the city of Los Angeles finally acquired a professional baseball team, it did so at the cost of the working-class Mexican and Mexican American migrants living in the Chavez Ravine area. After years of fighting over the proper use of the land—which included the city’s invocation of its rights of eminent domain to evict the migrants from their homes, the proposed plan and subsequent defeat by referendum to build public housing on the site, and the political maneuvering that made it possible to sell publicly seized land as private property for commercial use—the construction of Dodger Stadium magnified the problems of race in postwar urban development policies attempting to deal with the problem of urban blight. Racialized housing policy at the local and federal level ultimately made the construction of Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles possible.

The construction of Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles not only significantly influenced national urban development policy; it also demonstrated the effects of global capitalism and transcontinental/national migration on urban development. O’Malley understood that Los Angeles offered the potential for international markets across the Pacific. His travels to Japan not

only influenced the architectural design of Dodger Stadium, but they also helped to pave the way as Major League Baseball, and particularly the Dodgers, began to tap into a vast, largely untouched Asian market. And the explosive debut of Mexican-born Fernando Valenzuela in the early 1980s demonstrated just how profitable Southern California's vast Chicano population could be for professional baseball.

The construction of Dodger Stadium also served as an example for franchises located in cities facing the problem of white flight in two ways. First, if local fans and politicians failed to accommodate owners looking for land or tax subsidies, a franchise could simply relocate and move to a different city or region where there were plenty of wealthy white customers willing to meet the team's demands. But the construction of Dodger Stadium also showed franchise owners, like Jerry Reinsdorf of the Chicago White Sox, that proper regional marketing in conjunction with ample parking and direct highway access could serve to import a newly (auto)mobile clientele, and their increasing discretionary income, in from the suburbs. In this way Dodger Stadium and stadiums such as Chicago's new US Cellular Field operated more like suburban shopping malls than urban ballparks.

## **Chicago**

The new Comiskey Park (since renamed US Cellular Field) makes for an interesting case study because it is such an architectural anomaly. Following the construction of Dodgers Stadium, there was a wave of publicly owned (and funded), multi-purpose stadium projects, which arose as cities sought to increase the revenues of publicly funded stadiums by having multiple tenants. These stadiums were designed to accommodate multiple sports and concert events and were at times the cornerstone in a city's Olympic bid. (It is not within the scope of this dissertation to cover the era of multi-purpose stadium construction.) While US Cellular Field

was built as a baseball-only, open air stadium on the South Side of Chicago, it embodies many of the features of the suburban style stadiums from the 1970s.

US Cellular Field opened on April 18, 1991, and was the last stadium built before the “retro ball park” wave of the 1990s, which began with the opening of Baltimore’s Camden Yards the following year. But US Cellular Field is neither a multi-purpose stadium nor a “retro ball park.” It was the first baseball-only stadium to be built in the major leagues since Royals Stadium (now Kauffman Stadium) opened in 1973, and though influenced in part by Royals Stadium, US Cellular Field stands architecturally alone, between two of the biggest stadium construction waves of the twentieth century. In stark contrast to Dodgers Stadium, which was 100 percent privately financed,<sup>72</sup> Chicago’s US Cellular Field was 100 percent publicly financed. Coincidentally, Chicago White Sox owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, also had the political clout to build a new stadium for his Chicago Bulls basketball team (and the Chicago Blackhawks hockey team) the following year. Chicago provides an excellent opportunity to look at the political power structures and policies at work in stadium-driven urban development.

Just as the construction of the original Comiskey Park in 1910 has been viewed in conjunction with efforts to make the city more respectable as part of the progressive “City Beautiful” movement,<sup>73</sup> the construction of US Cellular Field (as well as the United Center) has likewise been viewed as part of city officials’ efforts to clean up and rejuvenate the city through extensive and ambitious urban redevelopment building programs. One of the more interesting layers to this story, however, is the presence of a strong alternative stadium plan (Armour

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<sup>72</sup> While the stadium was 100 percent privately financed, the acquisition, pricing, grading, and infrastructural development of the land were, on the other hand, publicly financed.

<sup>73</sup> Robin F. Bachin, *Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago, 1890–1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 226.



Field),<sup>74</sup> which arguably held truer to Charles Comiskey's original intention to design and build a stadium that architecturally meshed with existing neighborhood structures as well as aesthetically elevated the area. In the end, the "coalition" behind the Armour Field project was no match for the cluster of urban power coalitions that ultimately built US Cellular Field where it stands today.

As was the case in Los Angeles, the territory where the new stadium was to be built for the White Sox in Chicago was contested by a community of isolated racial minorities. This community developed as a result of segregated housing policies and failure to adequately address overcrowding and housing shortages due to African Americans migrating from the South seeking wartime manufacturing jobs in Northern cities. Black families living in Wentworth Gardens, a public housing project originally built to house African American war workers, saw vast segments of their community wiped away by postwar urban redevelopment: first, when the black commercial strip along Wentworth Avenue was cleared to make room for the Dan Ryan Expressway in the early 1960s, and again when the northern portion of the housing development and a home for senior citizens were bulldozed to make way for the new US Cellular Field.

In chapter 2, I demonstrate that the leverage wielded by White Sox owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, through the threat of relocation allowed him to build a stadium intended to serve the very northwestern suburbanites who prevented Reinsdorf from building his stadium at his preferred location in their own backyards. While the Dodgers similarly surrounded their stadium with parking lots and direct access to the highways, Los Angeles is a more sprawling metropolis with less clearly defined borders between city and suburb. Wary of how his suburban, primarily white fans might feel about coming to see a game on the South Side next to an African American public housing project, Reinsdorf secured a deal that allowed him to essentially seal off his

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<sup>74</sup> Cagan and DeMause, *Field of Schemes*, 138.

stadium from the surrounding city, funneling suburbanites directly off the highway into vast parking lots that serve only the stadium. This is an economic model similar to that of suburban shopping malls; the “Chicago” White Sox developed a tourist-based entertainment economy that imported its revenue from towns as far away as Addison, Arlington Heights, and Wheaton (25–30 miles away). Expanding on this model, Mike Ilitch built Comerica Park in Detroit, turning the entire north side of downtown into a sports and entertainment district under his control. Where Reinsdorf had settled for opening a shop in the mall, Ilitch engineered a financial cut of *every shop* in the mall.

## **Detroit**

Detroit has had a long and contested history of urban development, particularly during and after World War II as racial tensions erupted in the streets, signaling the decline of the “Arsenal of Democracy.” As whites and their money left the city due to deindustrialization caused by the relocation of automobile manufacturing plants, city officials were left with a rapidly deteriorating downtown and a rapidly increasing underclass of African Americans stuck without jobs, housing, or proper education. Over the second half of the twentieth century, city officials and local business leaders have searched for ways to stem white flight, encourage local business development, and maintain tax revenues. With the legalization of casino gaming and the construction of two new professional sports arenas, Detroit officials have “gone all in” on the sports and entertainment tourist economic model for urban development. But it took them a while to decide that, and it took a special man with a big vision to sell them on the plan.

Comerica Park opened April 11, 2000, in Detroit, the first of two stadiums<sup>75</sup> to be built downtown as part of a public revitalization initiative. After nearly a decade of fruitless efforts to get the city to build a new stadium for the Tigers, team owner and Domino’s Pizza founder, Tom

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<sup>75</sup> Ford Field, home of the Detroit Lions, opened two years later across the street from Comerica Park.

Monaghan, was forced to sell the team to his direct competitor, Mike Ilitch of Little Caesars Pizza. Comerica Park was a relatively small part of Ilitch's grander vision for Detroit's development that also included a football stadium, theaters, restaurants, and ultimately, a new hockey arena. I chose to include Comerica Park for three primary reasons. First, the stadium-driven urban renewal initiative in Detroit provides an excellent context for the study of the "tourist city" model of urban development.<sup>76</sup> In terms of architectural design, Comerica Park fits within the "retro ball park" model, but the presence of Ford Field right across the street takes away from the sense of "naturally" blending into preexisting urban space that so distinguishes retro parks like Camden Yards. The second reason Comerica Park makes for such an interesting study is that unlike the polar opposite split between private and public financing found in the examples of Los Angeles and Chicago respectively, only 38 percent of the \$300 million needed to build Comerica Park was publicly financed. Detroit Tigers' owner, Ilitch, privately financed the remaining 62 percent.<sup>77</sup> In light of the extensive literature on the fallacy of stadium economics that has developed over the last two decades, one might assume that Detroit offers an example of at least moderately successful community opposition to publicly subsidized stadiums. But Ilitch did not stop with Comerica Park.

Detroit is undeniably one of the most lasting and intensely scrutinized examples of post-World War II urban decline. It is the city that first comes to mind when many Americans see articles like "America's Most Dangerous Cities." It is the heart of the American auto industry, also recently bailed out of bankruptcy with taxpayer money. The city itself now finds itself in bankruptcy and is publicly soliciting the state for money to satisfy their creditors. And yet, even as Detroit fell under the control of an emergency manager, city officials signed off on a \$650

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<sup>76</sup> By "tourist city" model, I am referring to competitive cities looking to survive on tourist economies.

<sup>77</sup> "Comerica Park," *ballparks.com*, last modified April 2005, <http://www.ballparks.com/baseball/american/detbpk.htm>

million hockey arena for Ilitch's Red Wings National Hockey League (NHL) franchise. But it is a proud city, a city that lives and dies with its sports teams. A deep playoff run by the Tigers, Lions, Red Wings, or Pistons can bring radically diverse communities together with collective shouts of joy. In chapter 3, I focus on how urban leaders attempted to tap into that communal identity and hopeful spirit to bring renewal to a long-dying city through the development of a downtown stadium district.

Ilitch is to sports and entertainment (the urban tourist economy) what Andrew Carnegie was to the steel industry. Ilitch controls or profits from nearly every aspect of Detroit's growing tourist economy: from parking to concessions, to booking and promotions, to broadcast and ticket revenues, and even to the casinos in the area that call to wayward souls after a heartbreaking loss for the home team. Over the course of three decades, Ilitch has combined urban development and vast sports and entertainment holdings to build an empire just north of Grand Circus Park downtown that stretches from the Motor City Casino just west of the Lodge Freeway to the stadium district where the Fisher and Chrysler Freeways meet. "Little Caesar" has also made quite a fortune making pizzas. Stadium projects are now being developed near Atlanta and again in Los Angeles, and these projects mirror Ilitch's vision—they both encompass the broader sports and entertainment tourist economies.

## **Conclusion**

After analyzing these three cities, the conclusion of the dissertation will bring together their multiple histories and their baseball stadiums to place the processes and people that make up urban power nexuses into the broader context of post-World War II urban development. Urban renewal and redevelopment influenced by patterns of racial migration and the subsequent legacy of housing segregation in Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and other cities, have formed a

core analytical trope for US cities.<sup>78</sup> The private-public power brokerage that has made baseball stadium construction a core requirement for urban redevelopment has received far less attention from urban historians, particularly given the increasing number of cities that are embracing sports and entertainment-based tourist economy development strategies. Investigating the similarities in cross-sections of power structures and policies involved in stadium construction in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit and how they affected urban renewal, urban neighborhood developments, and pro-growth urban policies will contribute to expanding our understanding of urbanization in the United States.

In 2010, former (and the last)<sup>79</sup> American League president, Gene A. Budig, published *Clearing the Bases: Nine Who Did It with Grit and Class*, a memoir and tribute to nine significant individuals he had known during his time in Major League Baseball, including Mike Ilitch. In the forward to Budig's book, former National League president and chairman of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, Len Coleman, though referring specifically to Major League Baseball, articulated the problem that has plagued urban development (including stadium construction) for over a century: How and where do we include the minorities?

We were convinced that Major League Baseball had to do a far better job in promoting the game, especially among young minority students. We focused many of our thoughts on programs for the young from the inner city, those who inundate the sand lots in the major league cities. We also worried about the low number of minorities who were attending baseball games and we suggested remedies, many of which were implemented with success. . . . Commissioner Bud Selig encouraged the American and National League presidents to pursue new and different initiatives that would increase the number of minorities on the field and in youth leagues, in the front offices, in support areas like marketing and concessions, and at the games. Clearly, the increased numbers have made the

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<sup>78</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*; Biles, *Richard J. Daley*; Gillette Jr., *Camden after the Fall*; Kruse, *White Flight*; Self, *American Babylon*; Parson, *Making a Better World*; Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); also see articles by Eric Avila and Mark H. Rose, Andrew R. Highsmith, Michelle Ferranti, and Irene V. Holiman in a special issue on urban renewal in the *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 3 (2009).

<sup>79</sup> The position was abolished in 1999.

game more appealing to people of color who regard the game as an attractive, entertaining outing.<sup>80</sup>

Though he broke Major League Baseball's color barrier in 1947 and had a long history of fighting for equal political and economic rights for African Americans, Jackie Robinson's life work continues. America's national pastime and its cities are still struggling to deal with the legacy of racial animosity and segregation built from years of institutionally sanctioned and still unresolved residential, economic, and political disparity. The following chapters will articulate specific historical manifestations of that legacy revealed in the process of stadium-driven urban redevelopment over the second half of the twentieth century as well as the gradual shift to entertainment-based tourist economies in urban development. We begin over sixty years ago at the height of postwar urban renewal, in the entertainment capital of the United States, Los Angeles, California.

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<sup>80</sup> Len Coleman, foreword to *Clearing the Bases: Nine Who did it with Grit and Class*, by Gene A. Budig (Champaign, IL: News-Gazette, 2010), xii.

## CHAPTER 1

### Conquerors of the West: Julian Chavez, Walter O'Malley and the Construction of Dodger

#### Stadium in Los Angeles

*The history of urban America is inseparable from the history of race in America.*<sup>81</sup>

From its American inception following the end of US–Mexico War in 1848, Los Angeles has been touted as the “city of the future.”<sup>82</sup> Of course, a city that is perpetually identified with things to come cannot represent anything but a wished for, though certainly planned for, fantasy that promises, at best, an uncertain outcome. A historical analysis of the development of Los Angeles, culminating in this chapter with the construction of Dodger Stadium, provides a clear example of some of the issues that have continued to both shape and frustrate urban development in American cities. The legacies of Anglo American conquest and efforts to enforce and protect white hegemony, massive waves of migration, and the failure to deal with rapidly growing populations of transplanted racial *others* in American cities have dominated, and continue to dominate, the urban experience in the United States.<sup>83</sup> This has been particularly true regarding the roles that ethnicity and race have played in 'Los Angeles's urban planning and promotion. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, the expansion of black Los Angeles into the Leimert Park area, which was originally developed as a racially exclusive planned community for whites; the construction of a privately owned professional baseball stadium on 300 acres of

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<sup>81</sup> Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>82</sup> Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 1; William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1–10; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 218; William Alexander McClung, *Landscapes of Desire: Anglo Mythologies of Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 21.

<sup>83</sup> Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 15–22; Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón, eds., *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 60–78; McClung, *Landscapes of Desire*, 15; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight* 155–70; Parson, *Making a Better World*, 163–86; Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*; Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*; Fogelson, *Bourgeois Nightmares*.

land originally seized from Mexican American migrants and cleared for the purpose of building public housing; and the dichotomous development of what Eric Avila has called “chocolate cities and vanilla suburbs.”<sup>84</sup> The dominant, conquering Anglos of Los Angeles’s idealized “future” have both celebrated and sought to contain the racial and ethnic *others* they encountered there.

While boosters have continually advertised Los Angeles as a city of the future, it was built on a fabricated past that whitewashed (Anglicized) the region’s history and cultural symbols. One of the city’s most glaring holdovers from its ethnic/racial history—and therefore one of the most obvious targets for “blight” clearance—Chavez Ravine, was erased and replaced with Dodger Stadium, a symbol of urban America’s (white) past dressed up to accommodate the city of the future. It is more difficult to rationalize pro-growth urban development as “progress” when the “vernacular” of public/urban spaces is looked at more honestly; when the uncivilized, poor barrio that “blighted” Chavez Ravine is recognized as not merely the vernacular expression of inferior or incapable creatures.<sup>85</sup> Much like the blight that symbolically defined public housing developments in older industrial cities like Chicago and Detroit, the blight in Chavez Ravine was due in no small part to the intentional, unequal allocation of public funds for the maintenance of urban spaces. Though the people living in those communities took pride in their homes and did what they could with steadily decreasing resources to maintain a sense of home, as non-whites they were viewed as liabilities to property values, particularly when located relatively close to downtown commercial interests.

Studying the construction of Dodger Stadium as situated within the larger historical context of the urban development of Los Angeles can provide a clearer understanding of the

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<sup>84</sup> Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 1–19.

<sup>85</sup> For examples of reading architecture for the vernacular expression of those who use urban spaces, see Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); and Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).



historical processes that institutionalized and still shape publicly-funded stadium construction in American cities. Los Angeles became the archetype of both postwar stadium design and the fiercely competitive intracity battles for the opportunity to host (and fund) an American cultural icon of national (even international) scope and local pride. In many ways, the construction of Dodger Stadium set the standard for what sports team owners could use as leverage (community, civic pride, promised economic growth) and what they could demand in return from prospective host cities. It also heralded changes to the institutional and economic framework of the game of baseball such as: the internationalization of the game; the intentional transition to a middle- to upper-class clientele with a stadium that featured automobile/highway accessibility and a ballpark experience catering to that clientele; the team's growing monopoly over consumer spending; and finally, the use of baseball's historical "community-building" mythos and cultural capital to secure public funding and a nearly exclusive claim to the profits generated by the stadium. These aspects of the stadium building process are commonplace now, but the Dodgers move to the West Coast largely set those changes in motion.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, a broader historical study of stadium construction in Los Angeles can also broaden our understanding of the political, economic, and cultural issues that fueled postwar pro-growth urban development across the nation. Each city faces unique political, social, and economic pressures that work together to influence the decision-making process in urban development. On the surface, for example, the historical urban development of Los Angeles and Chicago appear to be vastly different. Most urban scholars would agree that the sprawling

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<sup>86</sup> The National League Boston Braves were actually the first franchise to relocate since the Baltimore Orioles became the New York Yankees in 1903 when owner Lou Perini moved the team to Milwaukee in 1953. The American League also saw two franchise shifts early in that decade when the St. Louis Browns moved to Baltimore (also in 1953) changing their name to the Orioles and the following year when a new owner moved Connie Mack's once dominant Philadelphia Athletics to Kansas City. The Dodgers' move to Los Angeles, however, is regarded as more of a significant precedent to franchise relocation because unlike the Braves, Browns, and A's, O'Malley's team was successful both competitively and financially prior to relocation. The other teams were playing (poorly) in multi-team cities, so their loss created far less emotional stress to their original host cities.

diffusion of Los Angeles County is very different from the more traditionally “monocentric”<sup>87</sup> city of Chicago. But by finding a common focal point for the study of urban development in both cities—baseball stadium construction—and by broadening the historical scope/breadth of that study, we come across patterns of urban development that span across both time and space.<sup>88</sup>

This chapter looks less at primary political sources for instances of institutionalized precedents and more so at the similarities between Walter O’Malley’s conquest of the West and the transborder connections in Los Angeles’s developmental history between the United States and Mexico. Following the trail of the region’s romanticized “Spanish fantasy past” provides a detailed look at perhaps the physical manifestation, or personification, of that fantasy past in the figure of Julian A. Chavez, the New Mexican migrant for whom the Dodgers’ home in Chavez Ravine is named. The story of Julian Chavez’s pioneering migration from New Mexico Territory to Los Angeles and the social and political successes that followed are not only connected to, but help explain in new ways, the racially charged “Battle of Chavez Ravine.”

The chapter begins by looking back into both the real and imagined past, with a brief explanation of the romanticized past of the city of Los Angeles that directly influenced the historical process that brought the Dodgers to Chavez Ravine. A detailed summary and exploration of the life of Julian Chavez within that context demonstrates how fantasy meets reality in the life of this early transnational Los Angeles pioneer. Following the sections on Chavez, a brief look at the history of Mexican American participation in baseball in Los Angeles will further highlight the differences between the white establishment (as represented by Dodgers owner Walter O’Malley and California’s political leaders) and the Mexican Americans they sought to exclude and ultimately displace. The historical narrative will then shift to Walter

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<sup>87</sup> For a discussion of LA’s development in contrast to the “monocentric” city model see Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*.

<sup>88</sup> Gaddis, *Landscape of History*. Gaddis has described these patterns as “fractals.”

O'Malley and his upbringing as a member of New York City's elite, followed by an analysis of how O'Malley's attempt to build a new stadium fits into the larger project of American postwar urban (re)development. Finally, I will articulate the now familiar story of the Dodgers move to Los Angeles and the subsequent construction of Dodger Stadium from 1959 to 1962 at Chavez Ravine in light of this exploration deeper into the past. The story of the construction of Dodger stadium is one of physical, racial, and ideological conquest.

### **Julian A. Chavez: The Conquest of Los Angeles (Last of the Conquistadors)**

Chavez Ravine is the westernmost of five ravines located within the roughly 300 acres of land on which Dodger Stadium was built. The stadium itself is actually located on what was once Sulfur Ravine, but over time the entire area came to be called simply Chavez Ravine. The area lies just to the north of downtown Los Angeles, and the actual Chavez Ravine itself has a long history in connection with the city. According to a report produced by an organization of small business owners opposed to the city's contract with the Dodgers, in the early 1830s, a laborer from the New Mexico Territory by the name of Julian Chavez moved to the pueblo of Los Angeles and eventually managed to get the city council to grant him the title to the ravine. He went on to have a successful career as a local politician, holding numerous public offices, and in time the ravine was named after him.<sup>89</sup> Much, if not all of the writing dealing with the construction of Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine cites this brief biography on Julian Chavez and leaves it at that.

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<sup>89</sup> J. Loyd, "Chavez Ravine Fact Book which Comprises the Untold Story of the O'Malley-Chavez Ravine Deal that Mayor Poulson Did Not Tell", April 9, 1962, Edward Ross Roybal papers, Dept. of Special Collections/UCLA Library. Accessed via the University of California Calisphere digital archives. This is a report by the Executive Secretary and Director of Research for the Southwest Chapter, Small Property Owners League of Los Angeles. He presents a compilation of facts exposing the deal as highly beneficial and lucrative to the baseball club to the detriment of the city and people of Los Angeles.

Yet, extending that narrative farther back into California's complex local history helps to broaden an understanding of the institutions and social structures that ultimately influenced where Dodger Stadium would be built. It might seem odd to suggest that we can learn something of that process by reading the 1829 diary of Antonio Armijo, the leader of a New Mexico Territory trading expedition to California in search of mules. On the other hand, I found it odder still that no one thought to ask, "How did a group of Mexican American migrant workers manage to secure such a large chunk of real estate two miles north of what would become the central business district in one of America's most historically violent and racist cities?" How did a "laborer" from the New Mexico Territory in 1844 get the city council of Los Angeles to give him such a prize, in light of Southern California's rampant real estate speculation and racial turmoil over the second half of the nineteenth century?

George Lipsitz argues in *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* that the violent reality of California's racist history "rivals that of any state in the union, including Mississippi."<sup>90</sup> The consistent reification of what Lipsitz refers to as Anglo Americans' possessive investment in whiteness throughout the development of the city has given Los Angeles (and deservedly so) "a reputation as a city blind to its own history."<sup>91</sup> Scholars studying California and Los Angeles in particular have shown this historical blindness to be a result of an intentionally fabricated regional history—the "Spanish fantasy past"—that worked both to romanticize the area's violent and racist past and to justify the racial hierarchies created to support Anglo American dominance after the US–Mexico War.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 231.

<sup>91</sup> Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 139.

<sup>92</sup> Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 231; Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 138.

In 1781, a group of colonizing *pobladores* arrived from Mexico to found a new pueblo near Yang-Na, the most prominent of forty Gabrieleño Indian villages in the area that would become Los Angeles. That the Native American tribes living in this region came to be named after the nearby Spanish San Gabriel Mission demonstrates that the project of racial assimilation, at least nominally, had already begun in the region. Ironically, the *pobladores* themselves were made up of a diverse mix of Spaniards, Native Americans, African Americans, and mestizos (persons of European and Native American descent),<sup>93</sup> though that did little to help the Gabrieleño Indians whom the conquerors forced into labor. By the time of California's statehood in 1850, it became clear that diversity was primarily to be valued insofar as it provided cheap labor for the conquering Anglo Americans in their ongoing quest to fulfill their "Manifest Destiny." Already deemed by Anglo Americans as incapable of assimilation, the Native American population in California was quickly decimated by white aggression, dropping from an estimated 300,000 prior to white settlement to "less than 30,000 in the first decades of statehood through the impressment of Native Americans for labor gangs and outright physical assaults on them, in the belief that such attacks protected white property."<sup>94</sup>

In the decades leading up to the Mexican War, that racist aggression was unleashed against Mexicans as well, supported, as William Deverell has argued, by "Manifest Destiny's darkest assumption that racial and national supremacy went hand in hand."<sup>95</sup> That assumption shaped the development of Los Angeles for the remainder of the century. Although there was a brief period during the transition from Mexican to American control when it appeared that the region's (primarily Mexican) landed elite might retain their land, thereby also maintaining their

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<sup>93</sup> Hayden, *Power of Place*, 85–91.

<sup>94</sup> Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness* 231–32; Miroslava Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 176.

<sup>95</sup> Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 12.

economic and social status, by the 1880s many of those once-mighty families found themselves relegated to a “Spanish fantasy past” as their resources steadily dwindled.<sup>96</sup> Ironically, though he played a sustained role in the development of both Mexican and American Los Angeles, and though “America’s pastime” finally found a home on the West Coast in the ravine bearing his name, the one man whose experience may actually have given a bit of credence to that fantasy as the descendant of Spanish conquistadors has largely been forgotten.

Julian A. Chavez (originally spelled Chaves) was descended from a Spanish family that had lived in the area of present-day New Mexico since the seventeenth century. Don Fernando Durán y Chaves rose to prominence serving under Diego de Vargas during the 1692 reconquest of New Mexico, and by 1696 he was *alcalde*, mayor of a settlement named Bernalillo, which was “located several kilometers north of present-day Bernalillo [in northwestern New Mexico], apparently on the west side of the Rio Grande.”<sup>97</sup> Like the majority of his descendants (including Julian), Don Fernando became a wealthy rancher.<sup>98</sup> By the time Julian was born in 1810, his father, Francisco Antonio Chavez, had settled the family in Abiquiú, New Mexico where he built a home overlooking the Rio Chama. Abiquiú was an important early outpost that faced frequent attacks by nearby Apaches, Utes, Navajos, and Comanches.<sup>99</sup>

The experience of the Chavez family was in some ways similar to that of the early Anglo American pioneers of the Southwest: they had to fight for everything they had and they had

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<sup>96</sup> Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest*, 147–150, Karen Clay and Werner Troesken, “Ranchos and the Politics of Land Claims” in *Land of Sunshine: An Environmental History of Metropolitan Los Angeles*, ed. William Deverell and Greg Hise (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 58.

<sup>97</sup> Joseph P. Sanchez, *Explorers, Traders and Slavers: Forging the Old Spanish Trail 1678–1850* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1997), 107; John L. Kessell, Rick Hendricks, and Meredith D. Dodge, eds., *Letters from the New World: Selected Correspondence of don Diego de Vargas to His Family, 1675–1706* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), 192–3.

<sup>98</sup> Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, *Letters from the New World*, 73–4; 189; 193. Diego de Vargas actually died in Chaves’s home after succumbing to a fatal illness during an attempt to recover some of Chaves’s cattle from raiding Apaches in the spring of 1704.

<sup>99</sup> Sanchez, *Explorers, Traders and Slavers*, 107.

complex relationships with local Native Americans that at times proved profitable (in trade, theft, and slavery) and at others came at great cost (in violent conflict and in reciprocal theft and slavery). Julian's older brother, José María Chavez, "took part in at least eleven campaigns against raiding bands of Comanche, Utes, and Apaches."<sup>100</sup> There is evidence that Julian joined his brother in various trading and military endeavors prior to his permanent relocation to Los Angeles, but Julian did not desire to be a lifelong soldier. And while many New Mexicans "resented control by the Mexican government," members of the Chavez family were typically supportive of Mexican appointees (which would later prove very dangerous).<sup>101</sup>

In many other ways, however, the experiences of the Chavez family were very different from early Anglo pioneers. The descendants of Don Fernando Durán y Chaves were members of New Mexico's landed gentry elite. They used powerful military and political connections both in the Spanish and Mexican periods to become one of the biggest and wealthiest families in New Mexico.<sup>102</sup> In 1829, when Antonio Armijo and a group of sixty explorer-traders (including Julian Chavez) opened up the Old Spanish Trail, providing a direct connection between Los Angeles and New Mexico, the Chavez family were at the center of what had become a transcontinental trade route used by traders from the United States, New Mexico, Spain, French Canada, and Mexico.<sup>103</sup> According to David J. Webster, "With Spanish power removed from North America in 1821 (Mexican independence) . . . trade goods from the United States began to flow freely into

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>102</sup> Sánchez, *Explorers, Traders, and Slavers*, 103–17; Kessell, Hendricks, and Dodge, *Letters from the New World*, 192–93; Maurilio E. Vigil, *Los Patronos: Profiles of Hispanic Political Leaders in New Mexico History* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1980), 56–61; Lynn I. Perrigo, *Hispanos: Historic Leaders in New Mexico* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1985), 53–55.

<sup>103</sup> David J. Webster, *Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 135. Describing the scope of the newly opened trade route, Webster wrote, "Americans, too, entered the horse trading business in California, driving livestock back to Santa Fe as the New Mexicans did. Some American traders also pushed California horses and mules beyond Santa Fe to markets in Missouri. Thus, in the largest sense, the new trails between New Mexico and California became extensions of the Santa Fe trade."

New Mexico.”<sup>104</sup> The Chavez family adapted during this transition and gave their support to the newly formed Mexican government, which in turn did not excessively interfere with pioneers in the New Mexican territory. Even when that support proved dangerous as “tensions between *ricos* and *pobres* over questions such as taxes and militia service would contribute to bloody insurrection in 1837,”<sup>105</sup> a warning from a powerful family member saved Jose María Chavez from certain execution, allowing him to escape to his brother Julian in Los Angeles.<sup>106</sup> As such, the trade route opened up by Armijo in 1829 also served as a transnational immigration route for New Mexican political refugees.

Julian Chavez came from a long line of politically connected ranchos, New Mexico’s moneyed elite, that owned multiple Indian slaves and consistently supported those in power (first the Spanish, then Mexico, and finally the United States).<sup>107</sup> As Webster and others have demonstrated, “New Mexico had developed a small moneyed elite by the end of the Spanish era. . . . In a province where a laborer earned three to six dollars a month, members of the Armijo, Chavez, Otero, Ortiz, and Perea families dealt in huge sums.”<sup>108</sup> Julian Chavez left New Mexico in the early 1830s to make a name for himself in Los Angeles, and despite being listed as a “laborer” in the 1836 Los Angeles city census, the historical record clearly demonstrates that there was much more to him than that.<sup>109</sup> And yet, despite all of those advantages and what appears to have been a long and distinguished career in Los Angeles politics, Chavez too was ultimately powerless against the Manifest Destiny of the conquering Anglos from the United States.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>106</sup> Sánchez, *Explorers, Traders, and Slavers*, 112; Janet Lecompte, *Rebellion in Rio Arriba 1837* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), 70–71.

<sup>107</sup> Sánchez, *Explorers, Traders, and Slavers*, 108.

<sup>108</sup> Webster, *Mexican Frontier*, 210.

<sup>109</sup> County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, “Supervisor Julian A. Chavez,” Board Member Biographies, [lacounty.gov](http://lacounty.gov), PDF file.



As a member of pre-American Los Angeles's gentry *Californio* elite, Chavez served as a Los Angeles city councilman between 1850 and 1875.<sup>110</sup> Californios retained a level of social prestige and influence after the American takeover of Los Angeles thanks to the "intermarriage of elite Anglos into the once-elite Californio families,"<sup>111</sup> property holdings, and their accumulated wealth. By around 1880, however, with their gradual but steady disappearance from political office and dwindling personal resources, those "former Californios found that theirs was an existence increasingly consigned to the past."<sup>112</sup> By 1912, for example, only the Chavez name remained in the Ravine, and the property was subdivided and sold as individual lots to Mexican families formerly living on the bottom of the Los Angeles River.<sup>113</sup>

### **The Immigrant *Californio*: A Member of Early Los Angeles's Urban Elite**

Not long after helping Antonio Armijo forge what would become the Old Spanish Trail connecting New Mexico and California, Chavez permanently relocated to Los Angeles and by the mid-1830s began investing in real estate. Chavez apparently did very well for himself, rising quickly up the social ladder, securing his first public position as *suplente alcalde* (assistant mayor) by 1838. Six years later, he successfully petitioned the *Ayuntamiento* (city council) for 83 acres of land near downtown that would eventually be referred to as Chavez Ravine. During the final years of Mexican rule, Chavez served as a *regidore* (councilman) as well as one of the region's *zanjaneros*, or *juez de aguas* (judge of the waters).<sup>114</sup> In 1846, in his role as *zanjanero*, Chavez ruled against two US immigrants in a water use/irrigation/property dispute that was typical of the ideological conflicts about land and water use that marked the transition from

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<sup>110</sup> Parson, *Making a Better World*, 164; Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 17.

<sup>111</sup> Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 29.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>113</sup> Parson, *Making a Better World*, 164.

<sup>114</sup> County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, "Supervisor Julian A. Chavez."

Mexican rule to American rule.<sup>115</sup> Chavez also acted as a mediator during the US–Mexico War by trying to help secure recompense for illiterate Mexican Californian women who had property stolen or damaged by American soldiers in 1847.<sup>116</sup> Following the end of the war, in an act that signified his growing social presence in the city, Chavez was elected as a member of *American* Los Angeles’s first city council in 1850.<sup>117</sup> Two years later, he was also elected as one of the first members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, a position that included the role of *juez del campos* (judge of the plains), in which Chavez was called upon to settle cattle disputes.<sup>118</sup> Over and over again, throughout his long tenure as a Los Angeles politician, Chavez served as a mediator as the region changed from Mexican to American rule—a role the Chavez family had played successfully many times over the years with regime changes in New Mexico.

Despite assurances granted by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, however, the violence against the Republic of Mexico did not stop after the war, nor did the US citizenship promised to Mexicans still living in American California offer them any protections under the law.<sup>119</sup> Whereas the Mexicans made up nearly 80 percent of Los Angeles’s total population in 1850, “that figure had plummeted to something like 20 percent in just a generation, a flip-flop of stunning magnitude and speed.”<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the production of specifically “Mexican” spaces within the city, such as Sonoratown, began the process of Americanizing Los Angeles by segregating those races “destined” to serve the dominant Anglos.<sup>121</sup> Located north of the plaza

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<sup>115</sup> David S. Torres-Rouff, “Water Use, Ethnic Conflict, and Infrastructure in Nineteenth-Century Los Angeles,” *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 1 (2006):124, n. 11.

<sup>116</sup> Chavez-Garcia, *Negotiating Conquest*, 83.

<sup>117</sup> Maymie R. Krythe, “Daily Life in Early Los Angeles: Part IV: Angelenos Took Their Politics Seriously,” *Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1954), 322; J. M. Guinn, “The Passing of the Old Pueblo,” *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California and Pioneer Register* 5, no. 2 (1901): 115.

<sup>118</sup> County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, “Supervisor Julian A. Chavez.”

<sup>119</sup> Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 13; Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 233.

<sup>120</sup> Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 26.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

not far from the banks of the Los Angeles River, Mexican (*not* American) Sonoratown near the heart of Los Angeles was perceived by Anglo Americans much in the same way that white residents of the city later perceived Chavez Ravine and its inhabitants nearly a hundred years later. Both communities represented what was regarded as the region's primitive, uncivilized past, and neither had any place in Anglo visions for the future of Los Angeles.

Though the "primitive, uncivilized conditions" of non-Anglo communities can, in some ways, be fairly attributed to cultural differences,<sup>122</sup> the historical record clearly demonstrates that the blight attributed almost exclusively to non-white areas like Chavez Ravine was the result of intentional, institutionalized neglect. In an article written for the *Pacific Historical Review*, David S. Torres-Rouffe describes the transition from *zanjas* (open-air ditches and canals) to underground sewers in the second half of the nineteenth century as Los Angeles transitioned from Mexican to American rule. During the Spanish and Mexican periods, rulers of the city understood water to be a communal resource; the guiding principle behind the laws governing use of the water was that "the pueblo itself held the right to the water, and use of it was granted in common to all inhabitants."<sup>123</sup>

During Los Angeles's Mexican period, the *ayuntamiento* appointed *zanjaneros* who were the "pueblo's highest paid government officers," to settle disputes and report to the *ayuntamiento* when improvements or additions were needed.<sup>124</sup> Only after recommendations from the *zanjaneros* would the *ayuntamiento* "approve irrigation projects, and it demanded, when possible, that such projects be community endeavors."<sup>125</sup> As Anglo immigration to Los Angeles

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<sup>122</sup> If we understand urbanization and infrastructural developments (such as underground plumbing) as signs of modern and/or "civilized" culture, then the agricultural-centered rural communities might be termed "primitive or uncivilized." But as will be discussed shortly, these differences derive primarily from public policy differences shaped by diametrically opposed understandings of community development and responsibility.

<sup>123</sup> Torres-Rouffe, "Water Use," 123.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 123.

increased in the middle of the nineteenth century, few Americans had previous experience with or an understanding of communal rights systems for regulating water use. In addition, the open air *zanjas* were likely seen by Anglos as typical of the unsanitary practices leading to the “scourge of epidemic disease” that were typically blamed on the “poor, the infirm, or members of nonwhite races” throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>126</sup> As Martin V. Melosi has demonstrated, in American cities “the line between individual and governmental responsibility for responding to community needs was obscure through the early nineteenth century.”<sup>127</sup> Citing Sam Bass Warner Jr., Melosi argued that “before then, ‘the city was to be an environment for private money-making, and its government was to encourage private business.’”<sup>128</sup> David Torres-Rouff’s article on ethnic clashes over water use in nineteenth-century Los Angeles also demonstrated that “increasing clashes between U.S. immigrants and Mexican Californians over ‘water, public land, and ownership rights’ were based on different ideological notions of rights (communal versus individual), and of ‘nature, progress, and economy.’”<sup>129</sup> As Julian Chavez adapted as a politician from Mexican to American rule, he too would play a part in this ideological shift, ultimately leaving his own land because of Los Angeles’s plans to modernize the city’s plumbing.

Drawing on the experience of his family’s long, multi-national history in New Mexico, Chavez worked to build social and political connections that would secure his place among the region’s landed elite despite the transition to US control. This involved a delicate balance between placating Anglo American fears, supporting public works projects that neglected areas

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<sup>126</sup> Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 41.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 13; Sam Bass Warner Jr., *The Private City*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 99.

<sup>129</sup> Torres-Rouff, “Water Use,” 124.

with high concentrations of (increasingly poor) Mexicans, and building alliances with the region's most powerful and longstanding families. During the smallpox epidemics of 1850 and 1880, for example, Chavez's land was used as the county "pest farm" to care for a number of afflicted Chinese and Mexicans. "Chavez Canyon," as it was then called, was home to the isolation hospital that effectively served to quarantine the diseased "foreigners," thereby protecting the Anglo American population.<sup>130</sup> And in 1865, Chavez had seemingly taken significant other steps towards securing his future in American Los Angeles.

In 1865 Julian Chavez was once again elected to serve on the city council, where he served on the Finance Committee, the Water Committee, and the Police Committee and also became a member of the Board of Equalization. He was also appointed to the Los Angeles River Improvement Committee, where he led efforts to fortify the river and straighten it to prevent flooding. Perhaps more significant to his local standing, though, the widower Chavez also married very influential *Californio* Augustin Machado's niece, Maria Luisa Machado, which connected him directly to one of Los Angeles's largest ranching families.<sup>131</sup>

Chavez served two additional terms on the city council, from 1870–1871 and again in 1873, which proved to be a very significant final term for the future of Chavez Ravine. In 1873, this former *zanjanero* and his colleagues on the council used eminent domain to secure land for Los Angeles's first sewer system. The council also issued special assessments (where the land owner pays the costs) for two subsequent sewer projects.<sup>132</sup> Though Chavez's own land was

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<sup>130</sup> County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, "Supervisor Julian A. Chavez." For another example of "ethnic quarantine" in Los Angeles, see chap. 5 of Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*. Deverell discusses the ethnic quarantine that took place during the 1924 plague outbreak. According to Deverell, "Ninety percent of those killed by the disease were of Mexican descent." (182)

<sup>131</sup> County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, "Supervisor Julian A. Chavez."

<sup>132</sup> Torres-Rouff, "Water Use," 127–31.

excluded,<sup>133</sup> it is significant to note that Los Angeles's first sewers did include land owned by the Machado family. Another interesting connection is that Francisco Machado, the brother of Chavez's new wife, was also serving as a county supervisor from 1872–1876 while his family's land was receiving underground plumbing.<sup>134</sup> Despite his powerful newfound alliances and long political career, however, things were rapidly about to change for the worse for Chavez.

A combination of natural disasters “that decimated crops and cattle between 1857 and the mid-1860s” and rising costs stemming from “time-consuming and costly legal proceedings to confirm . . . land titles” negatively impacted many once proud *Californio* elites like Julian Chavez.<sup>135</sup> In 1878, Chavez sought permission to break a trust reserving 57 acres for his wife and children so he could subdivide and sell the land. According to Chavez, “the land ‘gave them nothing’ and the ‘onerous’ overdue city taxes compelled him to sell the property.”<sup>136</sup> Though his wife's extended family, the Machados, seemed to retain at least 25,000 square acres in Southern California, Chavez and his family were ultimately left landless.<sup>137</sup> Drought and legal expenses pertaining to establishing land ownership under the California Land Act of 1851 ultimately undermined this once thriving *New Mexi-Californio*. On July 25, 1879, Julian A. Chavez died of a heart attack at the age of seventy.

Between 1848 and 1900, many of the region's *Californio* elite saw their lands seized by the conquering Anglo Americans who showed little regard for the protections guaranteed Mexicans living in California under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. These were prominent members of society, many of whom served politically to ease the transition from Mexican to

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<sup>133</sup> This is significant because the lack of modern infrastructure and plumbing was one of the reasons Chavez Ravine was deemed a blighted area in need of redevelopment prior to the construction of Dodger Stadium in the middle of the next century. I found no evidence to suggest why Chavez's property was excluded from the sewer projects.

<sup>134</sup> County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, “Supervisor Francisco Machado,” Board Member Biographies, [lacounty.gov](http://lacounty.gov), PDF file.

<sup>135</sup> Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest*, 150.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 148–49.

<sup>137</sup> Clay and Troesken, “Ranchos and the Politics of Land Claims,” 60; Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest*, 149.

American rule, much like Julian Chavez. This process of racial discrimination and marginalization continued to plague Mexicans and Mexican Americans who were simply trying to play by the rules set for them by the dominant Anglo Americans in an effort to realize the American Dream of home ownership and self-determination. Subsequent examples include “the ‘repatriation’ drive of the 1930s, the police attack on the zoot-suiters in June 1943, ‘Operation Wetback,’ [and] the evictions at Chavez Ravine which ultimately brought Walter O’Malley’s Dodgers to Los Angeles.”<sup>138</sup> The parallels between the seizure of *Californio* lands in 1848–1900 and the seizure of the homes of residents living in Chavez Ravine in the 1950s prior to the construction of Dodger Stadium are striking. Despite their efforts to work hard and realize the American Dream of home ownership; despite the fact that many of the young men of Chavez Ravine had fought and died for their country in World War II; and despite the fact that it was generally recognized that theirs was a happy existence with strong communal ties; much like the *Californios* nearly a century before, they were powerless against racial discrimination as *the* determining factor in Los Angeles’s future development.<sup>139</sup> That same power of racial discrimination would ultimately apply to the development of professional baseball in California as well.

### **We Already Have Baseball in California**

Baseball had already taken root and flourished in California by the time Albert Goodwill Spalding brought his World Tour of “All-Stars” through the state in 1888, so much so, in fact, that Spalding’s All-Stars were beaten (handily) by the California League’s San Francisco and

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<sup>138</sup>Charlotte Rebecca Negrete White, “Power vs. The People of Chavez Ravine: A Study of Their Determination and Fortitude” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2008), 16.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 16; Ronald W. Lopez II, “Community Resistance and Conditional Patriotism in Cold War Los Angeles: The Battle for Chavez Ravine,” *Latino Studies* 7, no. 4 (2009), 458.

Oakland teams.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, perhaps nowhere in the world was there a greater collection of diverse peoples and cultures taking to the game of baseball, through which, as Joel Franks has stated, they “might find . . . the ability to connect their pasts, gain wider social acceptance, link to other communities, achieve control of their lives, show pride in their communities, and just have fun.”<sup>141</sup> Baseball played a big role in the lives of the immigrants daily flooding into California from all over the world, particularly from Asia and Mexico. While European immigrants, like the Irish and Italians, were slowly assimilated as “whites” and thereby granted access to professional organized baseball, whether it be in the Pacific Coast League or the major leagues, African Americans in the East and Latino and Asian immigrants were forced to form their own segregated teams and leagues.

In California, racially-defined teams appeared as private company-sponsored teams, in youth leagues formed out of “the progressive era impulse to reform misdirected and potentially misdirected youth,” in Depression era church leagues, in semi-pro “bush leagues” around the state, and in fully organized leagues segregated by race, such as the ten-team Nisei League in Fresno formed by Japanese American baseball pioneer, Kenishi Zenimura.<sup>142</sup> Chinese Americans living in Oakland during the 1930s were represented by “a tough semiprofessional nine called the Wa Sung,” and Filipino leagues flourished during the 1920s and 1930s in San Francisco and Los Angeles.<sup>143</sup> And as would prove to be true in Japan during the American occupation following World War II, war also fed the transborder flow of baseball between Mexico and the

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<sup>140</sup> Mark Lamster, *Spalding's World Tour: The Epic Adventure that Took Baseball around the Globe—And Made It America's Game* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006.), 85–87. This was during the first attempt to organize and maintain a legitimate league, which lasted from 1887–1889. The current California League (Class A Advanced minor league) was not formed until 1941.

<sup>141</sup> Joel Franks, “California Baseball’s Mixed Multitude,” in *Baseball and the American Dream: Race, Class, Gender and the National Pastime*, ed. Robert Elias (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 102.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 105–20. *Nisei* refers to second-generation Japanese immigrants. As Franks states on p. 108, the first Japanese American baseball team was the Fuji club, which was formed in San Francisco in 1903 by *Issei*, or first-generation Japanese Americans.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 108–9.



United States following the US–Mexico War.<sup>144</sup> As the national pastime of the Western Hemisphere’s most dominant emerging imperial nation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, baseball had already “gained a top spot in the aspirations of young men in Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Nicaragua—almost all places where American economic and military presence has been very intense.”<sup>145</sup> According to Douglas Monroy, baseball “arrived in Mexico in the 1870s and 1880s via American sailors in Guaymas and mine employees in Cananea, and via Cuban players on tour,” and “north of the border, Mexicans were playing baseball in Arizona and New Mexico in the 1880s.”<sup>146</sup> By the twentieth century, baseball was a common part of community life for Mexican Americans living in Los Angeles, and by the middle of the century, the Mexican League would prove to be a legitimate threat to the interests of Major League Baseball in the United States.

Prior to the turn of the twentieth century and the waves of immigration that would follow, the game of baseball had become inextricably linked to the ideal of an American identity that was being shaped by the cultural leaders of the American Renaissance. In 1846, Walt Whitman wrote, “I see great things in baseball. It’s our game—the American game.”<sup>147</sup> At a dinner celebrating the return of Spalding’s World Tour, Mark Twain told a star-studded crowd (which included a young Theodore Roosevelt) that baseball was the “very symbol, the outward and visible expression of the drive, and push, and rush, and struggle of the raging, tearing, booming nineteenth century.” He added that “Spalding and his men had carried the American name to the

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<sup>144</sup> For a comprehensive look at baseball and US/Japanese relations see, Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, *Transpacific Field of Dreams: How Baseball Linked the United States and Japan in Peace and War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

<sup>145</sup> Douglas Monroy, *Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 45–46; see also Rob Ruck, *Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011).

<sup>146</sup> Monroy, *Rebirth*, 46.

<sup>147</sup> Quoted in Lamster, *Spalding’s World Tour*, 30; also quoted in Ruck, *Raceball*, 1.

outermost parts of the earth, and covered it with glory every time.”<sup>148</sup> By the early twentieth century, encouraged by progressive reformers, immigrants would increasingly see baseball as a way to keep their children active and out of trouble, as a way to instill confidence and a sense of community, and perhaps most importantly, they hoped baseball would teach “immigrant children about being American.”<sup>149</sup> On the West Coast, Mexican and Asian immigrants hoped that the game of baseball might afford them access to the American Dream, just as it did for Irish, Italian, and eventually Jewish immigrants in the East. But ethnicity and race were becoming different signifiers for foreign immigrants, and it became increasingly apparent that unlike European immigrants, Mexicans, Asians, and black Latinos—the brown and yellow races—could not be so easily whitewashed and thereby assimilated.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, “recently arrived Mexican elites” and “remnants of Californio society” were playing baseball games in the “lawn tennis patio” of Club Anahuac, “where the principle families of . . . reputable society always meet.”<sup>150</sup> Just as working-class Irish immigrants had forced their way onto teams in the Eastern leagues in the nineteenth century, by the 1920s, working-class Mexican teams “sponsored usually by local Mexican businesses regularly competed with one another, with other ethnically identified teams, with local Anglo clubs, and with touring professionals from the United States and Mexico.”<sup>151</sup> Baseball became central to the experience of Mexican and Mexican American migrant communities living in Los Angeles. During the 1920s and 1930s, baseball in Los Angeles “was one way the various people from south of the border forged an identity as Mexicans, a way for

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<sup>148</sup> Quoted in Lamster, xv-xvi; Ruck, *Raceball*, 1.

<sup>149</sup> Peter Levine, *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 87; Franks, “California Baseball’s Mixed Multitude,” 102. For an understanding of how American identity was also exported to places in the Caribbean, such as Cuba, during the early 1900s, see Ruck, *Raceball*; and Adrian Burgos Jr., *Playing America’s Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>150</sup> Monroy, *Rebirth*, 46.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

Mexicans to garner respect in the eyes of the americanos, and a public reinforcement of the traditional manly family values of forceful, dynamic activities.”<sup>152</sup> During the Jim Crow years, Douglas Monroy writes that “the crowds cheered for ‘their team,’ and their teams were often organized by ethnic group.” These games simultaneously demonstrated the players’ American-ness while reinforcing—and making a competitive statement—about the superiority of their collective ethnic identities.

Following the great migration north stemming from the fallout of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, an estimated 1.5 to 2 million Mexicans were living in the United States, according to the 1930 census and Mexican records.<sup>153</sup> For a rapidly growing population seeking permanence, acceptance, and a way to overcome decades of racial stereotyping, “baseball simultaneously created cohesion and identity in ‘the Mexican colony,’ provided recreation, and displayed Mexicans’ (at least the men’s) desire for the validation of the broader Los Angeles populace, for, in other words, the acknowledgment of various mexicanos as dwellers, Mexican ones, of the place.”<sup>154</sup> But as the experience of Julian Chavez and other *Californios* confirmed, their claims to place were ultimately denied by the lasting effects of the Mexican American War. They were a conquered people with no claim to the land and certainly no rights of ownership. As Monroy has articulated, “The legacy of the US–Mexico War awaited Mexican immigrants as they arrived in the north. The inheritance of history denoted them as a defeated and inferior people for whom unskilled labor was their only fitting role, a notion that distinguished Mexicans’ experience from that of other immigrants to the United States.”<sup>155</sup> And when the

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 93–94.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 106.

game of professional baseball began a process of desegregation in 1947, Mexicans would continue to be excluded from the major leagues, thanks to the legacy of a different war.

In the early 1940s, Major League Baseball faced its biggest threat since the Federal League tried to compete with the American and National Leagues in the 1914 and 1915 baseball seasons. A wealthy Mexican oil tycoon named Jorge Pasquel bought a team in the Mexican League in 1940 and began raiding the rosters of Negro League teams with the promise of higher pay and a life outside the reach of Jim Crow. Other Mexican League teams had been doing that since 1937, but beginning in 1943, Pasquel successfully used the same tactics to go after major league players. While the Mexican League raids pushed major league owners towards further towards integration and secured a number of concessions for players, including a modification of the ten-day release clause, their resolution also forced a non-compete agreement between Major League Baseball and the Mexican League.<sup>156</sup> While Jackie Robinson's integration of professional baseball ultimately led to a flood of Latin players into the game, noticeably absent were Mexican players, who had to be purchased from the Mexican League team they played for. The bottleneck created by this policy undoubtedly contributed to the heightened hysteria of "Fernando-mania" when former Mexican League pitcher, Fernando Venezuela, joined the Los Angeles Dodgers and took the league by storm starting in the 1981 season. Despite their love for playing the game of baseball, Mexicans living in America found they had no more claim to a place in the American game than they had to space in American cities.

### **The Battle of Chavez Ravine: It Was Over Before the Century Began**

*When Los Angeles was a young city, the rolling hills of Chavez Ravine were left undeveloped as the town spread out in the flatlands below. Without sewers, water facilities or improved streets, Chavez Ravine became a haven principally for Mexican-American and Mexican nationals, many of whom grazed sheep and cattle on the green hills as early as 1900. A minority group with no political*

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<sup>156</sup> Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, 167–70; Ruck, *Raceball*, 118–42.

*power, they were unable to get municipal services that would make the area a normal residential district. As the years went on, jerry-built shacks dotted the area. This naturally choice location, with hills looking down on Elysian Park on two sides and a view of the expanding city on another, became a blighted area.*<sup>157</sup>

The previous paragraph was taken from the *Frontier Special Report*, published in June 1957, which dealt with the illegality of constructing a ballpark on land designated for public use. The language from this report is filled with the whitewashed language of Los Angeles's "Spanish fantasy past." The "rolling hills of Chavez Ravine" were left undeveloped, *intentionally*, by Julian Chavez because he was a rancher. The area was *intentionally* left without sewers, at least partially under the watch of the very man who owned the land. The area was *intentionally* used by Anglo residents as a "haven" for Mexican American and Mexican nationals in an effort to segregate and quarantine fatal disease, on multiple occasions. Likewise, when finally given the opportunity to own land when the ravine was subdivided by Marshall Stimson ("a veteran Los Angeles politician as well as an activist in reform movements in state and local governments," who around 1913 sold parcels in the ravine to house roughly two hundred Mexican families living by the Los Angeles River as a result of being displaced by the 1910 Mexican Revolution), those new landowners *intentionally* and *proudly* built those "jerry-built shacks" they called homes.<sup>158</sup> It's true that that "blighted area" became that way *intentionally*, but not by the intentions of the people who would see their homes ultimately replaced by a baseball stadium.

Compounding the problem of perception of the area as blighted was the major housing shortage facing Californians during and after the Second World War, as the state experienced a massive influx of people migrating west to take jobs in the emerging aviation industry and the

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<sup>157</sup> "Public housing and the Brooklyn Dodgers: Los Angeles, double play by City Hall in the Ravine," A Frontier Special Report, June 1957, Edward Ross Roybal papers, Dept. of Special Collections/UCLA Library. Accessed via the University of California Calisphere digital archives.

<<http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb1b69n98s/?query=Ravine&brand=calisphere>>

<sup>158</sup> White, "Power vs. The People of Chavez Ravine," 42; Parson, *Making a Better World*, 164.

developing military industrial complex.<sup>159</sup> The tremendous housing shortage resulted in Congress passing the public housing acts of 1937, as well as the Taft-Wagner-Ellender bill in 1949, which provided large sums of additional money for housing. In August 1949, Mayor Fletcher Bowron and the Los Angeles City Council “by unanimous action authorized the City Housing Authority to build 10,000 low-rent slum clearance units on sites to be selected by the CHA.” Chavez Ravine was immediately selected as one of the prime locations to begin slum clearance, with the CHA’s plans calling for 3,360 of the 10,000 total housing units to be built on that site. Toward the end of July 1950 the residents of Chavez Ravine, whose homes had occupied just 40 percent of the land, received a letter from the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles informing them that surveyors employed by the city would be by shortly to estimate the value that the city would pay them for their homes.

Many residents refused eviction, and few, if any, received “fair value” for their homes and property. What came to be called “The Battle of Chavez Ravine” raged for the next decade in courtrooms, the local media, and over the rubble of homes bulldozed in front of weeping, and now quite literally homeless, Mexican American families. Adding insult to injury, the public housing program planned for Chavez Ravine was later voted down amid McCarthy Era Red Scare tactics that labeled the program as “creeping socialism,” clearing the way for Mayor Bowron’s successor, Norris Poulson’s courtship of the Dodgers.<sup>160</sup> By the time Poulson contacted Walter O’Malley in 1954 about the city’s sincere interest in bringing the Dodgers to the West Coast, O’Malley had already been told by New York Commissioner Robert Moses, in no uncertain terms, that he had no intention of using federally funded slum clearance for the purpose of building a ballpark in Brooklyn.

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<sup>159</sup> Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 119; Parson, *Making a Better World*, 76–78.

<sup>160</sup> Parson, *Making a Better World*; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*; Lopez, “Community Resistance and Conditional Patriotism”; White, “Power vs. The People of Chavez Ravine.”

**Walter O'Malley: "An heir to both the Wigwam political tradition and the Irish-American practice of blarney and charm."<sup>161</sup>**

Walter O'Malley was one of the most influential owners in the history of Major League Baseball. He has been credited with turning around a floundering franchise and making the Brooklyn Dodgers one of the most profitable teams in the league.<sup>162</sup> Then, at the height of the Dodger's success and national popularity, O'Malley uprooted the team and brought Major League Baseball to the West Coast. But the story of this Irish-American conqueror of the West carries little of the romance that we typically find in tales of immigrants struggling to attain the American Dream. That might very well apply to O'Malley's father, but by the time Walter was old enough to attend high school, his family was unquestionably counted among New York City's elite. The story of Walter O'Malley is but another chapter in the long history of the conquest of North America by powerful, Anglo elites.

Walter's father, Edwin O'Malley, was a Tammany Hall pol who used his extensive political connections to ensure that his son was given every opportunity to succeed. While facing political pressures stemming from corruption hearings regarding his role in the Tammany regime, Edwin sent Walter west to Culver Military Academy in Indiana, "an isolated and expensive haven for the elite."<sup>163</sup> Walter thrived at Culver, where he was identified by faculty early as a leader and strong communicator, as evidenced by his success writing for the school's paper. Upon Walter's graduation, senior faculty members suggested to his parents that he pursue a career in journalism or politics rather than the military. O'Malley's habit of developing and maintaining an extensive network of contacts began at Culver; as Michael D'Antonio suggested

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<sup>161</sup> D'Antonio, *Forever Blue*, 19.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 51. When O'Malley began working with the Dodgers at the behest of George McLaughlin from the Brooklyn Trust Company in the late 1930s, the team was indebted to the lender (which also served as executor of the Ebbets's estate) for \$500,000.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 9.

in his biography of O'Malley, "In a time long before the term was used, he was 'networking' his way to people who would help him throughout his life."<sup>164</sup>

Relying on his newfound connections at Culver and those of his father in Tammany Hall, Walter was able to get into the University of Pennsylvania (Class of 1926) at a time when only "10 percent of Americans . . . got any education after high school"; furthermore, as an Ivy League school, Penn graduates "made up a tiny percentage of those who earned college degrees, making them an elite among the elite."<sup>165</sup> As at Culver Academy, O'Malley thrived at Penn where he was elected class president for both his junior and senior year; upon graduation, his classmates declared him Spoon Man, "an honor reserved for the most respected fellow in class."<sup>166</sup> After returning to New York, O'Malley's father used his contacts to help Walter get into Columbia for law school, though he finished at Fordham. Even as many in the country were beginning to feel the devastating effects of the Great Depression, O'Malley finished his law degree by taking night classes at Fordham while working during the day with a contractor in the drilling and survey business. In 1931, he married his longtime sweetheart and family friend Kay Hanson, the daughter of a prominent Brooklyn judge.<sup>167</sup> The following year Walter started his own legal practice focusing on "civil cases, contracts, and real estate," which (given the financial ruin wreaked by the Depression) turned out to be a very lucrative and timely decision.<sup>168</sup>

By 1943 O'Malley had developed powerful civic and corporate connections, and in that year, he left his successful New York law practice to take the position of vice president and general counsel with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Prior to taking his first "official" position with the

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 13–15.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 15, 20.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 26–7.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 29–35. O'Malley was making over \$100,000 a year from his law practice by 1938, which according to D'Antonio, equaled \$1.3 million in 2009.



team in 1943, O'Malley's former mentor, George V. McLaughlin, who was the president of the Brooklyn Trust Company, asked Walter to keep an eye on the financially troubled ball club.<sup>169</sup> At the time he took the position, the nearly bankrupt team was in arrears in paying its mortgage to the Brooklyn Trust Company. Over the next seven years O'Malley managed to accumulate 50 percent of the ball club's stock, and on October 26, 1950, he officially became the majority owner and president of the team.<sup>170</sup> Though the stories of Larry McPhail, Branch Rickey, and of course, Jackie Robinson are central to the history of the Brooklyn Dodgers, they are beyond the scope of this chapter. It is worth noting, however, that each played significant roles in turning the Dodgers franchise around. Rickey in particular bears mentioning as the mastermind behind rebuilding the organization's farm system, developing quality players that would contribute to the team's great success following World War II, and of course, integrating the game with the signing of Robinson.<sup>171</sup> Without their contributions it is fair to suggest that the team may never have recovered financially, let alone moved to Los Angeles.

By 1946, the Dodgers had already become the most profitable club in the National League, and as the team entered into a ten-year period of unprecedented competitive success from 1946 to 1956, with five National League pennants, O'Malley attempted to capitalize on that success with repeated efforts to secure enough land for a new stadium until, ultimately, he resorted to the threat of relocation if public officials were unwilling to cooperate with him towards that end. Today this is a common tactic employed by major league teams which proves successful more often than not as demonstrated by the new ballparks built for the New York Yankees, the Chicago White Sox, the Minnesota Twins (who actually threatened to fold

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<sup>169</sup> D'Antonio, *Forever Blue*, 51; Sullivan, *Dodgers Move West*, 29.

<sup>170</sup> Sullivan, *Dodgers Move West*, 30.

<sup>171</sup> O'Malley also brought Rickey on as an ownership partner when he bought out the McKeever family's share of the team in 1944. Six years later, Rickey was bought out, and O'Malley obtained sole control of the franchise.

altogether by way of contraction), and more. The emotional trauma experienced not only in Brooklyn but throughout Major League Baseball due to the Dodgers' relocation to Los Angeles in 1958 set a lasting precedent that made those present-day threats effective.

In just under twenty years, Walter O'Malley's elite upbringing and education had prepared and enabled him to create a vast network of powerful connections that ultimately led to his position as the sole owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers. When those connections proved unable to help him secure the land he desired for a new ballpark in Brooklyn, another collection of urban elites would reach out to O'Malley and offer him an opportunity to realize his ambitions in Los Angeles. O'Malley's story demonstrates that stadium construction is a process controlled by and for the urban elite, much like most other forms of city building. And as was the case with the construction of Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine, stadium construction can most certainly be promoted as city building, particularly in a nation (no less a city) that has increasingly placed a cultural premium on professional sports and entertainment.

### **Postwar Urban Development: Cities/Suburbs, Transportation Infrastructure, and Land Use**

The story of the Dodgers' move to Los Angeles has often been articulated within the context of changing patterns in postwar urban development and the rapid expansion brought on by mass suburbanization. If one endorses the dichotomy that pits the effects of suburban sprawl against urban development, then Brooklyn Dodger fans and the families living in Chavez Ravine were merely casualties of the inevitable historical processes that led to white flight, capital flight, industrial decentralization, and liberal growth policies initiated in part by the federal government. As the old industrial spaces of northeastern cities were abandoned or absorbed into growing

inner-city “black belts” with their own forms of “business and entertainment” (what came to be called “vice districts”), white middle-class Americans began to fear those postindustrial urban spaces as *dark*,<sup>172</sup> dangerous areas scarred by neglect and rising crime. Postwar urban renewal legislation (and the federal funding that came with it) armed downtown business elites with the power to reclaim and rebuild some of those spaces in a manner designed to attract white middle-class residents/customers and to act as a buffer between their investments in the central business district and the dark areas on the fringe.

Prior to the 1950s, scholars from the Chicago school of urban sociology, such as Robert Park, Andrew Lees, and Louis Wirth identified the built environment of the city as the source of America’s social ills.<sup>173</sup> But as Becky Nicolaides points out, postwar urban scholars and critics such as Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, and William Whyte began to argue that “the suburbs had elbowed their way into that maligned position—the site of social dysfunction and pathology. Hell, it seemed, was moving from the city to the suburbs—like everyone else.”<sup>174</sup> The result was the widespread acceptance of an oppositional discourse that linked urban decline with suburban growth. Nicolaides suggests that although these city-based, postwar critics “maintained a faith in the superiority of urban life and even some optimism about the urban future, they approached their social analysis of cities and suburbs from within this oppositional framework... They maintained a hope for the city, a passionate faith that cities—not suburbs—held the greatest potential for progress and human civilization itself.”<sup>175</sup> But despite the prevalence of this oppositional view point among postwar scholars, as Greg Hise states in *Magnetic Los Angeles*,

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<sup>172</sup> Dark is used here to signify both the racial euphemism and what whites saw as cultural inferiority, as in “dark ages.”

<sup>173</sup> Becky Nicolaides, “How Hell Moved from the City to the Suburbs: Urban Scholars and Changing Perceptions of Authentic Community,” in *The New Suburban History*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 82–84.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 80–81.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 82.

“in practice, these boundaries were, and continue to be, far more porous than the simple city/suburb dichotomy suggests.”<sup>176</sup> As the historical narrative develops over the course of the twentieth century, that claim becomes more evident as postwar stadium-driven urban renewal policies changed in an effort to form a symbiotic, rather than competitive, economic relationship between city and suburb.<sup>177</sup> Nevertheless, when the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles in 1957, however, the dichotomous view of city and suburb was still evident in the renewal policies developed by city officials and downtown business elites.<sup>178</sup>

The first generation of suburban historians generally argued that “early suburbanization was shaped by the rise of a culture of domesticity that emphasized the separation of work and home, made possible by transportation innovations beginning with commuter railways and street cars and, later, the automobile.”<sup>179</sup> Those scholars further suggested that the “middle-class movement out of central cities was also spurred by perceptions of urban disorder and fears of immigration.”<sup>180</sup> The stereotype of suburbia as exclusively privileged, white middle-class enclaves developed out of this school of thought. In the postwar central cities of the Northeast, this proved to be an extremely persuasive stereotype that not only influenced public policies designed to combat decentralization, but it also began to take hold in the executive offices of Major League Baseball franchises. Some owners, including Walter O’Malley, attributed the steady decline in paying customers at the ballpark to the exodus of white middle-class fans who

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<sup>176</sup> Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 5.

<sup>177</sup> This will be particularly evident in the chap. 3 on Detroit, where city leaders and developers have embraced a strategy heavily dependent on importing suburban dollars in the city’s rising tourist economy centered around sports, gaming, and live entertainment.

<sup>178</sup> As the following chapter will articulate more fully, the construction of the new US Cellular Field on the South Side of Chicago presents an extreme example of the influence of the city/suburb dichotomy on urban development. There, when efforts to get away from the South Side and build in the northwest suburbs failed, the White Sox built a stadium surrounded by parking lots that effectively serves an imported suburban clientele while isolating them from the surrounding (primarily poor, African American) neighborhoods.

<sup>179</sup> Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, “Introduction: The New Suburban History,” in *The New Suburban History*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

had moved out to the suburbs. Ballparks surrounded by growing numbers of minorities and the working poor, with limited access and parking for automobiles, were not appealing to the expanding postwar white middle class. From a structural standpoint, then, changes to urban transit infrastructure and land uses once again coincided with the beginning of a new era of stadium construction.

Second only to the availability of large parcels of often costly urban real estate, the layout of a city's transportation infrastructure heavily influences the selection of potential stadium development sites. As far back as the late nineteenth century when baseball was still played in semi-permanent wooden ballparks, location was dependent on accessibility to mass transit.<sup>181</sup> Steven Riess detailed in *City Games* how deeply connected transit companies were to ball clubs, as demonstrated by their financial involvement with the game in 78 cities.<sup>182</sup> The Brooklyn National League Club was owned by traction magnates at the end of the nineteenth century before being sold to Charles Ebbets in 1898, who then moved the team to Washington Park III, a relatively small wooden ballpark in the centrally located, yet industrial, Red Hook section of Brooklyn near the Gowanus Canal. To help cover the costs of relocation and a new ballpark, Ebbets received financial backing from two trolley companies which were hoping to increase ridership on their nearby lines.<sup>183</sup> With the increased professional organization and stability of the game at the turn of the century, the game's popularity and profitability began to grow tremendously, and it became clear that the overcrowded and unsafe wooden ballparks could profitably be replaced by more expensive, and permanent, steel and concrete structures.<sup>184</sup> It was

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<sup>181</sup> Riess, *City Games*, 214.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>183</sup> Riess, *City Games*, 214; Ronald M. Selter, *Ballparks of the Deadball Era: A Comprehensive Study of Their Dimensions, Configurations and Effects on Batting, 1901–1919* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), 38; G. Edward White, *Creating the National Pastime: Baseball Transforms Itself, 1903–1953* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 16–17.

<sup>184</sup> Riess, *City Games*, 214.

during this transitional first decade of the twentieth century that Charles Ebbets began to take notice of “an area of Brooklyn at the southeast corner of Prospect Park between the Bedford and Flatbush sections colloquially known as ‘Pigtown.’”<sup>185</sup>

As will be more fully explained in chapter 2 (about Chicago), one of the most coveted land uses in urban development, particularly with the acceleration of “white flight” after World War II, has been middle- to upper-class residential areas. Downtown businesses have long favored such development due to fears of declining profits and property values associated with locations near heavy industry and the racially segregated urban poor.<sup>186</sup> With the National Agreement in 1903 that brought the competing American and National Leagues together under the banner of Major League Baseball, the game was on its way to becoming one of urban America’s big businesses as well. Like his eventual successor as owner of the Dodgers, Walter O’Malley, Charles Ebbets anticipated the changes coming to the game and acted decisively to get ahead of the curve by secretly acquiring individual parcels of land located between what he saw as two emerging upscale residential communities in Bedford and Flatbush.

Brooklyn’s growing population and Pigtown’s close proximity to Prospect Park, and more importantly, to nine distinct trolley lines, led Ebbets to believe that the squatter-filled former dumping ground would likewise see a “boom in land values.”<sup>187</sup> Moreover, the team’s home at Washington Park was beginning to suffer from increased industrial pollution emitting from a nearby can factory and coal field, as well as the resulting stench rising from the Gowanus

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<sup>185</sup> White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 17.

<sup>186</sup> Biles, *Richard J. Daley*; Lois Wille, *At Home in the Loop: How Clout and Community Built Chicago’s Dearborn Park* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997); Joel Rast, *Remaking Chicago: The Political Origins of Urban Industrial Change* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999); Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Bachin, *Building the South Side*; Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*; Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Squires et al., *Race, Class and the Response to Urban Decline*.

<sup>187</sup> White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 17; Riess, *City Games*, 220; Selter, *Ballparks of the Deadball Era*, 42.

Canal.<sup>188</sup> Ebbets had to secretly buy the tracts of land making up the five-and-a-half-acre site he targeted for his stadium to avoid jumpstarting that boom and creating a seller's market. Completely oblivious to Ebbets's intentions for the property (much like the property owners living in Chavez Ravine prior to the Dodgers move nearly fifty years later), the previous owners had no idea that the value of their property was about to increase dramatically. While the cost for the construction of Ebbets Field would eventually reach \$750,000, forcing him to take on his contractors as partial owners,<sup>189</sup> Ebbets secured all of the individual parcels that made up the site for just \$100,000.<sup>190</sup> As would prove true later when the Dodgers moved west to Los Angeles, and for future stadium projects around the country as well, transportation infrastructure and land use changes directly influenced the location of Ebbets Field at 55 Sullivan Place.

When Walter O'Malley began looking for a location for his new stadium during the 1950s, he was determined to have maximum parking and direct highway access.<sup>191</sup> The primary forms of urban transportation infrastructure were changing from streetcars and rails to roads, particularly following the passage of postwar legislation calling for extensive highway construction at both the state and federal levels. With the support of a growing military industrial complex, the automobile industry (at times one and the same during the buildup for war), and the *Los Angeles Times*, the region began to take shape as an intentionally "metropolitan mosaic" of planned communities connected by a web of carefully and intentionally placed highways. This, in conjunction with federally funded interstate highway construction, facilitated and accelerated the westward migration of Americans seeking work in California's growing military industrial

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<sup>188</sup> White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 16.

<sup>189</sup> The McKeever brothers, Stephen and Edward, owned half of the ball club.

<sup>190</sup> White, *Creating the National Pastime*, 17; Riess, *City Games*, 220.

<sup>191</sup> Riess, *City Games*, 236; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 152–54; D'Antonio, *Forever Blue*, 179; Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*, 38–40.

complex.<sup>192</sup> For a baseball owner like Walter O'Malley, who was looking to build a new stadium suited to the rise of suburbia and the age of the automobile, Los Angeles offered an opportunity to get in on the ground floor.

Along with transportation infrastructure, land use played a significant role in the development of cities and their ballparks. Following the passage of the 1954 Housing Act, the majority of the decision making regarding the use of federal funding for urban renewal and highway construction (often inseparable tools towards the same ends) was left to local and state governments respectively.<sup>193</sup> The passage of the Interstate Highways Act of 1956, Eric Avila and others have argued, “struck many of the nation’s leading planners as an opportunity to remedy the deteriorating condition of America’s cities.”<sup>194</sup> In Los Angeles, the “freeways encircling . . . the central business district are linked by four major interchanges, each of which stands on what used to be residential areas once identified as ‘slums.’”<sup>195</sup> As postwar urban development increasingly prioritized building up the central business district and constructing highways to provide wealthier, white suburbanites direct access to downtown, newly constructed baseball stadiums became both a tool for reshaping the urban core and an immensely popular cultural

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<sup>192</sup> Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 192-3. Avila points out that *LA Times* owner/publisher, Harry Chandler, “maintained early ties to the automobile industry. . . . By the early 1920s, the Chandler family had an economic interest in almost every aspect of automobile production.” Regarding highway construction, the military industrial complex, planned communities and westward migration see also, Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*, 118–20; Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*; Brian D. Taylor, “When Finance Leads Planning: Urban Planning, Highway Planning, and Metropolitan Freeways in California,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 20, no. 2 (2000):196–214.

<sup>193</sup> Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 117; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 206–7; Taylor, “When Finance Leads Planning,” 204.

<sup>194</sup> Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 206; Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 17, 121; Raymond A. Mohl, “Planned Destruction: The Interstates and Central City Housing,” in *From Tenements to the Robert Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth Century America*, ed. John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 227; Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 90; Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*, 116.

<sup>195</sup> Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 207; Charles C. Euchner, *Playing the Field: Why Sports Teams Move and Cities Fight to Keep Them* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 152. In Chicago, the Dan Ryan highway effectively cut off the city’s expanding Black Belt from the central business district and destroyed what was once a vibrant African American commercial strip along Wentworth Avenue, just south of where the new US Cellular Field (formerly the new Comiskey Park) now stands.



attraction that city leaders (and baseball team owners) hoped would reel in those suburban dollars. Urban power brokers have long argued that the displacement of thousands of poor racial minorities by stadiums and highways in cities across the country was solely motivated, even necessitated, by the pursuit of those dollars. While that might be fairly argued against regarding O'Malley's pursuit of a new stadium in Brooklyn, if only because no one was uprooted for a new stadium, the decision to build in Los Angeles, on the other hand, had everything to do with race; this is a story that reaches far deeper into the past than "The Battle of Chavez Ravine."

Just as scholarship in urban and suburban history has convincingly demonstrated the significance of race in postwar urban (re)development,<sup>196</sup> sports historians have recognized the central importance of this issue. Following the 1956 season, Walter O'Malley expressed concerns about the "long, long line of poor Puerto Rican people getting their welfare checks" directly across the street from his office in Ebbets Field. According to Neil Sullivan, such concerns demonstrate "the relationship between race and class in America." Sullivan argued that "bigotry is irrational because it means that people willing to part with their money are rejected for a reason that is arbitrary and self-defeating."<sup>197</sup> But the historical record clearly demonstrates that the fear of African Americans as threats to both personal and commercial property values directly led to the flight of capital and white residents which ultimately led to greater urban disinvestment. And if Ebbets Field was unable to accommodate a white suburban clientele driving in from the suburbs, long lines of locals receiving welfare checks, Puerto Rican or otherwise, did not bode well for O'Malley's economic future. As O'Malley's concerns mounted about how the changing demographics in the neighborhoods surrounding Ebbets Field were

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<sup>196</sup> Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Biles, *Richard J. Daley*; Wille, *At Home in the Loop*; Rast, *Remaking Chicago*; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*; Hunt and Ramón, *Black Los Angeles*; Fogelson, *Downtown*; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*; Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*.

<sup>197</sup> Neil J. Sullivan, *The Diamond in the Bronx: Yankee Stadium and the Politics of New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 111. Conversation between O'Malley and general manager Bill Bavasi.

affecting his take at the gate, he realized that he needed to build his new stadium in a location easily accessible for white, middle-class suburbanites. In short, O'Malley had to convince city officials that the Dodgers were a necessary part of New York City's postwar plans for urban renewal and the city's ongoing fight against the blight-inducing effects of decentralization.

While O'Malley deserves credit for anticipating many of the technological and geographical developments that would drastically alter the landscape of Major League Baseball, the solution he sought to counter the effects of mass migration from Brooklyn to the suburbs was heavily influenced by postwar efforts to slow, if not reverse, the growing threat that decentralization posed to the *monocentric* city model.<sup>198</sup> O'Malley believed that if he could build his stadium in a location that allowed immediate access to major highways and mass-transit, on a parcel of land large enough to accommodate both the stadium and parking for a minimum of 4,000 cars, suburban Dodgers fans would be more likely to drive into the city to catch a game. By the 1950s, however, the prospects for acquiring that much land in a single transaction within the city limits of Brooklyn were very bleak. There was a way to pull it off, but it would require cooperation from city politicians, and a willingness to classify the Dodgers as a public good, which warranted enacting one of the most powerful tools for urban redevelopment.

### **In Search of the Taj O'Malley**

*In late 1956, the Dodgers toured Japan. Walter O'Malley liked the ground-level suites—"dugout boxes"—between each dugout. They became part of Dodger Stadium. Too: five tiers of seating, red infield and warning track clay, and palm*

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<sup>198</sup> William T. Bogart, *Don't Call It Sprawl: Metropolitan Structure in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9. Bogart states that "the dominant intellectual approach to describing cities in the twentieth century was the monocentric city model. In a monocentric city, all commercial and industrial activity takes place in the central business district, while the rest of the city consists of residential areas." Although New York City had experienced a level of commercial and industrial decentralization by that time, one could argue that the infrastructural development plans of Robert Moses were focused on revitalizing downtown Manhattan and providing improved access to the central business district for residents of the surrounding neighborhood boroughs by investing heavily in the construction of highways, bridges, and tunnels.

*trees beyond the outfield. "I want to build the perfect park," he pledged. Designers still heap praise on baseball's Taj Mahal.*<sup>199</sup>

Ebbets Field was the Dodgers' home in Brooklyn since it first opened on April 9, 1913.<sup>200</sup> O'Malley began his crusade for a new ballpark just three years after taking his first official position with the team in 1943. In a letter dated October 14, 1946, addressed to Emil Praeger, an engineer working out of New York City, O'Malley sent the following cryptic message:

*Dear Emil,  
They say that everything happens in Brooklyn but here is something that didn't.  
Your fertile imagination should have some ideas about enlarging or replacing our  
present stadium.*

*Sincerely,  
Walter F. O'Malley*<sup>201</sup>

As early as 1948, O'Malley publicly issued a statement in the *New York Herald-Tribune* regarding the Dodgers' decision to decline plans drafted by theatrical designer Norman Bel Geddes for an 80,000 seat concrete and stainless steel stadium which was drawn to fit the existing acreage containing Ebbets Field, which at the time, had a maximum capacity of 35,000. He cited the exorbitant projected cost of \$6 million as the primary reason for rejecting the plans. O'Malley suggested that while "we appreciate that the Brooklyn fans are entitled to more seats in a modern stadium . . . it just does not seem possible in the near future."<sup>202</sup> And yet, beginning with the letter to Praeger in 1946, the historical records clearly demonstrate that O'Malley was

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<sup>199</sup> Curt Smith, *Storied Stadiums: Baseball's History through Its Ballparks* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003), 293.

<sup>200</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 125.

<sup>201</sup> "October 14, 1956: Letter from Walter O'Malley to Emil Praeger," Historic Documents: October 14, 1946 – June 26, 1953, accessed April 20, 2009, [walteromalley.com](http://www.walteromalley.com).

<[http://www.walteromalley.com/docu\\_detail.php?gallery=1&set=1&docuID=9&pageNum=1](http://www.walteromalley.com/docu_detail.php?gallery=1&set=1&docuID=9&pageNum=1)>

<sup>202</sup> "March 16, 1948: Statement by Walter O'Malley in New York Herald-Tribune," Historic Documents: October 14, 1946 - June 26, 1953. Accessed April 20, 2009. [walteromalley.com](http://www.walteromalley.com). The documents on O'Malley's biographical website also contain correspondence (May – June, 1956) with Buckminster Fuller, whose geodesic dome design was beginning to make waves in the world of architecture, regarding the possibility of a "clearspan enclosure" for his new ballpark design.

concerned not so much with construction costs, but rather the location of his new ballpark. O'Malley's primary concerns not only included additional seating and modern amenities, but also parking space and more direct access to the park via mass transit and/or more immediate proximity to highways.

Between 1946 and 1953, O'Malley began to float information about his intentions to build a multipurpose, retractable roof stadium to the local newspapers and magazines such as *Colliers*, suggesting that the development of such a venue, in combination with the immense popularity of the Dodgers, would push Brooklyn into the international spotlight. Furthermore, in one such letter written to Frank D. Schroth, publisher of *The Brooklyn Eagle*, O'Malley suggested that by building such a stadium, "we would become so important in Brooklyn that once again we would long to be a separate city with an individual identity."<sup>203</sup> On June 18, 1953, O'Malley sent a letter that included perhaps the first official threat of relocation to Robert Moses, commissioner of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority. That letter began a long and bitter fight between one of baseball's most beloved organizations and the cold, hard realities of Moses's "*monocentric city model*"<sup>204</sup> of urban (re)development.

O'Malley was more than willing to pay the city for one large property, but the only way to put such a package together was if Robert Moses, chairman of the mayor's Committee on Slum Clearance at the time, was willing to invoke the powers of eminent domain extended to governments under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 for the creation of public housing.<sup>205</sup> As John Mollenkopf has demonstrated, with the subsequent Housing Act of 1954, control of the program was ceded to local authorities, "which allowed downtown businesses, developers, and

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<sup>203</sup> "September 15, 1952: Letter from Walter O'Malley to Frank Schroth," Historic Documents: October 14, 1946 – June 26, 1953, accessed April 21, 2009, [walteromalley.com](http://walteromalley.com).

<sup>204</sup> Bogart, *Don't Call it Sprawl*, 9.

<sup>205</sup> Sullivan, *Dodgers Move West*, 44, 57.

their political allies, who had little interest in housing, to use federal power to advance their own ends.”<sup>206</sup> But as O’Malley would soon discover, Moses had a different vision for the future of metropolitan New York. In response to a letter sent by O’Malley on August 10, 1955, which attempted once again to convince Moses to help him secure the necessary land at the Atlantic-Flatbush site, “Moses replied sharply that ‘I can only repeat what we have told you verbally and in writing, namely, that a new ball field for the Dodgers cannot be dressed up as a Title I project.’”<sup>207</sup> If there was to be no way for O’Malley to counter the exodus of Brooklyn baseball fans to the suburbs, then perhaps it was time for O’Malley to consider the possibility of bringing the Dodgers out to the middle class. And he would do just that, following their exodus all the way out to the West Coast. In what can only be described as tragically ironic, on July 24, 1950, just three years prior to O’Malley’s first letter to Moses, the very same urban renewal policy of federally authorized and subsidized slum clearance that would eventually prove fatal to O’Malley’s efforts in Brooklyn was formally introduced (also by letter) three thousand miles away to a small community of migrant workers living just north of downtown Los Angeles.

### **The Battle of Chavez Ravine and the Significance of Dodger Stadium**

Walter O’Malley was able to build his modern stadium because the public officials of Los Angeles developed a freer interpretation of Title I of the Housing Act of 1949. The land surrounding Chavez Ravine was originally confiscated by the city under the power of eminent domain for the construction of blight-clearing public housing units; however, by the time that construction was voted down, the land had already been confiscated and the land legally restricted exclusively for public-use development. The result was a problem of much greater significance than what appears on the surface. The contract between the city and the Dodgers

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<sup>206</sup> Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 117.

<sup>207</sup> Robert Moses, quoted in Sullivan, *Dodgers Move West*, 48–49.

was hotly contested in court, and one of the primary objections raised by those opposed to the contract was the gross discrepancy between the original appraisal of the lands, which set the value for the compensation owed by the city to the original residents of Chavez Ravine, and the projected value of the land once it was graded for development. As Neil Sullivan points out, “Grading, however, required significant investments and could be undertaken only for a project promising substantial commercial returns. As [mayor] Poulson’s memoirs suggest, no firm had been willing to risk such a venture until the Dodgers arrived.”<sup>208</sup>

If Poulson’s account is accurate, the city was then doubly motivated to complete the Chavez Ravine deal with the Dodgers. Not only was the team necessary for elevating the status of Los Angeles as a nationally competitive metropolis, or “Major League City,” but building a stadium appeared to be the only option available in city efforts to replace the blighted shacks of Chavez Ravine’s migrant community. The stakes in the Battle of Chavez Ravine were not just about raising the cultural status of the city. Just like cities in the East, Los Angeles had to deal with issues of urban renewal, and the intimate proximity of Chavez Ravine to downtown Los Angeles made that site a primary concern in those efforts. The reason the Dodgers succeeded in Los Angeles where they had failed in New York was, in part, due to the powerful influence of two men. In New York, Robert Moses wielded absolute control over the implementation of plans for urban renewal, which of course included the manner in which he invoked the power of eminent domain. Moses had very specific ideas about how the city should be rebuilt, and providing land for the construction of a baseball stadium was not one of them. In Los Angeles, Mayor Poulson did not wield the same level of autonomous control, but he had a very strong cluster of coalitions—including civic leaders, businessmen, Hollywood stars, and the Los Angeles press—that he masterfully guided, demonstrating savvy political skill. If not for the

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<sup>208</sup> Sullivan, *Dodgers Move West*, 159.

tireless efforts by these clusters of varying influence and power to overcome the many obstacles to securing the Chavez Ravine site—the same obstacles that influenced Robert Moses’s decision against invoking Title I—the configuration of Major League Baseball might look very different today. Furthermore, it goes without saying that while Los Angeles was sure to be granted a baseball team eventually, the city would be very different today without Dodger Stadium.

When Dodger Stadium was completed, it became the first modern stadium funded primarily by private capital. The last privately funded ballpark had been Yankee Stadium, which was constructed in 1923. After Dodger Stadium opened in 1962, there has never been another major league ballpark constructed solely with private funds. But Walter O’Malley set a powerful and lasting precedent that demonstrated the immense cultural power wielded by Major League Baseball. Today it is common practice for owners to leverage cities for the construction of new, publicly funded ballparks under the threat of relocation. None of that would have been possible had O’Malley stayed in Brooklyn. The echoing cries of Brooklyn residents, stripped not only of their team but also their community identity, continue to haunt civic leaders whenever a sports team threatens to leave their city.

## **Conclusions**

The construction of Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine was the culmination of more than a hundred years of territorial and racial conquest in Los Angeles. The dominant group—whether it was the Spanish, Mexicans, New Mexicans, or Anglo Americans—displaced, disenfranchised, or coopted (rather than assimilated) the conquered residents of the city and identified its own interests with those of the city as a whole. A pueblo became a mission; the mission became a trading outpost; and the trading outpost became first a Mexican and finally an American city.

With each conquest, some aspects of the conquered people's culture were eradicated; cultural aspects that were lost include communal water rights, the *Californio* landed gentry elite, and close-knit rural communities, like Chavez Ravine, where sheep and goats grazed on the hillside. At other times and in other ways, the dominant group coopted the culture of the conquered for their own profit; the creation of the "Spanish fantasy past" is perhaps the best example of this process, not only in Los Angeles, but in Southern California as a whole.

The creation of the entertainment industry as exemplified by Hollywood, Disneyland, and the Los Angeles Dodgers signified the finality of the Anglo American cultural conquest of the West Coast. The arrival of Major League Baseball in California highlighted many of the important changes taking place in postwar America. It highlighted the viability of cross-continental flight and the new private airline industry that had grown out of California's aircraft production for World War II; it highlighted the dramatic impact of the 1956 National Interstate and Defense Highways Act that forever changed the urban and suburban landscape and the centrifugal movement of American political and economic power; and certainly it exposed the ruthless side of the "business of baseball" and the power private corporations wield in the shaping of postwar American cities, even to the point of acquiring private land for entertainment purposes.

A 1982 article from *Forbes* magazine describes the secrets to the Dodgers' tremendous financial success:

Compare Dodger Stadium, for example, to another entertainment success of the West Coast—Disneyland. Dodger Stadium is squeaky clean, beautifully landscaped and rests in a striking setting. As at Disneyland, Dodger Stadium attendants—even in the parking lot—are civil. The bathrooms are clean and safe.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 192.



In Dodger Stadium, we see a physically tangible metaphor for the history of American urban development. The stadium was constructed as a result of slum clearance legislation enacted as a defense against decentralization, in a location that was ideally situated near the hub of major highways connecting downtown to the rest of the metropolitan area. The attention given to order, cleanliness, open spaces, and natural beauty refer back to the ideals that carried over from Ebenezer Howard's garden city and the progressive City Beautiful movement, which both had a profound impact on suburban development in the postwar period. The influence of Disneyland in urban stadium construction also foreshadowed later efforts to revive cities with import, destination-based tourist economies. And perhaps most importantly, Dodger Stadium represents Anglo American efforts to whitewash the history of the development of Los Angeles.

That Major League Baseball would be played in Chavez Ravine signified even more for our understanding of urban development patterns in the United States. Neither wealth nor public standing had the power to overcome the history of racial conquest in the United States. The parallels between the lives of Julian A. Chavez and Walter O'Malley are striking and provide an illuminating perspective on race, migration, and Anglo dominance in the development of American Los Angeles. Walter O'Malley, who has universally been recognized as a pioneer in Los Angeles developmental history, used his elite connections, influence, and understanding of how he could use post-WWII national and local legislation to drive a particular type of urban development to bring a symbol of America's glorious past into Los Angeles's ever-changing, yet predominantly white future. The legacy of Chavez Ravine's tightly-knit community of Mexican American migrants was ultimately "whitewashed" out of existence with the construction of Dodger Stadium. On the other hand, despite his true legacy as a man who also deftly used his own elite connections, influence, and understanding of the region to play major roles in the first

two decades of American Los Angeles's development, Julian Chavez has largely been coopted and relegated to the region's "Spanish fantasy past." Neither the tremendous wealth and power the *Californios* had accumulated, nor the legal assurances and protections granted by the Treaty of Hidalgo, could secure a place for Mexican elites in the Anglo-dominant vision of American Los Angeles.

Chavez's role as an Angelino is recalled largely by an empty ravine that now holds a ballpark, remembered primarily in his whitewashed biography as a Los Angeles politician and proprietor of the blighted, poor agricultural past that the land bearing his name has come to signify in the story of Los Angeles's urban development. But the blight and plight of Chavez Ravine were largely intentionally created conditions to suit the developmental desires of the city's white, urban elite, despite concerted efforts by Mexican and Mexican American residents to maintain a sense of home and community with the little resources they had. The stadium that now sits in Chavez Ravine symbolically represents Los Angeles's ongoing attempt to marginalize the present racial other while simultaneously glorifying a "Spanish fantasy past." It symbolizes the Americanization of that space by tapping into the national pastime's glorified past. Chavez Ravine is a space that has represented Mexican American prestige and wealth; it was a space that served as an arena where Anglo American fears were played out in the form of racially designated "pest farms" and Red Scare politics. Now it is a place known as the home of one of the most beautiful stadiums ever built for an American professional baseball team.

Ultimately the space and place of Chavez Ravine needs to be understood for its representation of these significant aspects of urban American history: migration and racial conquest, postwar highway development and effects of white flight; the increasing power of Major League Baseball owners to shape the processes of urban development; and the shift from

urban manufacturing economies to entertainment-based tourist import economies. The violently racist impulses of Manifest Destiny in the US West morphed into a more benign racism that has characterized cities across the country. In cities like Chicago and Detroit, racial minorities were segregated and largely cut off from the emerging post-manufacturing urban economies, leaving them isolated in overcrowded, deteriorating pockets of poverty and crime. The scars of Anglo America's violently racist past remain largely unaddressed in all of these elements, and thus, we come full circle to the quote that began this chapter: *The history of urban America is inseparable from the history of race in America.*<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 8.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Building Community: Bringing the Suburbs to Chicago's South Side**

*The territory surrounding Comiskey Park would be devoted to a single purpose: moving fans into and out of the ballpark as expeditiously as possible. It was as if the franchise were saying, "Please attend our contests and support the Sox. But there will be no dillydallying or frivolity along the way!"*<sup>211</sup>

Cities that pursue Major League Baseball teams in an effort to attain "major league" status might fairly argue that they are engaging in "city building" enterprise. Such was the case when Los Angeles lured the Dodgers from Brooklyn in 1957. The construction of the new Comiskey Park on Chicago's near South Side, on the other hand, was reactionary urban development undertaken by a city afraid of losing that status. During the 1980s, Chicago politicians were confronted by all of the city's major professional sports teams seeking new stadiums. Chicago was home to some of the oldest stadiums in the nation, so there was some legitimate cause for concern over the deteriorating structures. Though there were two real opportunities to incorporate the new baseball stadium more organically as part of a larger, mixed-use neighborhood development, the construction of the new Comiskey Park never developed into a purposeful attempt to improve the city through careful urban planning.<sup>212</sup> The result was the erection of a large suburban-style stadium in the middle of a poor South Side neighborhood, surrounded by a sea of parking lots to serve a suburbanite fan base.

A number of factors contributed to this unfortunate development. *First*, the precedent set by the Dodgers' move to Los Angeles, which gave teeth to teams' threats of relocation,

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<sup>211</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It's Hardly Sportin'*, 79.

<sup>212</sup> As will be seen in more detail later in the chapter, there were two opportunities where the city could have considered including the stadium in a broader neighborhood development plan. The first came during discussions about building on the vacant rail yards in the South Loop and would have involved expanding Tax Increment Funding for development in Chinatown (just to the southeast of the proposed site) to include the stadium. The second opportunity came in the form of an alternative stadium plan developed by Philip Bess which featured a smaller traditional urban ballpark designed to organically blend into the neighborhood's existing urban form.

suggested that the possibility of *losing the team altogether* was a very real possibility. The White Sox used this leverage to gain control of the entire process, from the timing of the deal, to the design of the stadium, and even with regard to further commercial development surrounding the park. *Second*, political pressures unique to Chicago infused that threat with very real and immediate political consequences. Harold Washington's election as mayor in 1983 was a shock to the traditional power structures long cultivated by the Cook County Democratic regime. As he sought to fill city positions with individuals from the coalition that got him elected, entrenched opponents in City Hall fought back, leading to Chicago's infamous "Council Wars." As the threat of losing the White Sox to the suburbs (or worse to St. Petersburg, Florida) escalated, Washington's political rivals sought to use the loss of one of the city's cultural icons against him in the upcoming election cycle.<sup>213</sup> Losing the team, then, was *politically unfeasible*. Under such pressure, there was simply no time to entertain broader, more urban-minded forms of stadium development. A *third* contributing factor was Chicago's long history of what might be termed "go big or go home" urban development. As far back as the aftermath of the great fire of 1871, Chicago's political and business leaders believed that a great metropolis was defined by great civic monuments, a thriving commercial sector, and increasing property values in and around the city's core. Powerful civic leaders and politicians shaped, institutionalized, and later reified downtown development policies which *prioritized commerce* rather than community in the city's physical development.<sup>214</sup> The decision to build the new Comiskey Park in South Armour Square

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<sup>213</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 139. For more on Washington and race in Chicago politics also see: Dempsey Travis, *Harold: The People's Mayor: An Authorized Biography of Mayor Harold Washington* (Chicago: Urban Research Press, 1989); William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931–1991* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Dianne M. Pinderhughes, *Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: A Reexamination of Pluralist Theory* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Paul M. Green and Melvin G. Holli, eds., *The Mayors: The Chicago Political Tradition* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2005).

<sup>214</sup> Carl Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Flanagan, *Seeing with Their Hearts*; Lois Wille, *At Home in the Loop*; Biles, *Richard J.*

was determined as much as, if not more, by those developmental precedents than it was by the powerful negotiating position of the White Sox ownership.

### **Baseball and Building Community**

The construction of the new Comiskey Park in Chicago provides an excellent study on the different ways in which the notion of “community” is understood in urban development. Baseball teams (and their stadiums) have historically been defended by stadium boosters and fans as community building enterprises, and when the Dodgers played in Brooklyn, there was certainly a good deal of truth to that claim. But that community was developed in a completely different time and urban context than what currently exists in “Major League Cities.” The intimate relationship that developed between the team and the residents of the borough was a product of a number of factors that simply do not exist today.

First, Ebbets Field was designed in a manner that physically forced a level of intimacy between the spectators and ballplayers.<sup>215</sup> Much of this was due to the inherent limitations of space that governed the first wave of urban ballparks built during the early decades of the twentieth century. They were confined to the size of a city block, and as such, the seats were of necessity constructed so that the fans were almost literally on top of the field of play. Second, that was prior to the nationalization of the game that occurred with broadcast television and westward expansion. Baseball was very much a local institution, and as such, the players on the Dodgers were regarded as integral parts of the local community.<sup>216</sup> This was also before the

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*Daley*, 47–50; Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*, 132, 139; Rast, *Remaking Chicago*; Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*.

<sup>215</sup> The largest seating capacity at Ebbets Field was 35,000 (between 1937 and 1945).

<sup>216</sup> Sullivan, *Dodgers Move West*; Euchner, *Playing the Field*; Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*; D’Antonio, *Forever Blue*.

introduction of free agency which led to the eventual skyrocketing of player salaries and the development of the “superstar” system enabling players like the New York Yankees’ Alex Rodriguez to earn more per plate appearance than many Americans make in a year.<sup>217</sup> Back then, players were viewed as “working stiff” much like the rest of us. But as Charles C. Euchner has demonstrated in *Playing the Field*, much has changed in both the physical and cultural constructs of what community means in the context of professional sports and their host cities in the latter half of the twentieth century:

Sports franchises are difficult for local politicians to confront because the symbolism and ritual of sports are so powerful. Sports is vivid; it provides intense bursts of action that most other activities lack. The sports event has the potential to hold the rapt attention of spectators because of the intensity of competition. . . . The “star system” that dominates the sports industry and other entertainment industries creates unreal and even mythic figures. Sports is also a vehicle through which cities develop what Alan Ingham and his associates have called “*contrived community*.”<sup>218</sup>

Urban communities, as envisioned by, and made up of, local residents and small businesses, however, have much more pressing needs than winning ballgames. Despite the repeated claims by boosters that stadiums bring real economic benefits to their host cities, the vast majority of modern stadiums have in fact proven to be economically neutral at best.<sup>219</sup> Moreover, as this chapter will demonstrate, residents directly affected by stadium construction typically oppose the projects for reasons other than economics, such as the increased traffic,

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<sup>217</sup> Over the first four years of his contract with the Yankees (2008–2011), Rodriguez averaged \$59,492 per at bat. “Highest Paid Players,” Cot’s Baseball Contracts, *BaseballProspectus.com*, accessed May 23, 2012.

<sup>218</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 12, emphasis added.

<sup>219</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*; Baade and Dye, “Impact of Stadiums and Professional Sports”; Rosentraub, *Major League Losers*; Cagan and DeMause, *Field of Schemes*; Noll, *Government and the Sports Business*; Okner, “Subsidies of Stadiums and Arenas”; Steven A. Riess, “Historical Perspectives on Sports and Public Policy,” in *The Economics and Politics of Sports Facilities*, edited by Wilbur C. Rich (Westport: Quorum Books, 2000); James P. Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Hard Ball: The Abuse of Power in Pro Team Sport* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Quirk and Fort, *Pay Dirt*; Mark Rosentraub et al., “Sports and Downtown Development Strategy: If You Build It, Will Jobs Come?” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 16:3 (October 1994): 221–39; John Siegfried and Andrew Zimbalist, “The Economics of Sports Facilities and Their Communities,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 93–114.

noise, litter, and crime that often surround urban stadiums. The two downtown locations most seriously considered in the development of the new stadium for the White Sox were inhabited by two very different urban communities, but both emphasized the importance of relative safety, quality housing, schools, and local shopping and businesses to successful community development. Despite rhetoric from stadium boosters that would suggest otherwise, stadium construction has nothing to do with community development.

The construction of the new Comiskey Park in South Armour Square also demonstrated that the communities courted by professional baseball teams tend to be far removed from the locality of the urban spaces in which they play, making them just as contrived as the notion of a common community of baseball fans. From the very beginning of the planning process, the White Sox made it clear that they wanted a suburban location and fan base. When that location was denied by public referendum in suburban Addison, the team designed an urban space to serve suburban fans that were imported via the expressways as customers of an urban tourist economy. The problem for local residents and the city was that the stadium had no positive effect on the urban space around it, and was in fact, purposely designed that way. The team marketed itself regionally as a cultural icon for the greater Chicago-land area, with focused efforts directed towards the northwest suburbs. They presented the team as a cultural institution for communities on the South Side of Chicago while simultaneously developing a contrived community of suburban tourists to fill their publicly-funded revenue enhancer.

The city, for its part, was working defensively from the start. The pace of stadium construction planning is controlled by the baseball team, giving even the most community-minded politicians little time to properly develop a plan capable of successfully integrating a stadium into an existing neighborhood in a manner that mutually benefits both the team and the



surrounding area. Even in a best case scenario involving low land-acquisition costs and little to no residential displacement (as in the South Loop option to be discussed shortly), city officials can only placate the interests of so many; so the path chosen is often the path of least resistance. And yet, throughout the process, local politicians tout the great cultural value the team adds to the city, invoking the great myth of the imagined community created by professional sports teams.<sup>220</sup>

Of course, not all urban communities are equal in the minds of urban developers, who at times seek to enforce their own visions of community by manipulating the physical space of certain areas of the city. John H. Mollenkopf describes one particularly suitable example of this within the context of Chicago's post-World War II development: "From the late 1950s, for example, freeway construction and urban renewal directly threatened central-city neighborhoods, particularly black communities."<sup>221</sup> South Armour Square, where the new Comiskey Park was built, houses a "tiny, racial minority-occupied neighborhood with limited political, economic, or organizational resources," and is bordered by one of those freeways (the Dan Ryan Expressway) on the east, a railroad viaduct on the west, and the ballpark on the north.<sup>222</sup> When the city ran out of other options for site location, the path of least resistance was through this politically under-represented public housing community that, despite years of grassroots organizing attempts to make their community more livable, was ultimately no match against the power brokers behind Chicago's new South Side stadium.

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<sup>220</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983). The "contrived community" of sports fans shares some of the characteristics that describe Anderson's "imagined communities."

<sup>221</sup> Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 17.

<sup>222</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It's Hardly Sportin'*, 84, 104.

## **Mechanisms of Entrenchment: Public/Private Partnership in the Development of Chicago**

In his study of the political origins of modern communications in the United States, Paul Starr argued that the development of our modern system of communications was shaped largely by political, *constitutive choices*—“those [choices] that create the material and institutional framework of fields of human activity.”<sup>223</sup> Starr argues that constitutive choices are cumulative and branching in their effects on institutional development, creating institutional precedents and biases, which in turn become what he calls *mechanisms of entrenchment* that are purposely designed to be perpetual standards.<sup>224</sup> This line of reasoning can also inform an understanding of how constitutive choices made early in Chicago’s development, and reified over the course of the twentieth century, affected the outcome of the White Sox stadium project on the city’s South Side. Factors that affected the planning process for the new White Sox stadium arguably stretch back as far as Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exhibition. Beginning with Daniel Burnham’s 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, and later reified with Richard J. Daley’s 1958 *Development Plan for the Central Area of Chicago*, Chicago’s civic leaders made a number of constitutive choices about the material and institutional framework for the city’s development policies, forming institutional precedents and biases that served as mechanisms of entrenchment which ultimately affected the decision-making process behind the construction of the new Comiskey Park.

In *Building the South Side: Urban Space and Civic Culture in Chicago, 1890–1919*, Robin F. Bachin discusses the emergence of “three different, and often competing, models of civic culture,” elements of which continued to fuel contestation over Chicago’s physical

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<sup>223</sup> The term “mechanisms of entrenchment” is borrowed from Starr, *Creation of the Media*.

<sup>224</sup> Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 1–2.

development throughout the remainder of the twentieth century.<sup>225</sup> The first model represented the “culture of centralization and consolidation that defined both the corporate world and the world of technocratic expertise.” This model was championed by civic leaders such as University of Chicago president William Rainey Harper and architect and planner Daniel Burnham who “exemplified a belief in elite cultural uplift, in which reform came from above and was disseminated by trained experts who could be the best stewards of cultural refinement.”<sup>226</sup> Burnham’s 1909 *Plan for Chicago* was influenced by the City Beautiful movement, which was first initiated primarily by local women-led urban beautification municipal reform groups, and iconically exemplified in the “White City” that Burnham designed for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition.<sup>227</sup> Despite the *Plan*’s emphasis on beauty and cultural uplift, Burnham also “recognized the central role of commercial growth in shaping civic life.”<sup>228</sup> Bachin’s description of that relationship is illuminating for the purposes of demonstrating how that constitutive choice impacted future downtown development:

This relation between civic design and commercialism would be inscribed on the city through the planning of the City Beautiful. The commodification of art and aesthetics promoted capitalist growth and linked beauty to financial development. According to M. Christine Boyer, planners sought to impose “disciplinary order and ceremonial harmony” on urban growth in order to enhance commercial productivity. The “rational city” of efficiency and technical expertise became a means of expanding the role of the state in order to control land use, and stimulate economic development, and shape urban growth.<sup>229</sup>

The partnership between the city officials and business leaders which utilized state control of land use to stimulate economic development and shape patterns of urban growth became a

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<sup>225</sup> Bachin, *Building the South Side*, 8–9.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 196. See also Flanagan, *Seeing with Their Hearts*.

<sup>228</sup> Bachin, *Building the South Side*, 171.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

mechanism of entrenchment, purposely designed as a perpetual standard for downtown development policy.

Following the presentation of Burnham's *Plan*, the mayor-appointed Chicago Plan Commission "strengthened the role of government, which became the new locus of plans for city growth and economic development,"<sup>230</sup> fusing "the goals of commercial leaders with the professional skills of architects, landscape designers, engineers, and urban planners."<sup>231</sup> The constitutive choice to centralize the role of "experts" in the urban planning process ultimately undermined the authority of women-led grassroots initiatives "as the Commission sought to consolidate all phases of planning under its control."<sup>232</sup> With the rise of professional urban planners and the incredible monuments they constructed symbolizing the dominance of corporatism and privatism in American urban development, "women's influence on the shape of cities took backstage to the great names of the architectural and planning professions."<sup>233</sup>

At the same time, activist women in Chicago were pushing for an alternative model of civic culture. Beginning with the Fire of 1871, women reformers developed a vision for a livable city—a city that valued and took responsibility for education and the welfare of women and children—in response to their unique experiences in the private sphere. They saw the city as a community of homes, a vision that sharply conflicted with men's vision of a minimalist municipal structure that prioritized the interests of private business. While the men turned to bureaucratic experts and planners for urban development policy, the women believed that "civic sense came from the people, not from the experts."<sup>234</sup> Furthermore, social reformers like Jane Addams sought to "overcome social distance among urban residents" by forging alliances in

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Spain, *How Women Saved the City*, 60.

<sup>234</sup> Flanagan, *Seeing with Their Hearts*, 120.

“spaces like settlement houses and public parks.” The public parks, in particular, were intended to serve as “a shared leisure space around which to structure a vision of urban order and harmony,” urban spaces where the working classes might “learn proper deportment from their social superiors.”<sup>235</sup> But in reality, “the planning of the large pleasure grounds showed little concern for the recreational and leisure patterns of the urban working class.”<sup>236</sup> As such, rather than overcoming the social distance among urban residents, public parks often served to reinforce those differences, leaving the working classes made up primarily of racial and ethnic minorities forced to pursue other avenues of leisure. Much to the consternation of reformers, that pursuit often ended in the city’s “vice district.” Like the more formal public/private developmental policies of downtown construction, the segregation of public parks became entrenched in Chicago, and this too would have an impact on the construction of the new Comiskey Park.<sup>237</sup>

Both of these civic models contained a “strain of anti-commercialism.”<sup>238</sup> One of the primary reasons that civic leaders and reformers disapproved of commercial culture is that many associated it with “gambling, prostitution, petty theft, the sale of alcohol from unlicensed distributors, ‘lewd’ dancing, and racial mixing” increasingly located in the “vice districts” of poorer working-class neighborhoods in the South Side’s “Black Belt.”<sup>239</sup> Vice districts offended the moral sensibilities of urban reformers and worried civic elites about their potential to drive away respectable customers and negatively affect property values. But commercial culture was going through dramatic changes at the turn of the twentieth century, and public entertainment

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<sup>235</sup> Bachin, *Building the South Side*, 135.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>237</sup> One point of contention in the stadium planning was the refusal to build on Armour Square Park, which had long served as a buffer between the white Bridgeport neighborhood to the north and the African Americans living in the Wentworth Gardens public housing development to the south. There is a long history of violent racial intimidation by whites who sought to keep blacks out of “their park.”

<sup>238</sup> Bachin, *Building the South Side*, 8–9.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 255.

became more ordered as the “participatory and interactive” popular culture of the nineteenth century receded in the face of a growing mass culture that “induced passivity and the privatization of culture.”<sup>240</sup> And as baseball entrepreneurs like Charles Comiskey sought to legitimize Major League Baseball as a respectable and profitable industry, they built grand stadiums that were as architecturally stunning as any civic monument.

Both social reformers and civic elites found reason to celebrate these great monuments to commercial culture. With the rise of the play movement, baseball began to be touted by politicians and reformers alike as a wholesome activity that both assimilated newcomers to American culture and taught children such values as hard work, individual achievement, and team play.<sup>241</sup> Graduated seat pricing in the stadiums also reinforced existing norms regarding social class. Thus, baseball stadiums such as the South Side of Chicago’s Comiskey Park, which opened in 1910, appeared to serve the interests of civic leaders, reformers, and the rising entrepreneurs of commercial culture alike. Despite the century-long struggle between these competing visions over the development of the city, for the most part, the stadium stood as an urban space that transcended those traditional differences; it was a cultural icon that succeeded in securing the allegiance of civic elites, politicians, and reformers.

It was a tenuous relationship that was strained at times (the 1919 “Black Sox” scandal for example), and the segregation of the game “suggested that as much as blacks might enjoy attending games, they were not a part of the complete civic experience embodied in the stadium.”<sup>242</sup> At the same time, Comiskey Park also served as a point of pride for largely disenfranchised, predominantly poor African American residents of Chicago’s South Side. While

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<sup>240</sup> Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change in the 20th Century* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 22.

<sup>241</sup> Bachin, *Building the South Side*, 209.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

they were barred from playing in Major League Baseball games, “for many African Americans in Chicago, going to a baseball game was an experience of liberation and a celebration of taking part in the shared culture of Chicago civic life.”<sup>243</sup> And that pride grew for a time when Andrew “Rube” Foster formed the National Negro League and leased Comiskey Park for his Chicago American Giants team.

In the first years of its existence, then, Comiskey Park did serve in many ways to bring people of diverse social standing together and provided a source of pride for the surrounding South Side communities, even if just for nine innings. As Bachin demonstrates in *Building the South Side*, the efforts by promoters of commercial culture (particularly those of Charles Comiskey), in effect, set a longstanding cultural precedent linking Comiskey Park, and particularly the business of baseball, with Americanism and civic pride:

Promoters of commercial amusement like Chicago White Sox owner Charles Comiskey, black baseball entrepreneur Andrew “Rube” Foster, and black theater owner Robert Motts helped legitimized mass culture by infusing it with the rhetoric of Americanism, urban reform, and civic pride. . . . [T]hese spaces illustrated the multiple dimensions of urban citizenship, whereby city residents shaped their sense of civic identity based on participation in an emerging culture of leisure that ultimately helped forge broader access to the political arena.<sup>244</sup>

This early history set many precedents that would influence the decision-making process behind the construction of a new stadium for the White Sox; in particular, the strength of the “community building” and “civic identity” arguments employed by baseball owners and politicians seeking publicly funded stadiums over the second half of the twentieth century gained much of its cultural power during the first wave of stadium construction. Furthermore, the constitutive choice to expand the role of the state in partnership with downtown business leaders

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 8–9.

in an effort to “control land use, stimulate economic development, and shape urban growth”<sup>245</sup> developed into an institutional precedent that became entrenched as the standard model for urban redevelopment in Chicago. Despite dramatic changes to urban economies and residential patterns following World War II, Chicago’s postwar redevelopment followed that precedent in ways that further affected the decision-making process behind the construction of the new Comiskey Park during Harold Washington’s term as mayor from 1983 through 1987.

### **The Corporate-Center Strategy**

The most serious deliberation about where to build a new White Sox stadium downtown centered around two locations, both south of Chicago’s central business district, the Loop. Many of the factors that influenced the planning process, including the White Sox organization’s courtship of the suburbs, can be tied to the post–World War II redevelopment of Chicago’s Loop. Shortly after Richard J. Daley was elected mayor, the Department of City Planning released its 1958 *Development Plan for the Central Area of Chicago*. Just as the Commercial Club of Chicago had sponsored Daniel Burnham’s ambitious *Plan for Chicago* in 1909, the Chicago Central Area Committee, a collection of the city’s commercial elite, likewise influenced Daley’s *Development Plan*.<sup>246</sup> The Central Area Committee was created by downtown corporations in 1956 to “enhance the area’s physical and cultural environment,”<sup>247</sup> and they had a significant role in the crafting of Daley’s *Development Plan*. In his study of Chicago’s response to postwar industrial decline, *Remaking Chicago: The Political Origins of Urban Industrial Change*, Joel Rast demonstrated that Daley’s downtown redevelopment goals focused on changing land-use plans for the central area:

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 171; Lois Wille, *At Home in the Loop*, 19.

<sup>247</sup> Wille, *At Home in the Loop*, 5.



When Richard J. Daley became mayor of Chicago in 1955, the city's economy was in decline. Under pressure to act, Daley soon forged an alliance with key representatives from the downtown business community focused around rearranging land use in central Chicago in accordance with the corporate-center strategy for downtown redevelopment. In 1958, the administration announced plans for a major restructuring of the central area, featuring a new university campus, a convention center, several new government office buildings, and a network of expressways designed to link the central business district with outlying portions of the metropolitan area. During the next several decades, the city would use its powers over land use, infrastructure provision, the distribution of federal urban development funds, and other policy tools to help make these plans a reality.<sup>248</sup>

One significant issue the *Development Plan* hoped to address was the increasing “blight” surrounding the central business district, particularly to the north and south of the Loop. Declining manufacturing districts and the abandoned rail yards that once served them suffered from the neglect and disinvestment brought on by the changing economic realities of the postindustrial city. Those realities were reinforced by constitutive choices made by city officials and downtown business elites to change land use patterns to suit a corporate-center strategy that emphasized a “best use” approach to downtown development which linked increasing property values to economic growth. Thus, “downtown redevelopment ultimately required that industry and lower-income residents be relocated outside the central area so that near-downtown property could be reused for new commercial and middle- to upper-income housing developments that would reinforce the growth of corporate and financial activities in the Loop.”<sup>249</sup>

The rail yards running south from Roosevelt Road between State Street to the east and the Chicago River on the west had long been a growing eyesore to the south of the city's financial core in the Loop. In the late 1800s the rail yards were a sign of the rapid growth of industrial Chicago. In an effort to keep the rail lines from disrupting business downtown, the

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<sup>248</sup> Rast, *Remaking Chicago*, 12–13.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

depots, such as Dearborn Station (built in 1885) were built on the outskirts. The “cluster of stations brought thousands of jobs to the area,” but with the increased passenger traffic arriving daily, the area quickly became a “vice district” home to prostitution, gambling, and saloons.<sup>250</sup> By 1913, the vice district had spread south of the depots, and the city’s business leaders had grown frustrated by their inability to expand the Loop past the vast stretch of rail yards.<sup>251</sup> Over the next 50 years, various government and civic groups were repeatedly rebuffed by the railroad companies in their efforts to consolidate and redevelop the yards.

When the city began looking for a suitable extension campus for the University of Illinois downtown towards the end of the 1950s, in an effort to “protect the downtown Loop” Mayor Richard J. Daley, local developers, and business leaders initially “favored reclamation of the seedy railroad terminal area, south of downtown,” but the high prices demanded by the railroads repeatedly soured negotiations.<sup>252</sup> As the rail industry steadily declined over the next decade, the South Side rail depots began to close down, beginning with the Grand Central and LaSalle stations in 1969. While the loss of railroad traffic and the closing of stations appeared to clear the way for the eventual southward expansion of the Loop, it also contributed to the collapse of Chicago’s once thriving printing industry concentrated in Printers Row around Dearborn Station, which, as Lois Wille suggests, only added to the area’s perceived blight:

The collapse of the rail industry during the 1950s and 1960s coincided with the introduction of technologies that made the printing establishments obsolete. They moved to new plants elsewhere, and the great Dearborn Street buildings emptied out. So, in addition to vast stretches of abandoned rail yards and the porn-and-sleaze strip slithering toward the financial district, the South Loop by 1970 was burdened with blocks of vacant and vandalized buildings.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Wille, *At Home in the Loop*, 9.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>252</sup> Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 75; Wille, *At Home in the Loop*, 9.

<sup>253</sup> Wille, *At Home in the Loop*, 10.

In the spring of 1970, Thomas G. Ayers, Gordon M. Metcalf, and Donald M. Graham, three of the most respected members of Chicago's business community, looked out from Ayers's thirty-seventh floor window in the newly constructed First National Bank building and decided that they had to do something about the threat posed by the acres of abandoned rail yards and buildings.<sup>254</sup> Drawing on the historical precedent set by previous generations of Chicago's business elite, they sought to take the matter of developing the Loop into their own hands. Ironically, the first man they turned to when it came time to approach Mayor Daley about the idea was James C. Downs Jr., the same man who served as Daley's Housing and Redevelopment Coordinator. Downs oversaw the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the housing policies that effectively institutionalized the segregation of public housing in Chicago.<sup>255</sup>

In the 1958 *Development Plan*, planners had already recommended the "construction of middle-income housing for up to 50,000 families in areas immediately north and south of the Loop." In the spirit of the public-private partnership that influenced the development of the *Plan*, housing "was to be privately developed on land assembled and cleared by the city under powers of the 1949 U.S. Housing and Redevelopment Act."<sup>256</sup> By the mid-1960s, there had been some promising residential development north of the Loop, such as architect Bertrand Goldberg's Marina City, "a tightly packed riverfront complex with twin 60-story towers resembling giant corncobs, a 16-story office building, an ice rink, bowling alleys, a food store, restaurants, a marina,

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 1, 19. Ayers was "president-on-the-path-to-chairman of Commonwealth Edison, the biggest power company in the Midwest." Metcalf was "chairman of the board and chief executive of Sears, Roebuck and Company." Graham was "chairman of the board and chief executive of Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company of Chicago, the biggest bank in the Midwest, the biggest employer in downtown Chicago, and City Hall's biggest single creditor." (2)

<sup>255</sup> Wille, *At Home in the Loop*, 12; Biles *Richard J. Daley*, 88–89; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, 231.

<sup>256</sup> Rast, *Remaking Chicago*, 29.

spiraled parking garages, a health club, and movie theater.”<sup>257</sup> But more than a decade after the release of Daley’s *Development Plan*, the rail yards south of the Loop still lay barren, and leaders of the Chicago Central Area Committee decided it was time the business community did something about it. The first order of business was securing the land, but multiple failed efforts to do so in the past had suggested that that would be no simple task.

City officials and private developers had repeatedly been rebuffed by the railroad companies that owned the land, whose asking prices were prohibitively high. Ironically, it took the influential cultural capital of professional sports to secure an acquisition price that made development feasible. Long-time Chicago Bears owner/coach, George Halas, had secured an option on a 51-acre portion of the land between State and Clark Streets that extended about a mile south from Dearborn Station at Polk Street at the price of \$3.25 per square foot, “less than half of the lowest price the South Loop group had heard in any of its many meetings with rail executives.”<sup>258</sup> When Mayor Daley refused to use city-backed bonds to help pay for it, Halas’s attempts to build a new stadium on the property failed, though he still held the option to the land.<sup>259</sup> Recognizing the impossibility of building his stadium without financial assistance from the city, Halas reluctantly agreed to transfer his option for the land to the tight collection of central area business leaders who formed the Chicago 21 Corporation in 1972 to buy the land and secure the funding to privately develop the area for middle- to upper-income residents. The trick was getting the mayor to spend public money to develop the streets, sewers, and water connections, and other capital improvements.<sup>260</sup> While Daley was initially hesitant to commit to

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 26–27, 36.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 54, 58.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 59.

a deal that appeared like a public handout for private profit, his record of working with members of the Central Area Committee to change downtown land use and provide capital improvements suggested that he would eventually come around.

Once Chicago 21 Corporation had raised enough private investment to seed the development of what would eventually become Dearborn Park, the city slowly but surely began to make good on its commitments to infrastructural improvements. As this was happening, other developers began to buy up the old industrial loft buildings located in Printers Row. As with the Dearborn Park project, the city provided favorable land use conditions through changes to zoning restrictions in the area as well as capital improvements at the street level, while private investors funded the redevelopment of the buildings.<sup>261</sup> Both of these projects were guided by the long institutionalized corporate-center strategy which favored the mixed-used commercial and residential development as the best means to increase property values. Development in both areas ultimately proved successful towards those ends. With assistance from city officials, Chicago 21 Corporation and other private developers finally created a middle- to upper-class residential enclave that buffered their downtown commercial interests from the South Side's "Black Belt." But as of 1985, when Harold Washington's administration began looking for a suitable location for the White Sox stadium, a tough economy and the lack of sufficient capital had stalled efforts to complete the second phase of the Dearborn Park development, leaving a fairly sizeable piece of open real estate just south of Roosevelt Road, between the first phase of Dearborn Park and Chinatown.

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 113–36.

## Exploring the Options: Finding a Politically Feasible and Mutually Agreeable Site

*Washington reminded the audience that his campaign a year ago was based on the idea that people at the grassroots level should make decisions that affect their lives and that the “people’s” decisions should govern the conduct of public officials.*<sup>262</sup>

Mayor Washington’s 1986 “Neighborhood Forums Work Plan” listed as its objectives, among other things, to report on accomplishments directly affecting a given community area, and to outline policy, programs, and development projects.<sup>263</sup> While there is evidence that such transparency existed in early phases of stadium planning,<sup>264</sup> toward the end of 1986, residents living in Wentworth Gardens learned about the demolition of homes and businesses in the northern part of their community by seeing a map in the newspaper showing plans for a new stadium.<sup>265</sup>

In July 1985, the city began an analysis of eight different stadium development options presented by the Minneapolis-based accounting firm Coopers & Lybrand. The report confirmed that the city was “assessing the viability of various options to develop one or two stadia within the City which could house the White Sox, Cubs, and/or Bears professional teams” and that the accounting firm’s initial review was designed to “assess the net cash flows from operations resulting from a number of different scenarios and sets of assumptions.”<sup>266</sup> Of the eight stadium proposals, six featured domed stadiums, and five of them were based on multi-teams scenarios.

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<sup>262</sup> Chicago Housing Authority Papers, 1948–1992, Box 20, Folder 3, Immediate Release and Speeches, *CHA News*, March 26, 1984, “Mayor Visits CHA Residents,” Chicago Historical Museum, Chicago, IL 60614. This was the first time in the history of the CHA that a mayor of Chicago met with tenant councils.

<sup>263</sup> Harold Washington Archival Collection (HWAC), General Subject Files, Neighborhood Forum (memos) 1986–1987, Box 6, Folder 14, “Neighborhood Forums Work Plan – 1986,” Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago, IL, 60605.

<sup>264</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It’s Hardly Sportin’*, 75.

<sup>265</sup> Roberta M. Feldman and Susan Stall, *The Dignity of Resistance: Women’s Residents’ Activism in Chicago Public Housing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 213.

<sup>266</sup> HWAC, Stadium Development 1985, Box 50, Folder 3, Letter to Mr. Donald Franklin, Fiscal Policy Economist, City of Chicago, July 17, 1985.

The various proposals had projected seating capacities of either 65,000 or 82,000 seats.<sup>267</sup> Of the many alternatives offered, city officials initially favored a West Side location as it offered the potential to meet the stadium demands of multiple teams, either by constructing two stadiums or by getting the teams to agree to share a multi-purpose stadium, which was the most cost-effective option.

In a follow-up letter based on additional feedback from city officials, the accounting firm eliminated consideration of two sites west of the Loop (due to the high cost of land development) and limited the seating capacity for all scenarios to 65,000. Throughout this process, both the consultants and city officials favored a domed stadium. In their final analysis, then, the firm recommended the following scenarios in preferential order:

1. West Side with two stadiums and the Bears, White Sox, and Cubs as tenants:  
This option would allow the best configuration for each sport. This location would also be the most likely to attract both the White Sox and Cubs as tenants.
2. West Side with one stadium and the Bears, White Sox, and Cubs as tenants:  
This option would require one of the lowest operating subsidies. Again, this location would be most likely to attract both the White Sox and Cubs as tenants. Because of utilizing a single, multi-purpose stadium, some sacrifices in sight line and configuration will be required.
3. South Loop with one stadium and only the Bears and White Sox as tenants:  
This location has the lowest land acquisition and off-site improvement cost and the best parking plan. This option also would require one of the lowest operating subsidies. It should be considered that this option would not resolve the locational problems of the Cubs.<sup>268</sup>

Despite the Mayor's desire to pursue transparent development policies in cooperation with affected communities, many of the documents discussing stadium development were noted as "confidential." Furthermore, in one such confidential memo to various officials in the

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<sup>267</sup> HWAC, Stadium Development 1985, Box 50, Folder 3, Coopers & Lybrand Chicago Sports Stadium Project Evaluation of Alternative Scenarios, August 6, 1985.

<sup>268</sup> HWAC, Stadium Development 1985, Box 50, Folder 3, Letter to Mr. Donald Franklin, Fiscal Policy Economist, City of Chicago, August 19, 1985.

Washington administration which intended to “lay out the next steps in [the] Stadium Development Evaluation Processes,” not one of the twelve tasks outlined in the memo involved interaction with the affected community on any level.<sup>269</sup>

In early October, members of the mayor’s Stadium Development Task force received a memo outlining concerns and suggestions regarding the ongoing stadium analyses. Robert Mier, the Commissioner of Economic Development, worried that despite all the numbers indicating that the stadium would be a financial loser, the mayor was publicly projecting the plan as a winning investment that the city wanted to be in as a financial partner. After demonstrating that the already bleak financial forecasts were still underestimated in terms of cost, Mier suggested the following two options:

1. Roll up our sleeves with the Sox and see if they are willing to be the owner/operator of a combined stadium/arena complex on the West Side. (From the information they sent us, we know that’s their interest.)
2. Take a “statesman” role, and announce that any developer who signs up two teams will get our full cooperation, short of money. Then play the role of bringing actors together.

Neither of the options assumes site control, which we neither have nor probably can afford.<sup>270</sup>

Despite these early efforts to take control of the process and, if possible, avoid using public money to fund the project, the owners of the White Sox deftly used the threat of moving the team to another city as leverage to control much of the timing and substance of the negotiations.

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<sup>269</sup> HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987, Confidential Memo from Donald B. Franklin, Fiscal Policy Economist, City of Chicago, August 6, 1985.

<sup>270</sup> HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987, Memorandum from Robert Mier, Department of Economic Development Commissioner, City of Chicago, “Domed Stadium,” October 9, 1985.



## **Urban Planning by Concession: The Tempo and Tone of Negotiations Driven by the Team**

Key to the success of any proposed stadium development project was, of course, finding the means to fund such a large public investment. This involved a delicate partnership between municipal, state, and federal government. In early November 1985, members of the Stadium Development Task Force advised the mayor that “tax legislation [was] the key to carrying the stadium project forward.” The problem the city faced was that current tax laws left no room under the bond volume cap due to the more than \$415 million already allocated for General Aviation Revenue Bonds (GARBs). As of November 5, 1985, even after combining \$100 million in carryover cap space from 1984 with the \$450 million allowed for Industrial Development Bond (IDB) allocation in 1985, the city was left with just \$10 million of unallocated IDBs with which they could fund the stadium development. With a projected total cost of nearly \$180 million to build a new stadium, the city was clearly in a financial bind. The Stadium Development Task Force offered the mayor two options for securing the necessary cap space to permit the city to finance the stadium’s construction: “keeping our bond cap unused (by exempting GARB’s from the cap) and available for a stadium project”; or, “grandfathering a stadium under proposed tax laws.” Both options required the mayor to approach US Representative Daniel Rostenkowski, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, with requests to amend the transition rules in proposed tax reform legislation in favor of financing the new stadium.<sup>271</sup>

While city officials were earnestly looking for a way to keep the team in Chicago, the White Sox ownership was aggressively pursuing an alternative plan that would bring the stadium

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<sup>271</sup> HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987, Confidential Memorandum to Mayor Harold Washington, November 7, 1985.

out to suburban Addison. They originally wanted to build in a location more representative of the contrived community from which they hoped to draw their revenues. As early as June 1985, White Sox owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, had already bought a 100-acre tract of land near the Eisenhower Expressway and Illinois Highway 53 in Addison as a potential site for a new sports complex. He had also commissioned a “demographic review of people who buy White Sox tickets” to shore up his case for targeting a middle- to upper-class suburban fan base.<sup>272</sup> This created a problem for Chicago officials who were increasingly forced into a reactive position during negotiations. As Charles C. Euchner demonstrated in his own work on Chicago sports stadium development, “sports franchises exert great leverage over public officials because they can control the timing and the tempo of negotiations, because supply is restricted, and because expansion or movable teams can always attract multiple bidders.”<sup>273</sup> While Reinsdorf continued to suggest publicly that Addison was but one of many options being explored for a suitable location for the new stadium and as the negotiations continued over the course of the following year, it became evident that a Chicago site was the team’s backup plan.

By November, six groups of developers had submitted proposals to the city to build a domed sports stadium. Ira J. Edelson, special counsel to the mayor, released only the names and the general locations of their proposed developments. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that city officials “refused to share details of the six proposals with reporters, claiming the stadium effort does not amount to a formal bidding process and, therefore, does not need to comply with state laws governing disclosure of public information.”<sup>274</sup> As all of this was happening, the mayor’s

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<sup>272</sup> John Schmeltzer, “Reinsdorf, Du Page Are Talking Stadium,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, June 21, 1985.

<sup>273</sup> Charles C. Euchner, “Tourism and Sports: The Serious Competition for Play,” in *The Tourist City*, ed. Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Fainstein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 218.

<sup>274</sup> John McCarron, “6 Vie to Build Domed Sports Stadium,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, November 19, 1985.

Stadium Task Force was still working out how they were going to fund a losing proposition. Even as Representative Rostenkowski succeeded in securing “an exemption permitting tax-exempt financing for a Chicago-area sports complex” in the House’s Ways and Means Committee’s tax reform package, the threat of a move to the suburbs gained traction.<sup>275</sup>

At that point in the planning process it became fairly evident that, while there were still at least six different proposals submitted by developers for the construction of the new stadium, sites on the city’s West and Near West Side had been ruled out. That was due to greater infrastructure costs associated with developing the land there and because the various teams’ support for a multi-purpose stadium waned as the process drew on. Representative Rostenkowski’s efforts to secure an exemption for tax-exempt financing demonstrated as much. When the tax reform package was released in the final weeks of November, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Rostenkowski had “permitted just two potential Chicago-area sites—in suburban Addison and just south of the Loop—to qualify for the exemption.” Perhaps more revealing, it was further reported that the “Chicago White Sox [were] interested in both sites on Rostenkowski’s agenda.”<sup>276</sup> This marked the beginnings of the power play between state and city government officials that pitted the mayor and his preferred site south of the Loop against Governor Jim Thompson and DuPage County Republicans and their preference for a suburban locale. The entire process was playing into the White Sox’s hands as they continued to build leverage for extracting the best stadium deal possible.

Mayor Washington received a confidential memo from his Stadium Task Force in December 1985 with the following recommendations:

As the Stadium Task Force, we recommend that the City select the Chicago Sports Complex Development Corporation and the Chicago Riverdome

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<sup>275</sup> Bill Barnhart, “Ways, Means Need Work,” *Chicago Tribune* (1963–Current File), November 29, 1985.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

Corporation, as developers, and the Chicago White Sox, Ltd., as initial tenant to negotiate an agreement for the design, development, construction, management, operation, and occupancy of a new stadium to be located on the South Loop site at Roosevelt Road and the Chicago River. . . .

This site was preferred by the City for its potential and because the land was vacant, and that a project could be achieved there without the level of disruption associated with other sites.<sup>277</sup>

Just two days later an article in the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Howard Pizer, executive vice president of the White Sox, had confirmed that the “Sox [controlled] almost 150 acres’ in Addison and an adjacent area where the organization has proposed building a \$130 million retractable-dome stadium.” However, Pizer later added: “Although we continue to work with the mayor of Addison and people in DuPage, we are also talking to people in Chicago. . . . We are moving in both directions—exploring everything with Chicago and Addison.”<sup>278</sup>

On December 21, Mayor Washington released his own plan for a \$125 million stadium to be built on the South Loop site. City officials acknowledged that the tempo of the negotiations and the suburban threat, both controlled by the White Sox, had forced their hand at times during the planning process, most notably their decision to build an open-air, baseball-only stadium rather than the all-purpose domes they had initially favored. The two developers chosen to work together on the project, Daniel Shannon and Robert Winslow, had a combination of political influence (Shannon was a friend and advisor to Rostenkowski) and relatively large-scale development success near the city’s core (Winslow). They were offered the freedom to “tailor the physical and financial offer” as they saw fit, and the city asked that they “secure a ‘letter of commitment’ from the White Sox no later than February 15.”<sup>279</sup> Barely a month had passed

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<sup>277</sup> HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987, Confidential Memorandum to The Honorable Harold Washington, Mayor of Chicago, Stadium Task Force Recommendation, December 16, 1985.

<sup>278</sup> Neil H. Mehler and Susan Lewis, “Sox Sock Away Suburban Land,” *Chicago Tribune* (1963–Current File), December 18, 1985.

<sup>279</sup> John McCarron, “Mayor Gives Nod to Sox-Only Stadium Plan,” *Chicago Tribune* (1963–Current File), December 21, 1985.

before the White Sox responded to the developers' package in a manner that demonstrated how "sweet" the city's stadium deal would have to be to prevent them from leaving.

In late January 1986, the White Sox sent a letter to the city-appointed development team with a list of "12 'minimum' requirements so favorable to the team that developers [said] the project [might] die unless the Sox relent." Those requirements included: an open-air, baseball-only stadium; team control of stadium design and day-to-day operations; all public-works and infrastructure costs (estimated at \$55 million) "arranged" by the developers; game day traffic police, also "arranged" by the developers; a ban on all stadium events that might interfere with the team's 81 home games; surface parking for 8,000 cars; a waiver by the city of all amusement, parking, and real estate taxes, along with a ban on new city taxes once the stadium was built; all stadium construction, improvement, maintenance, insurance, and utility costs absorbed by the developer-owner; and finally, the White Sox would retain 100 percent of all concession, parking, and advertising revenue related to baseball games.<sup>280</sup> The developers were quick to suggest that the team's demands only amounted to a strong opening bargaining position. And yet, team co-owner, Eddie Einhorn, offered a strong rebuttal to such claims, saying only that "I can't tell you there's any 'give' in the Sox position."<sup>281</sup> Such onerous terms completely undermined the viability of the city's economic justification for funding the stadium with public financing.

Earlier, when the mayor's stadium plan was released, city officials suggested that "the bond issue would cost Chicago taxpayers nothing . . . because the \$10 million annual debt service would be nearly covered by the sum of the White Sox rent payments, skybox and loge seat revenues and myriad other sources ranging from parking fees to concession sales."<sup>282</sup> Of all of these sources of revenue that the city might have utilized to recoup their investment, only the skybox and loge

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<sup>280</sup> John McCarron, "Sox Throw Developers Knuckleball," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, January 19, 1986.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> McCarron, "Mayor Gives Nod to Sox-Only Stadium Plan."

seat revenues remained on the table, and the developers made it clear that those rent payments would not nearly be sufficient to cover the annual debt service on construction bonds.<sup>283</sup>

As the White Sox pushed the city for a nearly unworkable economic package amidst continued efforts to develop a stadium in suburban Addison, city officials began to receive a flood of correspondence from residents surrounding the proposed stadium site south of the Loop. Residents of the South Loop, particularly homeowners in the now thriving Dearborn Park neighborhood, feared that a new stadium would undermine the years of localized residential and small commercial development that many in the area felt were vital to the sustainability of what had been, up to that point, successful community-minded urban development. While the city did receive some letters that voiced support for the project, albeit with noted reservations, the vast majority of the correspondence confronted city officials with the growing reality that their long-fought efforts to retain the White Sox in the city had ultimately been rejected by the people who, according to the conventional economic logic of stadium boosters, should have had the most to gain from the project. The central issue surrounding the stadium project, then, revolved around different notions of what makes up a sustainable, vibrant urban community. As stated earlier, however, there were many different understandings as to what constituted the desired “community” that the various groups involved in the stadium development process were seeking to build.

### **Building Community in the South Loop**

In late January 1986, the mayor’s office received a memo from the Department of Planning regarding “Near South Issues” in which a number of questions were asked regarding the development of what was then being called the “South Loop Riveredge Stadium”

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<sup>283</sup> McCarron, “Sox Throw Developers Knuckleball.”

development project. One of the questions asked, “Should Chinatown [Tax Increment Financing (TIF)] be expanded to include [the] stadium site?”<sup>284</sup> Tax Increment Financing involves using anticipated future increases in property taxes to pay off bonds used to fund development. Chinatown was located just two blocks south of the proposed stadium site: “80 acres [of] vacant railyard property from Roosevelt, Clark, 18<sup>th</sup> Street, [and the] Chicago River.”<sup>285</sup> From the vantage point of city officials, this was an ideal site for the new stadium for a number of reasons. By building on 80 acres of vacant land, the city could avoid residential displacement while simultaneously improving a tremendous gap of disinvestment. TIF redevelopment initiatives in Chinatown had proved successful, so there was some thought of including the stadium in a broader, interrelated development strategy. But the Chinatown program was “on a faster track” than the stadium project, and city officials ultimately decided that Chinatown’s TIF might not “be an appropriate financing vehicle for the stadium.”<sup>286</sup> To the north of the proposed site, the apparent success of Dearborn Park’s first phase of development provided further impetus to consider the stadium as part of a larger regional development effort. Ultimately, this turned out to be a missed opportunity to consider a broader development plan that could incorporate the stadium into existing patterns of urban development.

Another question posed in the memo to the administration demonstrated first, that the city was still trying to find a way to solve two stadium issues with one large project, and second, that city officials were at least discussing how the proposed stadium plan would affect the future development of Dearborn Park. Commissioner Elizabeth Holland framed the issues as follows:

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<sup>284</sup> HWAC, Mayoral Records, Development Files, Box 8, Folder 19, General Subject Files, South Loop, “City of Chicago Department of Planning Memorandum,” January 30, 1986.

<sup>285</sup> HWAC, Mayoral Records, Development Files, Box 8, Folder 19, General Subject Files, South Loop, “Riveredge Stadium,” November 1985.

<sup>286</sup> HWAC, Mayoral Records, Development Files, Box 8, Folder 19, General Subject Files, South Loop, “City of Chicago Department of Planning Memorandum,” January 30, 1986.

Protecting the area for the second stage of Dearborn Park Phase II requires careful stadium planning. If both a baseball field and a covered football stadium are to be developed, the ball field should be moved south on the site to reduce noise impacts on surrounding residents. Full development of stadium facilities could jeopardize further residential development in Dearborn Park Phase II area because of parking needs and overall impact. Is this ok?<sup>287</sup>

Behind closed doors, city officials were very cognizant of the potential conflicts that could develop from trying to combine two radically different models of development. They were still trying to find a way to accommodate both the White Sox and the Bears, and though neither team was interested in sharing a multi-purpose stadium (which would have been the best economic scenario for the city), there was some hope that the teams might agree to two stadiums located within the same “stadium complex.”<sup>288</sup> From the perspective of the Washington administration, the vast stretch of vacant land available at the South Loop site provided them an opportunity to avoid the residential displacement and extensive infrastructure improvements that typically aroused community opposition to stadium projects. The residents of Dearborn Park knew very little, if anything at all, about the city’s stadium complex deliberations. And in their minds, there were other pressing issues tied to the proposed stadium that could potentially harm their growing community. The city’s lack of transparency about the stadium plan increased their suspicions and fears.

As early as November 1985, the Mayor’s office began receiving letters from a diverse mix of South Loop residents expressing their opposition to the proposed stadium project. Many worried about how game day traffic disruptions, noise, and littering would affect their lives on a daily basis. Some expressed concerns that the stadium would lower property values and scare

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> One example that influenced Chicago planning was Kansas City’s Truman Sports Complex, constructed for the Royals and the NFL’s Chiefs at the end of the 1960s. Early in 1986, Charles Deaton, the Colorado architect who designed the Truman Sports Complex was brought in by the city’s development team to design a multi-purpose stadium to be shared by the Bears and White Sox for the proposed South Loop site.



away would-be residents. But the central theme that stands out when the correspondence is considered on the whole is that residents had a very different understanding of what community development should look like. In letter after letter, residents emphasized the importance of mixed residential and small commercial development that focused on creating relatively safe, quiet neighborhoods with good schools and convenient local shopping. One resident, Nancy M. Martin, described the area as a “good mix of young and old, singles and families, blue collar and white and many shades of skin color.”<sup>289</sup> The bulk of the correspondence overwhelmingly described the stadium project as an inevitable destructive force that would, by its very design, eliminate many of the developmental gains the area had realized up to that point. Martin even suggested that the stadium would make the area less appealing to “young families and *refugees from the suburbs*,”<sup>290</sup> who were precisely the type of residents Rust Belt cities like Chicago had been trying so hard to retain and attract in the postindustrial urban era. Though the pressure to find a feasible location and the opportunity to avoid residential displacement temporarily caused city officials to downplay these concerns, such correspondence should not be taken lightly, for these were precisely the type of residents that city and downtown business leaders hoped to attract and retain. Some of the letters stand out, carefully articulating what successful community-led development in Chicago looked like.

One such letter was written by Robert L. Schmidt, a professional urban planner and registered architect in the state, who had moved to Dearborn Park in the early 1980s. Commenting on the successful efforts by the city and business community to build a thriving residential neighborhood in the South Loop, Schmidt wrote, “I have walked past empty storefronts that now house fine restaurants and shops on South Dearborn Street, and through mud

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<sup>289</sup> Nancy M. Martin to Mayor Harold Washington, March 18, 1986, HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

fields that have been redeveloped into residential properties. The South Loop area is very much alive and continuing to grow. Most importantly, it can truly be called a neighborhood in the best Chicago tradition.” He then remarked that his occupation as a professional planner had also given him “the opportunity to ‘share’ our South Loop experience with clients and peers across the country.” In Schmidt’s experience, the “imaginative planning” which was working to create a “very special and unique renaissance” in the city of Chicago had excited other urban planners who were “impressed with the built results—the implementation of the plans -, and anxious to explore similar opportunities for their cities.” Schmidt closed his letter encouraging the mayor to “visit our community and very carefully consider the future of the South Loop neighborhood” before moving forward with the proposed stadium project.<sup>291</sup>

The emphasis on community and the administration’s failure to publicly seek feedback from area residents was evident in much of the anti-stadium correspondence received by Mayor Washington’s administration. A form letter sent by many condominium owners living on South Plymouth Court, just north of the proposed stadium site, criticized city officials’ handling of the issue arguing, “This site has been poorly chosen and hastily endorsed by your office without due consideration of the consequences to adjacent residential areas.”<sup>292</sup> A letter from the president of 1169 South Plymouth Court Condominium Association argued that “the city has neither sought nor been interested in the opinions of South Loop residents in judging the desirability of the stadium project.”<sup>293</sup> Stated more directly, one letter closed with, “We smell a good deal of vacillation and confusion, which only underscores our feeling that something is being foisted

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<sup>291</sup> Robert L. Schmidt to Mayor Harold Washington, November 20, 1985, HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987.

<sup>292</sup> Calvin Jones and Dan C. Langan to Mayor Harold Washington, February 23, 1986, HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987.

<sup>293</sup> Ivan R. Dee to Mayor Washington, January 10, 1986, HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987.

upon us.”<sup>294</sup> There was much truth in that sentiment as the details of the proposal were in constant flux while the city, the state, and the project’s developers waited on the White Sox who were skillfully driving the negotiations. All city officials could do was to reply to residents with their own form letters that attempted to be compassionate in tone, while offering vague rhetoric promising a complementary development plan with the surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>295</sup>

In March 1986, a group of South Loop residents from Dearborn Park, River City, and Printers Row, organized as *Citizens Against the Stadium* (CATS), sponsored a neighborhood meeting at which they presented Alderman Fred Roti (First Ward) with a petition containing 884 signatures in opposition to the stadium. Roti assured those in attendance that “the signatures would be a ‘top priority’ in his decision on whether to support the stadium.” Speaking as a member of the Chicago City Council’s Zoning Committee, Roti also told the crowd that “the project’s developers should disclose their plans and ‘present them to the community.’”<sup>296</sup> At the time of the meeting, no such transparency existed. But not all South Loop residents opposed the stadium project. Days after the meeting, Alderman Roti received a letter from one such resident who had lived in Dearborn Park since the end of 1980 and saw the proposed stadium project as no threat at all:

First of all, I am so weary of special interest groups who put the needs and wants of 800 or so people over those of the millions of residents of Chicago. Let’s face it, the proposed South Loop location is central to all expressways, all CTA transportation, and all neighborhoods. It doesn’t favor Northsiders, Southsiders, or suburbanites. The land itself is virtually empty, causing no displacement of residents or businesses. How ideal can a proposal get?<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Nancy M. Martin to Mayor Harold Washington, March 18, 1986.

<sup>295</sup> Earnest G. Barefield to Steven D. Marcus, Chief of Staff, April 17, 1986, HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987.

<sup>296</sup> Cheryl Devall and Joseph Sjostrom, “S. Loop Group Opposes Stadium,” *Chicago Tribune* (1963–Current File), March 4, 1986.

<sup>297</sup> To Alderman Fred Roti, HWAC, Chief of Staff’s Office, 1981–1988, Management Plan, 1983–1988, Earnest G. Barefield, OS-Box 106, Folder 8, Stadium Development, 1985–1987.

After reading this letter, it is not hard to imagine officials in the Washington administration exclaiming, “Finally! Someone gets it!” From the position of city officials attempting to find an economically and politically feasible location to build a structure as (potentially) massive as a multi-purpose dome, there could not be a better site. Each of the other locations seriously considered by city officials would have involved huge expenditures in infrastructural development and the displacement of area residents and small businesses.

Given the final decision to build the park in South Armour Square on the northern tip of the Wentworth Gardens public housing development, it is interesting to note that the resident supporting the stadium project ended his letter begging Alderman Roti to remember one thing: “Please don’t ever let them build public housing on that property. If all these ‘CATS’ would give a second thought to what will happen to the land if the stadium fails, they might worry a little about something really important. Like those idiot gangs catching us in their crossfire.”<sup>298</sup> The owners of the White Sox wanted to move out of Comiskey Park for those very reasons. Spirou and Bennett termed it the team’s “South Side problem”:

In a pattern of neighborhood racial transition that dated to the 1950s, most of the South Side residential areas near Armour Square and Bridgeport were now home to majority African American populations. Moreover, as Chicago had deindustrialized since the 1960s these same areas had become increasingly poor. In the view of the White Sox owners, due to neighborhood conditions, bringing free-spending fans into Comiskey Park was an increasingly daunting challenge.<sup>299</sup>

As was demonstrated earlier, the Dearborn Park, Printers Row, and River City residential neighborhoods were intentionally developed to attract middle- to upper-class residents. Regardless of the facts that the stadium itself had little to do with the poor conditions surrounding it, and that city officials had no intention of building additional public housing that close to the Loop, residents in these communities feared such possibilities and fought to defend

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It’s Hardly Sportin’*, 65.

their communities from encroachment by “undesirables” that might negatively affect the value of their respective neighborhoods. The White Sox ownership had already experienced the problems associated with operating in a location surrounded by poor African Americans. As far as they were concerned, the best scenario for the construction of their new stadium involved relocating to suburban Addison where the problems of race and poverty could be avoided altogether.

### **Community Makeover: The White Sox Begin Courting the Suburbs**

*The suburban model for stadium construction is perpetuated because professional baseball derives economic benefit from it. But this model has high costs, and these costs are disproportionately borne by others outside the community of professional baseball.*<sup>300</sup>

The White Sox were committed to their own vision of a desirable community whose primary function was to serve their commercial interests, and they treated that community very differently throughout the planning process. Their first step was to conduct marketing and demographic studies to determine precisely who their fans were, where they were located, and how much they were able and willing to spend on White Sox baseball. One of the first things they discovered was that “middle-class fans, particularly white suburbanites, were afraid of crime in the Comiskey Park area.”<sup>301</sup> The White Sox had relatively few black fans, despite the fact that most of the residents living around the stadium were African Americans, which compounded the problem.<sup>302</sup> The South Loop location, with its “burgeoning community of apartments, condominiums, and town houses,”<sup>303</sup> offered the potential for a local base of middle-class fans. Unfortunately for the team (and for the city), the residents were making it clear that they did not want the team there. Moreover, the research clearly suggested that the vast majority

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<sup>300</sup> Philip H. Bess, *City Baseball Magic: Plain Talk and Uncommon Sense about Cities and Baseball Parks* (St. Paul: Knothole Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>301</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 136.

<sup>302</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It's Hardly Sportin'*, 65.

<sup>303</sup> Cheryl Devall and Joseph Sjostrom, “S. Loop Group Opposes Stadium.”

of the team's fans were located in the suburbs, which prompted Sox owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, to remark, "The fans moved away from the South Side. Why can't we?"<sup>304</sup> And so the team's attempt to build their new stadium in suburban Addison was much more than a bargaining chip to secure a better deal with the city of Chicago. The suburban option, moreover, was a direct result of the earlier constitutive choices made in Chicago's downtown development. First was the decision to connect the city and the suburbs via the construction of the expressways; second, the decision to contain public housing in African American neighborhoods located in the southern Black Belt and on the West Side determined the poor conditions that surrounded Comiskey Park and influenced team owners to look elsewhere for a new site.

Commenting on the positive results of a survey given to residents of Addison regarding the proposed construction of a new suburban stadium, White Sox executive vice president, Howard C. Pizer, "emphasized that a decision on a new stadium location for the White Sox has not yet been made. 'We are keeping our options open,' he said, 'but it just makes good sense to explore the attitudes of the people living in the area where we might decide to build a stadium.'"<sup>305</sup> They were also considering building their stadium in the South Loop at the time, but residents there received no such consideration from the team, nor would the residents of South Armour Square once the suburban option had been thoroughly exhausted. One obvious explanation for the differences in how the White Sox courted would-be stadium communities was succinctly summarized by "urbanologist" Pierre DeVise: "Given the dichotomy of black inner city, white suburbs found in many metro areas, the anti-urban bias of stadium relocation

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<sup>304</sup> Phil Hersh, "Comiskey Park Bears Skid Mark of White Flight," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, July 13, 1986.

<sup>305</sup> Steve Kerch, "Land Broker: Matchmaker in Real Estate," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, March 23, 1986.

often projects an anti-black bias. The anti-urban, anti-black bias is no doubt related to the fact that white middle-class suburbanites make up bulk of . . . stadium patrons.”<sup>306</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that the owners of the White Sox were motivated to leave Chicago for explicitly racial reasons. Citing Judge Wayne R. Anderson’s concluding remarks from *Laramore v. Illinois Sports Facilities Authority (ISFA)*, a case in which South Armour Square activists sued the city, state, and ISFA for racially discriminatory actions in the stadium development process, Costas Spirou and Larry Bennett suggest that the evidence clearly shows that the White Sox had “purely economic reasons” for building their new park.<sup>307</sup> Through the process of new stadium construction, Major League Baseball was making a concerted effort to change their economic base by marketing and pricing their product to wealthier clientele. The northwest suburban-targeted marketing and stadium planning by the White Sox over the summer of 1986 are evidence of that aim. Race entered the equation due to segregated urban development policies of Chicago’s racially troubled past.<sup>308</sup> In cities like Los Angeles and Chicago, the question of race is ever present. In both cities, the residents that were forced out to make room for a new stadium lived in communities of poor racial minorities. For as long as the suburban Addison site was viable, however, the owners of the White Sox had intended to follow the lead of other major league teams from large, older, postindustrial cities, such as the Dodgers, leaving their rapidly decaying surroundings for greener pastures and fatter wallets.

### **Suburbs and Suburban Stadiums**

All but two of the fourteen stadiums built between 1962 and 1977 were suburban model, multi-use facilities. The two exceptions were Dodger Stadium and Royals Stadium, which were

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<sup>306</sup> “Changing Sports Addresses?,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, April 3, 1986.

<sup>307</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It’s Hardly Sportin’*, 104.

<sup>308</sup> The impact Chicago’s long history of racially discriminatory housing policies had on the decision to build in South Armour Square will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

baseball-only versions of the suburban model.<sup>309</sup> The suburban model for stadiums emphasizes the use of what are called “superblocks,” giant parcels of land that would normally hold multiple city blocks. Following the example set by Dodger Stadium, the suburban model stadium is surrounded by acres of surface parking to accommodate automobile access. The demand for multiple rows of luxury suites, ramps on the stadium’s exterior for more efficient vertical pedestrian flow, and obstruction-free seating throughout the park created stadium designs that dwarfed the grand old parks like Comiskey Park, Tiger Stadium, and Yankee Stadium. The vast majority of the multi-use stadiums built between 1962 and 1967 were sterile, symmetrical, concrete behemoths of nearly identical design. Architect and stadium critic, Philip H. Bess, cites former Major League Baseball Commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti who said of the suburban model: “Modern ballparks are the most conventional architecture since Mussolini’s social realism.”<sup>310</sup> The owners of the White Sox preferred Kansas City’s baseball-only model, and they likely had something like that in mind for their Addison site. But as Chicago’s stadium boosters scrambled to find an economically viable solution to keep the Sox in the city, they came to the conclusion that building a suburban multi-use stadium in the South Loop for both the White Sox and the Bears was their only hope.

At the end of April 1986, Mayor Washington held a press conference announcing plans for a \$255 million multi-use stadium that would be contingent on having the Bears as co-tenants with the White Sox. The stadium would seat 70,000 for football and 50,000 for baseball. The Mayor was adamant that the package would only work if both teams agreed to share the facilities. In addition the White Sox had to agree to pay a minimum of \$1.5 million annually for rent as

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<sup>309</sup> Bess, *City Baseball Magic*, 8.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



well as surrendering 45 percent of parking and 12 percent of concessions revenues.<sup>311</sup> But there were three problems with this scenario, holdovers that had plagued the process all along. First, the White Sox did not want to surrender any revenues other the luxury suite rentals and had no intention of agreeing to pay rent as long as the Addison option was viable. Second, they had their minds set on a baseball-only stadium in the Kansas City mold.<sup>312</sup> Finally, the Bears were never interested in sharing a facility with another team, and at that time, they were looking into building a privately owned stadium in the suburbs.

On May 1, 1986, the city reached a tentative agreement with the White Sox, contingent on the Bears as co-tenants. Bears President, Michael McCaskey, promised to review the stadium proposal but maintained that the Bears' preference was for a privately owned stadium.<sup>313</sup> While the city waited on a decision from the Bears, White Sox owner, Reinsdorf, told reporters, "Within a couple of weeks we should know where we stand. . . . [W]e will have to tell the city either it's a go or no. I suspect that it will be no. And if we leave Chicago, it won't be because we want to leave, or because Mayor Washington hasn't done everything possible to keep us."<sup>314</sup> It was true that the mayor had done everything possible, but Reinsdorf's own negative suspicions betrayed his desire to move to the suburbs. Furthermore, at a meeting with "250 executives from northwestern Cook and Du Page Counties" held to rally governmental support for the Addison stadium proposal, Reinsdorf laid his cards on the table: "There is no question I would prefer the Addison site. . . . If it were a case of just what we preferred, we would have blown . . . [Chicago]

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<sup>311</sup> John McCarron, "Mayor Tosses Sox a Last Pitch," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, April 24, 1986.

<sup>312</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 158.

<sup>313</sup> John McCarron, "Stadium Developer Win Over Sox," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, May 1, 1986.

<sup>314</sup> Bob Verdi, "Hearing Isn't Always Believing," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, May 29, 1986.

off a long time ago. Ownership of a team does involve a semi-public trust, and that's why we've got to give Chicago every chance."<sup>315</sup>

When the Bears finally backed out in mid-June, claiming that the mayor's South Loop stadium plan was "too costly and too late,"<sup>316</sup> the city made one last attempt to get the state to chip in through the formation of a "city-state stadium authority." The legislature's failure to act on it prior to breaking for summer, however, left the city without the funding commitment necessary to make a deal with the White Sox.<sup>317</sup> With the funding stalled indefinitely, the White Sox decided they had waited long enough on Chicago, lest "any further delay . . . jeopardize [their] ability to develop the Addison site, which could result in a need to leave Illinois."<sup>318</sup> The team had already floated rumors about other cities such as Phoenix, Tampa Bay, and Washington, DC. For all of Reinsdorf's talk of the team being a "semi-public trust," the owner of the White Sox would soon find that the people of Addison were wary of building that trust with a professional sports franchise.

### **White-Collar Communities**

The proposed stadium development in Addison was estimated to cost \$105 million plus \$15 million in surrounding public works. That was significantly less than the South Loop proposal, but the White Sox were still looking for financial backing from the Illinois legislature.<sup>319</sup> Some Chicago Democrats in the legislature made it known that they would make any suburban funding initiative for a stadium very difficult. The mayor's floor leader in the

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<sup>315</sup> William Presecky, "White Sox Pressing for Addison, Aid," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, June 12, 1986.

<sup>316</sup> John McCarron, "Bears Sack Mayor's Stadium," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, June 16, 1986.

<sup>317</sup> John McCarron and Manuel Galvan, "White Sox Forced to Leave Chicago," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, July 8, 1986.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> John McCarron and David Young, "White Sox Owners: It's Addison or Adios," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, July 9, 1986.

house, Rep. Carol Moseley Braun, told reporters, “I wouldn’t give them ice water in winter.”<sup>320</sup>

Furthermore, opposition was forming in Addison as environmental protesters (looking to protect wetlands) and local residents (worried about traffic) started organizing their efforts. If stadium building is indeed a community-building effort as its proponents suggest, it was ironic that a growing number of Addison residents were wary of bringing the White Sox to the suburbs even as many Chicago South Siders hated to see them go. One local Chicago fan went so far as to compare the team’s suburban efforts to the Dodgers leaving Brooklyn in 1957.<sup>321</sup>

Support from Addison residents was “not crucial to financing of the stadium,” but due to building and zoning ordinances, the village of 30,000 had to approve the project.<sup>322</sup> The press coverage often referred to the village as a “blue-collar suburb,”<sup>323</sup> but residents took issue with how they were being represented on the stadium issue. An earlier village survey had shown that “more than half” of the residents did not want the stadium built in Addison.<sup>324</sup> In an effort to set the record straight, one resident who had lived in Addison for twenty-five years remarked:

The traffic is already impossible in our community at rush hour—we certainly don’t need any more. We also do not need the riff-raff who will be hanging around the stadium. I know if they build the stadium, I will be the first to put a “For Sale” sign on my home. By the way, the facts are also wrong on another point—this is a white-collar community.<sup>325</sup>

The suburbanites of Addison saw a clear distinction between their “white-collar” community and those “communities” which surround stadiums like Comiskey Park. Furthermore, given the racial profile of Addison (87.9 percent white according to 1990 Illinois census data), residents’

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> William Presecky, “With White Sox on Menu, Addison Luncheon Big Draw,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, July 10, 1986.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> G. Anderson, “Addison and Sox,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, April 17, 1986.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

use of the “white-collar” distinction likely had as much to do with racial demographics as it did economics.<sup>326</sup>

As was the case with the South Loop proposal, homeowners associations were the first to voice their opposition to the perceived negative impact of building a stadium in their backyards. Tom Zver, president of the Presidential Estates-King’s Point West Homeowners Association, told reporters that “the only positive benefit is for the owners of the White Sox and, I might add, at the expense of the families in our community.”<sup>327</sup> Zyer was not buying the pitch Addison stadium boosters were pushing:

It makes little difference to Tom Zver how often his new neighbors mow their grass, how nice their fence is or how many millionaires they invite over. As far as he’s concerned, if the White Sox move into Addison, there goes the neighborhood.<sup>328</sup>

A member of the homeowners association for nearby Medinah Estates further remarked, “We’re [Addison’s] neighbors, and they’ve never said anything to us. How would you like to have a beautiful home with a pool on an acre estate and hear you’re going to have a baseball stadium behind you? It devastates us.”<sup>329</sup> The residents of South Armour Square in South Chicago could have only dreamed of such a problem. In nearby Bloomingdale one public official feared that if the Addison stadium was publicly financed, “the Bloomingdale elementary school district and

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<sup>326</sup> US Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. 1990. *1990 Census of Population, General Population Characteristics, Illinois*. Prepared by the Decennial Planning Division in cooperation with the Decennial Operations Division, the Housing and Household Economics Statistics Division, the Population Division, the Data User Services Division, the Geography Division, the Statistical Support Division, the 1990 Census Redistricting Data Office, the Administrative and Publications Services Division, the Data Preparation Division, the Field Division, the Personnel Division, and the Technical Services Division, Bureau of the Census. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

<sup>327</sup> George Papajohn, “Addison Area Homeowners Aim a Bean Ball at White Sox Owners,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, July 13, 1986.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

fire protection district [would] lose valuable property off their tax rolls.”<sup>330</sup> Added to the growing opposition by wealthy home owners, “local naturalists” enlisted the US Army Corps of Engineers to block the stadium should the land be determined “valuable wildlife habitat.”<sup>331</sup> No corps of any kind made an attempt to block the demolition of the northern portion of the Wentworth Gardens public housing development a few short years later.

### **He’s No O’Malley**

White Sox owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, grew up in Brooklyn, New York, rooting for Walter O’Malley’s Dodgers. He thought it was wrong for O’Malley to take the Dodgers away from the borough in 1957. According to Reinsdorf, “O’Malley wanted to move the Dodgers out of Brooklyn because he saw the promised land. He was right about that, but to this day I think he was wrong to take the Dodgers out of Brooklyn.” Reinsdorf cited the support of the fans and claimed (erroneously) that the “city was committed to a new building,” before suggesting “that wasn’t good enough for Walter O’Malley.”<sup>332</sup>

He had a better deal, and he passed up a good deal for a better one. I don’t think that was right, because ownership of a ballclub is at least a semi-public trust. If O’Malley wanted to go to Los Angeles, the league should have given him a franchise and left the Dodgers in Brooklyn, because they were an integral part of Brooklyn. . . . We tried to keep the team in the city because we felt an obligation to Chicago. . . . That’s why we gave it our best shot. But my conscience is clear. We didn’t cause it to fail.<sup>333</sup>

Reinsdorf was no fool. He knew full well that O’Malley could not have succeeded so well in Los Angeles without the Dodgers brand name. As a powerful owner in the game, Reinsdorf also knew that O’Malley used his clout with baseball’s commissioner to secure

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid.; George Papajohn, “Wetlands May Dampen White Sox Plans,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, July 15, 1986; Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 146.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>332</sup> Sam Smith, “My Conscience Is Clear, Reinsdorf Says of Plans,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, July 15, 1986.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

approval from the other owners for the move to the West Coast. O'Malley followed the television money and his automobile-driving target customers to Los Angeles, prizes he was not about to concede to a new owner. Reinsdorf was after the same revenue enhancers and employed the same tactics as the man who took his boyhood team out of Brooklyn. His own target location of suburban Addison, however, was just outside of the city. They would still be Chicago's White Sox in his mind, playing for the greater Chicago-land region. Why should he have any regrets?

Reinsdorf's experience differed in one other unfortunate manner from that of O'Malley thirty years earlier. The outcome of both owners' stadium relocation plans hinged on referendum votes. In O'Malley's case, he was the benefactor of 300 acres of land in Chavez Ravine as a result of a referendum passed on June 3, 1958, to overturn the use of the land for public housing. In Reinsdorf's case, the unfavorable results from a stadium referendum in Addison took the land for his stadium away. In a November 1986 election, a slim majority of Addison voters (50.3 percent) "voted 'no' on an advisory proposal that asked whether a stadium should be constructed in their village."<sup>334</sup> While the vote was not binding, the clear display of public opposition caused the team's most powerful political allies behind the suburban proposal (like Governor James Thompson and Senate Republican leader, James "Pate" Philip) to back away from the suburban option.<sup>335</sup> By December 1986, the White Sox were back at the negotiating table with the city of Chicago. But if Reinsdorf's only remaining option was in the city, he would do everything in his power to build a stadium that brought the suburban market to him.

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<sup>334</sup> Robert Blau and Barbara Mahany, "Election 86," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, November 5, 1986.

<sup>335</sup> Daniel Egler and John Schmeltzer, "Thompson Tells Sox: Switch Site," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, November 22, 1986.

## Mayor Washington Gets His Team?

*We have a written agreement signed, sealed, and delivered, and the Sox are committed to stay in Chicago pursuant to finalization of that [agreement].<sup>336</sup>  
We're here. We're here to stay. And we're here to stay in the City of Chicago.<sup>337</sup>*

Immediately following the Addison outcome, Al Johnson, the mayor's lead on the Stadium Task Force, contacted the White Sox about resuming negotiations to keep the team within the city limits. The city's offer contained one significant change from the previous proposal that fell apart when the Illinois state legislature refused to act prior to adjourning over the summer of 1986: the mayor wanted to build a baseball-only stadium on or near the property where the original stadium existed at 35th Street and Shields Avenue in South Armour Square.<sup>338</sup> The city and the team now had to hope that Governor Thompson and the legislature would pass the legislation calling for the creation of a seven-member stadium authority to fund and own the ballpark. Reinsdorf had to hope that the funding expected from legislators for his Addison stadium plan would still be on the table. But aside from questioning a few of the details in the city/team agreement, White Sox owners had little reason to doubt that the governor would go to bat for them. For Thompson himself had agreed with Reinsdorf and Einhorn that the team needed a new stadium as he sat with them on Opening Day in 1985. He was even reported to have suggested to the owners that the team would need to threaten to leave the state before getting a new stadium.<sup>339</sup> Thompson, like Mayor Washington, saw the opportunity to "Save the Sox" too tantalizing for his political legacy to pass up.

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<sup>336</sup> Mayor Harold Washington quoted in Daniel Egler and John McCarron, "Sox, City Pitch Stadium Plan to Governor," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, December 3, 1986.

<sup>337</sup> White Sox President, Eddie Einhorn, quoted in John McCarron and Daniel Egler, "Mayor Covered All Bases to Swing Sox Deal," *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, December 7, 1986.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Edward I. Sidlow and Beth M. Henschen, "Building Ballparks: The Public-Policy Dimensions of Keeping the Game in Town," in *The Economics and Politics of Sports Facilities*, ed. Wilbur C. Rich (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2000), 156–57.

The final deal struck between the White Sox, city officials, and the governor included the creation of a city-state authority led by a seven-member governing board, with “three members each . . . appointed by the governor and the mayor, with a chairman appointed by both.”<sup>340</sup> The authority had the power to sell \$120 million worth of tax-exempt municipal bonds to fund the construction of a 50,000 seat, open-air stadium. The White Sox agreed to pay the authority up to \$4 million annually in rent, and the authority was also “empowered to levy a 2 percent tax on the rental of hotel rooms within the city, with at least \$1 million a year in proceeds going to pay for improvements near the stadium.”<sup>341</sup> Finally, should the authority fall short on meeting its bond obligations, the city and the state each agreed to cover up to \$5 million of the shortfall.

As had been expected, when the Addison scenario went before the state legislature, there was an initial tug of war between city Democrats and suburban Republicans, though the sides had switched. It was now the Democrats who wanted to approve the stadium legislation, while Republicans wanted funding for a new suburban racetrack and off-site betting parlors. Governor Thompson, who “strongly supported both projects,” did his part working the floor to get Republicans behind the stadium plan. Speaking to reporters after both measures passed, though only by a slim margin for the stadium, Thompson crowed, “I simply reminded some of the members . . . that it would be very difficult to defend a vote against the White Sox and yet ask for Democratic votes for racing and Arlington Park.”<sup>342</sup> As the stadium deal appeared to be finally falling into place, both the governor and the mayor wanted the credit for the stadium and control of the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority that would implement the plan. Over the next ten months, the mayor and the governor fought over nominations to the seven-member ISFA as

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<sup>340</sup> Egler and McCarron, “Sox, City Pitch Stadium Plan to Governor.”

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Daniel Egler and John MCCarron, “Sox Stadium Is Safe at Home,” *Chicago Tribune (1963–Current File)*, December 6, 1986.



they sought various political concessions in exchange for consent. In particular, Mayor Washington was committed to securing broader guarantees for minorities in the awarding of stadium construction contracts.<sup>343</sup> By the time the members of the ISFA finally met together for the first time since its creation fifteen months earlier, the White Sox had found a new suitor in St. Petersburg, Florida—and that city was already building them a stadium.<sup>344</sup> The sudden death of Mayor Washington in November 1987 caused further delays and ultimately reduced the city's role in the process.<sup>345</sup>

With the threat of relocation to St. Petersburg, the White Sox once again had the advantage of leverage. Unlike the Addison scenario, in which the residents had rejected the team after the White Sox had already spent a considerable amount of money on their attempt to relocate there, St. Petersburg was actively seeking to land the team and offered a much more attractive financial package. The construction of the Sun Dome was nearly finished, at no cost to the White Sox. Furthermore, as Los Angeles had done for the Dodgers in 1957, Florida offered the White Sox a large untapped market with the promise of huge media contracts that extended into multiple Spanish-speaking markets as well.<sup>346</sup> This was a very real threat with teeth, thanks to the Dodgers' precedent, and the White Sox used it to force city and state officials to renegotiate the terms of the 1986 agreement to include additional subsidies and dramatically reduced rent obligations. Perhaps more importantly, the new arrangement also granted the ISFA “quick take” powers with regard to land acquisition and \$10 million to compensate property owners and cover moving expenses.<sup>347</sup> Just as the construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway had destroyed a once vibrant African American commercial strip, the construction of the new

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<sup>343</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 140–41; Spirou and Bennett, *It's Hardly Sportin'*, 74.

<sup>344</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 141.

<sup>345</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It's Hardly Sportin'*, 75

<sup>346</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 148.

<sup>347</sup> Spirou and Bennet, *It's Hardly Sportin'*, 70.

Comiskey Park would ultimately claim a number of African American homes and the few remaining small businesses left in South Armour Square.

### **The Dignity of Resistance: The Battle for South Armour Square**

*The residents of Wentworth Gardens . . . are not interested in organizing around issues; they want to save their homes and neighborhood. Organizing in this community is a lopsided struggle for a place at the decision-makers' table, a place that is rightfully theirs because the residents share a vision of what their community should be.*<sup>348</sup>

The most comprehensive account of the “Battle for South Armour Square,” particularly from the vantage point of the communities directly impacted by the new stadium, is found in part 4 of Roberta M. Feldman and Susan Stall’s *The Dignity of Resistance: Women Residents’ Activism in Chicago Public Housing*, titled “Transgressive Resistance in the Public Sphere.” The contrast between the experiences of the women activists in the Wentworth Gardens public housing community (owned by the CHA) and those of the middle- to upper-class residents of the privately developed Dearborn Park neighborhood are striking.<sup>349</sup> But as Feldman and Stall demonstrate, the first years of Wentworth Gardens’ history also offered many similarities to the early experiences of Dearborn Park residents. The demand for housing in the first phase of Dearborn Park was overwhelming. Even before the buildings were finished, Chicago 21 Corporation had sold out of units, creating a long waiting list of people hoping to secure a spot in residential units that had yet to be built.<sup>350</sup> Buyers were attracted by the intentionally self-contained design of the community which emphasized green spaces, minimal traffic, and a safe tight-knit community just minutes south of the Loop, where the majority of them worked.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, xii.

<sup>349</sup> Lois Wille’s *At Home in the Loop* is an excellent account of the development of Dearborn Park as well as the redevelopment of Printers Row.

<sup>350</sup> Wille, *At Home in the Loop*, 101.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 157–58.

There were some initial problems with poor workmanship due to the rushed pace of construction, but the leaders of Chicago 21 Corporation were quick to respond to calls for needed repairs.<sup>352</sup>

When Wentworth Gardens opened, it was likewise a beautifully constructed community. But when their buildings began to show signs of deterioration and disinvestment, the residents' calls for repairs increasingly fell on deaf ears.<sup>353</sup>

The significance of this negligence cannot be understated for city officials' have long focused urban renewal efforts towards the reclamation and redevelopment of "blighted" areas, those sections of the city most visibly suffering deterioration due to disinvestment.<sup>354</sup> Since the Blighted Areas Redevelopment Act and the Relocation Act were adopted by the Illinois General Assembly in 1947, the practice of using the power of eminent domain to clear and redevelop areas of disinvestment in Chicago, particularly in low-income African American neighborhoods, has been justified by the city, state, and federal governments as a necessary means by which to "sustain the city's fiscal stability."<sup>355</sup> A combination of sustained disinvestment in Chicago public housing and urban renewal policies designed to physically isolate and concentrate public housing into black "ghettos" throughout the second half of the twentieth century created an environment that left the residents of Wentworth Gardens particularly vulnerable as a target for stadium-driven urban renewal after the alternative locations for a new White Sox stadium had

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>353</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, 64.

<sup>354</sup> Biles, Richard J. Daley; Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*; Rast, *Remaking Chicago*; Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*; Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Wille, *At Home in the Loop*; John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian, eds., *From Tenements to the Robert Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth Century America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Fogelson, *Downtown*; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Squires et al., *Race, Class and the Response to Urban Decline*.

<sup>355</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, 39; see also Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto* and Biles, Richard J. Daley. As each of these books demonstrates, Chicago's urban renewal legislation from the 1940s provided a framework for future post-World War II federal urban renewal and housing legislation.

been ruled out.<sup>356</sup> Following a lasting precedent in Chicago's developmental history, it would be a collection of women activists that would mobilize against city officials and powerful commercial interests to defend their homes and fight for better living conditions in their community.

### **Mechanisms of Entrenchment: Disinvestment and Isolation**

Wentworth Gardens was originally intended to serve as housing for black employees working in jobs to support the war effort, but it was converted to low-rent housing when it was completed in 1947. The low-rise housing development was constructed on a superblock on the southern edge of Armour Square, just to the northwest of Chicago's Black Belt. In stark contrast to the high-rise Robert Taylor homes (a public housing project) built later on the eastern side of the Dan Ryan Expressway, Wentworth Gardens was intended to be a "discrete," residential development whose goal was to restore small "community sociability" and "moral character,"<sup>357</sup> sharing many of the design characteristics first introduced by the British Garden City model and that later influenced the City Beautiful movement and the lakefront designs in Daniel Burnham's 1909 *Plan for Chicago*.<sup>358</sup> In the first years of its existence, Wentworth Gardens was viewed as the "best housing in the [predominantly black occupied, public housing] community,"<sup>359</sup> much in the way Dearborn Park would later viewed by its predominantly white, middle- to upper-class residents.

Many African Americans in search of housing during Wentworth's first years preferred it over other public housing developments because "it was attractive, well maintained, and beautifully landscaped and in a convenient location . . . accessible to mass transit, schools, and

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<sup>356</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 141.

<sup>357</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, 35–36.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 36; Bachin, *Building the South Side*, 169.

<sup>359</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, 72.

medical facilities.”<sup>360</sup> Similar to the experiences of the first residents of Dearborn Park, older activists at Wentworth Gardens generally agreed “that in the past, Wentworth was a well maintained development with well cared for buildings and grounds, attentive management, strict policies regarding acceptable tenant behavior, friendly and helpful neighbors, and little crime.”<sup>361</sup> Wentworth residents also benefited from a thriving shopping district until it was destroyed, first by the construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway in 1967, and later when remaining stores were demolished to make room for a senior citizen center.<sup>362</sup> In cities all over the country during the late 1950s and 1960s, “massive amounts of urban housing were destroyed” to make room for federally funded expressways that highway builders used as a “means of clearing ‘blighted’ urban areas.”<sup>363</sup> The loss of the shopping district added to the problems of growing unemployment due to the loss of manufacturing jobs as many manufacturers chose, or were forced by city-directed zoning changes, to leave the central area of the city.<sup>364</sup>

Joel Rast writes, “In the decades following World War II . . . advances in transportation and communications encouraged certain Chicago manufacturers to relocate to outlying portions of the metropolitan area. . . . By 1970 . . . the central area contained just 15 percent of the Chicago metropolitan area’s total manufacturing employment.”<sup>365</sup> Bad management by the CHA also led to increasingly poor responses to residents’ needs as well as a failure to properly screen new residents. Compounded by the steady withdrawal of funding for subsidized housing by both

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 74–75.

<sup>361</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, 75.

<sup>362</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 152.

<sup>363</sup> Mohl, “Planned Destruction,” 227; Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*, 116; Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 90.

<sup>364</sup> Rast, *Remaking Chicago*.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 50.

the federal and local governments, these factors led to the steady deterioration of the city's public housing developments located throughout Chicago's "second ghetto."<sup>366</sup>

Chicago's sprawling ghettos on the South and West Sides were given institutional permanence due to constitutive choices made primarily during the 1950s by city, state, and federal government officials. Beginning with Mayor Martin Kennelly's administration (1947–1955), the public housing policy was centralized and controlled by the city council. Kennelly and the city council then used postwar federal funding "to tear down slums and to erect public housing within the black ghetto."<sup>367</sup> Public housing was later used by Mayor Richard J. Daley to form a second isolated ghetto on the West Side as a means for containing (and controlling) the thousands of African Americans who fled there when their homes were destroyed by slum clearance in the Black Belt.<sup>368</sup> Constitutive choices made at all levels of government, then, created a mechanism of entrenchment that institutionalized the racialized segregation and physical isolation of Chicago's public housing. All of these things—racialized public housing, the loss of employment and shopping districts, the construction of physical barriers like the expressways to isolate the segregated poor—were due to those decisions and formed lasting institutional precedents that directly impacted the decision to build the new Comiskey Park in South Armour Square.

Wentworth did not experience the dramatic rise in violent crime often associated with the high-rise developments such as the Robert Taylor Homes, but there was an increase in drug activity and steady physical deterioration despite the best efforts of the women activists in these

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<sup>366</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, 49; Roger Biles, "Public Housing and the Postwar Urban Renaissance, 1949–1973," in *From Tenements to the Robert Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth Century America*, ed. John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 159. See also D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*; Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto*; Biles, *Richard J. Daley*.

<sup>367</sup> Biles, *Richard J. Daley*, 87. See also, Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto*; Hunt.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 91. See also, Hirsch, *The Making of the Second Ghetto*; Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*.

tight-knit “community households.”<sup>369</sup> Wentworth activists have “established a network of social exchange through the people they assist, who, in turn, provide assistance to them in times of need.”<sup>370</sup> The foundation of this reciprocal trust was based on the efforts of women activists who “extend[ed] the boundaries of their immediate families to include the community household and the residents of the larger Wentworth development.”<sup>371</sup> Moreover, these activists had won some significant battles, including the establishment of the Local Advisory Council in 1971, the necessary space and funds to open and operate an onsite laundromat (1968) and convenience store (1973), and funding for a new roof for their field house (1986).<sup>372</sup> But women-centered activism built on the strength of community households proved insufficient against the White Sox and the coercive powers of the state.

But by the time of the stadium issue in 1986, Wentworth Gardens had been reduced to an impoverished African American community headed predominantly by single mothers. The construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway and postwar deindustrialization had eliminated local commerce and employment. Public housing income regulations also made it difficult to sustain two-parent households.<sup>373</sup> To make matters worse, there had been a long history of racial violence between blacks in South Armour Square and their white neighbors to the north of the

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<sup>369</sup> Chap. 4 of Feldman and Stall’s *Dignity of Resistance* contains a fuller examination of the “community households” that characterize lower income African American communities. The basic premise is that over time, the women living in these communities expanded “traditional roles in the work of kinship and, when focused on children, mothering” to develop a broader sense of “community kinship.” Feldman and Stall argue that the work of community “othermothering,” embracing the maternal responsibility to care for other children in the community, and the work of community kinship “are grounded in an ethic of care and provide an important foundation for Wentworth women’s community activism. (95)

<sup>370</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, 103.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 119, 182–83.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

stadium.<sup>374</sup> Feldman and Stall identified the central reasons for the neighborhood's postwar decline:

The unequal distribution of economic prosperity has produced increased economic isolation and social distress among poor people in poor communities. Economic deprivation, toxic political representation, exploitative institutions, and austere social conditions are the forces that work against decent housing and sustainable development for the residents of Chicago's public housing.<sup>375</sup>

When the White Sox had finally run out of other options and announced that they were going to demolish the northern portion of the development to make room for their stadium, Wentworth Gardens residents had no leverage whatsoever in the fight.

Despite the fact that building the stadium in the South Loop would have required no residential displacement, the residents living in Dearborn Park, Printers Row, and River City, with help from the Chicago Bears, successfully killed that proposal. They were able to do this first, because they represented the type of resident taxpayer that both city officials and downtown commercial leaders coveted, and second, because the stadium threatened further development, particularly Dearborn Park's as yet to be built second phase. Conversely, even after putting together a broader base of resistance in the form of the South Armour Square Neighborhood Coalition (SASNC), residents of Wentworth Gardens had homes and small businesses destroyed while receiving little in the form of compensation. Constitutive choices made years before—the prioritization of commerce over community in downtown development, land use changes that contributed to the loss of manufacturing jobs, and the intentional segregation and physical separation of minority public housing—all played significant roles in determining where the new Comiskey Park would be built. As had been the case so often in Chicago's downtown development history, the efforts of Wentworth's women activists to protect their community fell

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<sup>374</sup> Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Biles, *Richard J. Daley*; Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*.

<sup>375</sup> Feldman and Stall, *Dignity of Resistance*, xiii.



short when the ISFA succeeded in breaking their coalition by offering sweeter compensation and relocation deals to South Armour Square homeowners.<sup>376</sup> Some have suggested that had the women activists of Wentworth Gardens been able to maintain that coalition, they might have succeeded in defeating the stadium proposal.<sup>377</sup> But opposition to the deal was further weakened when the White Sox agreed to build new homes for displaced homeowners in the Gap, a neighborhood between the Illinois Institute of Technology, Michael Reese Hospital, and the Lake Meadows apartment complex undergoing gentrification at the time.<sup>378</sup>

There was one alternative proposal for building a stadium in South Armour Square that would have avoided the destruction of the northern portion of Wentworth Gardens. Architect Philip Bess designed a much smaller, traditional urban ballpark that would have been constructed on the site of Armour Square Park, directly to the north of the original Comiskey Park. According to Spirou and Bennett in *It's Hardly Sportin'*, "Critical to Bess's thinking about the new White Sox ballpark was the connection between the sports facility and nearby structures, which drove his view of how the urban ballpark could become a stimulus for associated economic development opportunities."<sup>379</sup> Bess's proposal fell on deaf ears, however, for two primary reasons. First, his stadium plan would have eliminated Armour Square Park, which had traditionally served the white residents of Bridgeport as a source of civic pride and as a buffer of territorial protection against African Americans to the south of the stadium. Even if city officials were not faced with an artificially accelerated timetable controlled by the White Sox, it is unlikely that they would have wanted to take on residents of Bridgeport who had long tradition of political influence stretching back to the Daley years at mid-century. Second, the White Sox

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>377</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 159.

<sup>378</sup> Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*, 127.

<sup>379</sup> Spirou and Bennett, *It's Hardly Sportin'*, 96.

had already decided to build a suburban-style stadium modeled after the Kansas City Royals ballpark.<sup>380</sup> This was another missed opportunity to approach the stadium issue as part of a broader neighborhood development, but again, city officials were operating from a defensive standpoint on stadium development from the start, which severely limited their ability to explore such opportunities.

In the end, the White Sox got their suburban-style stadium and fan base, city and state politicians could claim that they had “saved the Sox,” and downtown business leaders had secured the continued development of their South Loop middle- to upper-class real estate buffer. The residents of Wentworth Gardens, however, found themselves further isolated, both politically and physically, from the rest of the city. Rather than simply serving as an example of the immense exploitative power of Major League Baseball’s monopoly status, the construction of the new Comiskey Park in South Armour Square was tied directly to institutional precedents in downtown development, formed and strengthened by Chicago’s political and civic elites throughout the twentieth century.

## **Conclusions**

Municipal investment typically goes to those who already have substantial resources. City politicians favor investors that offer the best symbolic value for their political success (like baseball teams), those that promise to lure middle-class workers and clientele (like Dearborn Park), and most importantly, those that contribute to their re-election coffers. Commercial investors also desire development projects free of perceived threats to their investment. A community of low-income African Americans, for example, has historically been viewed as an undesirable location for development due to fears that the community of minorities will bring

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<sup>380</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 158.

down property values and scare customers away.<sup>381</sup> Chicago continually struggled to develop sustainable public housing because city officials were entrenched in developmental policy that almost exclusively favors large-scale projects. But a policy that attempts to concentrate the city's African American population into large "projects" also creates areas that traditional urban commercial developers view as too risky for investment. By creating these "commercial investment deserts," the city isolates the "risks" to property value into smaller sections away from the city's commercial core. A community cannot be sustained without local access to quality employment and food.

By the time the White Sox built their new stadium in Chicago's South Armour Square, US cities had long been using "slum clearance" and gentrification urban renewal policies.<sup>382</sup> Politically, those policies were accepted by white middle-class majorities who saw the dilapidated housing projects and Ronald Reagan's "welfare queens" as blemishes to be removed. But as recent scholarship (cited above) has shown, the deteriorating conditions of urban public housing was a long and contested process, at times, involving politically disenfranchised whites.<sup>383</sup> The white majority in the United States has a long history of demonizing racial and ethnic "others" to suit their own desire for progress or profit. More often than not, white males conflated the two, defining *progress* exclusively by *profit*. Chicago in particular, following the fire of 1871, chose to rebuild itself as the profitable city at the expense of women's efforts to build a livable city.<sup>384</sup> And so it should come as no surprise that the construction of the new Comiskey Park should pit wealthy white male corporate ownership seeking to maximize

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<sup>381</sup> Fogelson, *Downtown*.

<sup>382</sup> Gillette Jr., *Camden After the Fall*; Teaford, *Rough Road to Renaissance*; Biles, *Richard J. Daley*; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster*; Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Squires et al., *Race, Class and the Response to Urban Decline*.

<sup>383</sup> Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block*.

<sup>384</sup> Flanagan, *Seeing with Their Hearts*.

individual profit against the African American women fighting to save what remained of their homes, neighborhood, and community. The same gendered contest between the profitable city and livable city still exists in Chicago today. The “quick take” powers of eminent domain necessary for urban redevelopment projects of the magnitude of a new stadium are more easily defended and enacted when the target area is home to culturally demonized minorities living in poverty with little political representation.

Due in part to the cultural significance of professional sports and to the limitations of the information offered to the public by the press (which is often working in concert with the professional team), the primarily white middle-class, often suburban, fans of the team do not see the social problems inherent in urban renewal programs. The politicians behind the programs do, in fact, see the social problems as they truly exist, but they fail to address them because the solutions are often politically infeasible. After all, the poor community about to be displaced by urban “renewal” has no political power to make politicians accountable for such negligence. But should the team decide to leave for another state, the threat that the white middle-class political majority will make their politicians pay for losing their team, their “major league” status, is very real. Even when the facts show that a stadium deal almost never provides the host city with tangible economic benefits, politicians must give in to the monopoly of Major League Baseball, the institution holding all of the cultural capital as well as control of the media. Working from a defensive position from the very start, Chicago politicians had little hope of incorporating the stadium into a broader development plan that might have proved to be a better long-term investment for both the city and the residents living near the stadium. As a result, they were limited to working within the confines of an urban redevelopment policy of institutionalized precedent, codified by the constitutive policy choices made by civic leaders working in vastly

different cultural and economic times. The combination of all of these factors ultimately forced even politicians with community-minded initiatives, like Chicago's Mayor Harold Washington, to displace some of the very people who helped get him elected.

## CHAPTER 3

### Little Caesar Brings the Coliseums to Detroit

*Stadiums can be the jewel. . . . This is going to be the centerpiece of a revival that stretches from the freeways that border this [stadium district], all the way back to Grand River and all the way down to Grand Circus Park.*<sup>385</sup>

In a piece written early in the summer of 1985 about what it was like to experience a game at Tiger Stadium, a “real ballpark, like Fenway and Wrigley,” Hall of Fame baseball writer Peter Gammons wrote two sentences that became a self-fulfilling prophecy signaling the ultimate demise of the grand old stadium. Caught up in the historical romance often peddled by sportswriters when two storied franchises like Boston and Detroit meet, Gammons wrote: “It’s fun here because the Tigers are at the heart of the comeback of the downtown of one of America’s great cities, the way the ’75 Red Sox and the ’79 Orioles coincidentally were vital to their cities’ revivals. Because it is a lifestyle unto itself, baseball is the only sport that qualifies as an urban renewal project.”<sup>386</sup> Of course, neither the Boston revival of 1975 nor the Baltimore revival of 1979 had anything to do with the construction of a new stadium. The kind of urban renewal that Gammons was describing was the emotional exuberance that tends to grow in sports chat rooms and the blogosphere when a community of fans is excited about their team’s competitive success. There was likely little of this brand of urban renewal taking place, for example, in Miami when the Marlins completely dismantled their high-payroll club “one year removed from opening up a brand-new stadium that cost the taxpayers upwards of \$350 million.”<sup>387</sup> Gammons did not know that he was writing just prior to a remarkable new stadium

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<sup>385</sup> Mike Ilitch quoted in Drew Sharp, “Ilitch’s Legacy Is on the Line with New Comerica Park,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 28, 1999.

<sup>386</sup> Peter Gammons, “ON BASEBALL; They’re Big Wheels in Motown,” *Boston Globe (Pre-1997 Fulltext)*, June 5, 1984.

<sup>387</sup> Ron Juckett, “Why Jeffery Loria’s 2012 Fire Sale Is the Lowest Moment in Miami Marlins History,” *Bleacher Report*, November 13, 2012.

boom that would sweep across “Major League Cities” over the next two decades and ultimately claim historically loved stadiums not only in Baltimore and Detroit, but also in major cities like Chicago and New York.<sup>388</sup> But there was something to Gammons’s claims about the power of baseball in Detroit, and the Tigers would, in fact, become the centerpiece of yet another attempt to rejuvenate the heart of downtown.

### **In Detroit They Call It “Urban Crisis”**

Following World War II, like many industrial cities across the United States such as Chicago, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh, Detroit saw increasing white flight and decreasing tax bases as corporations moved their manufacturing operations to locations that offered cheaper labor costs and lower taxes. Detroit has found it particularly difficult to recover, however, because so much of its economy and labor force depended heavily on the automobile industry. But there is another, and not unrelated, reason why the city of Detroit has been unable to rebuild itself despite multiple attempts and billions of dollars in federal, state, municipal, and private investments. Perhaps more than any other major northern city, Detroit has failed to substantively and effectively deal with problems stemming from years of racial segregation and discrimination. The tensions caused by political, economic, and residential discrimination boiled over in the 1967 race riots that served to exacerbate racial animosity and speed up the process of white flight. Moreover, the incredible physical destruction and social disintegration left in the wake of the uprising gave politicians, journalists, and suburbanites a very tangible, and lasting, scapegoat for the problems that continued to plague the city in the following decades. As Kevin Boyle stated in

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<sup>388</sup> Historic Fenway Park in Boston still stands, along with Wrigley Field in Chicago, because of ownership groups that ultimately found more value in restoring their classic landmark stadiums. They were the only two franchises to seriously consider, let alone go forward with, the renovation of their old ballparks rather than constructing a new stadium altogether. Fenway implemented renovations over the course of a decade between 2002 and 2011. At the time of this writing, renovation plans for Wrigley Field in Chicago have been held up due to stalled legal negotiations with rooftop owners concerned about how obstructed views created by additional signage planned for the outfield will affect their business.

his historiographical article on Detroit's urban crisis: "Many residents of the Detroit metropolitan area would be surprised to hear that historians date Detroit's decline to the years immediately after World War II. White Detroiters, in particular, have fashioned a different story of the postwar era."<sup>389</sup> Despite residents' continued tendency to blame the city's problems on what they perceived as black-instigated riots and the inadequacies and prejudices of Detroit's first black mayor, the historical evidence demonstrates that the urban crisis began well before the 1967 riots due almost entirely to the actions of whites.

The historical revision of Detroit's urban decline began in the 1980s when labor historians "fashioned a devastating critique of the United Automobile Workers."<sup>390</sup> According to the updated historical consensus, when the organization began in the 1930s, "its leaders and shop-floor activists were willing to challenge corporate power at the bargaining table, in national politics, and at the point of production." In the following decade, however, "the UAW's leaders retreated from the union's progressive agenda" and ultimately reached an accord with Detroit's automakers—the "Treaty of Detroit"—that "set the pattern for labor relations for the next three decades." While UAW workers secured higher wages than most industrial workers, their

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<sup>389</sup> Kevin Boyle, "The Ruins of Detroit: Exploring the Urban Crisis in the Motor City," *Michigan Historical Review*, 27, no. 1 (2001): 110.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 111. Examples of the historical literature on labor from the 1980s include: Kevin Boyle, *The UAW and the Heyday of American Liberalism, 1945–1968*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); John Barnard, *Walter Reuther and the Rise of the Auto Workers* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1983); Dudley W. Buffa, *Union Power and American Democracy: The UAW and the Democratic Party, 1935–1972* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984); Joe T. Darden et al. *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Richard Feldman and Michael Betzold, eds., *End of the Line: Autoworkers and the American Dream* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988); David Gartman, *Auto Slavery: The Labor Process in the Automobile Industry of the United States, 1897–1950* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986); Martin Glaberman, *Wartime Strikes: The Struggle against the No-Strike Pledge in the UAW during World War II* (Detroit: Bewick, 1980); Charles Harry Katz, *Shifting Gears: Changing Labor Relations in the U.S. Automobile Industry* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985); Nelson Lichtenstein and Stephen Meyer, *On the Line: Essays in the History of Auto Work* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989). It should be noted that there were scholarly works prior to the 1980s that addressed the problems of UAW. One particularly good example is: Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975). An updated version was published in 1998 by the South End Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts. *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* covers the radicalization of Detroit's black auto workers and the formation of radical labor organizations, in particular, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM).



leadership surrendered the workers' rights regarding labor's input on the automakers' business decisions and the conditions for work within the plants.<sup>391</sup> The autoworkers' victories in compensation proved shortsighted, however, as work conditions grew increasingly dangerous and stressful due to increased production demands. More importantly, the decision to concede worker input for business decisions ultimately left workers powerless when the autoworkers moved to undercut workers' wage gains by relocating plants away from Detroit to places where labor and land were cheaper. African American workers suffered disproportionately as a result of these changes and their interconnectedness to other issues like discriminatory housing.

As Thomas J. Sugrue convincingly demonstrated in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, race and inequality were inseparable in postwar Detroit and reached into all areas of African American life. As waves of African Americans migrated north during the war to escape the harsh realities of the Jim Crow South, they poured into industrial cities like Detroit where manufacturing jobs in support of the war effort were abundant. But when the migrants reached Detroit, they found both a housing shortage of incredible proportions as well as fewer opportunities to work than they had expected. As Sugrue explained, a number of factors led to uneven hiring practices from plant to plant where, should blacks be lucky enough to find work, it was often dangerous and demeaning work.<sup>392</sup> In some locations, plant leaders would avoid hiring blacks in an effort to maintain worker morale and avoid racially motivated hate strikes by white workers. African Americans were routinely passed over for promotions both within the factories and within UAW leadership. Discrimination at the hiring gate kept blacks working primarily in unskilled labor which lacked stability and any hope for social mobility.<sup>393</sup> This left them particularly vulnerable as postwar highway construction and advancements in communication

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 111; Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 95.

<sup>392</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 99.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 100–101.

led to capital mobility and the deindustrialization of cities.<sup>394</sup> The lack of steady employment for the vast majority of Detroit's growing African American population, combined with federally sanctioned discrimination in the city's housing market, forced blacks to live in the overcrowded inner city which was facing a crisis of disinvestment as well.

African Americans (as well as thousands of whites) migrated to find work in Detroit's great industrial Arsenal of Democracy, but the city's racial tensions and discrimination have a long history tied to both employment and housing. Before the summer of 1967, the city experienced serious race riots in 1833, 1863, and 1943; both the 1863 and 1943 riots were instigated by whites fearful of losing jobs to increasing numbers of blacks.<sup>395</sup> Henry Ford used black workers to break strikes, which led to another racial clash when 800 black workers at Ford's Rouge plant "put up a physical fight against the UAW during its final organizing drive in April 1941."<sup>396</sup> Detroit maintained a strong, and publicly open Ku Klux Klan presence throughout the 1920s and 1930s as evidenced on July 11, 1925, when "10,000 people cheered on KKK delegates as they flayed at 'Catholics, Jews, and Niggers.'"<sup>397</sup> This overt racism was regularly on display as mobs of angry whites routinely attacked and terrorized African Americans who dared to move into white neighborhoods. This violence and intimidation was reinforced by racially discriminatory practices in federal housing and lending policies, in the private real estate market, and in home owners/neighborhood association covenants.<sup>398</sup> The harsh reality of Detroit's state-sanctioned segregation isolated African Americans in the center of the

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<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>395</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 29; Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, 153–55.

<sup>396</sup> Georgakas and Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, 154.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>398</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Heather Ann Thompson. *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Reynolds Farley, Sheldon Danziger, and Harry J. Holzer, *Detroit Divided: A Volume in the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000); Darden et al., *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development*; June Manning Thomas. *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

city, despite massive overcrowding and rapidly deteriorating housing conditions. Inflated rents due to the scarcity of options for African Americans in the ongoing housing crisis left blacks with few resources to maintain their homes. In conjunction with the forces of white and capital flight, this led to overwhelming disinvestment and decreasing tax revenues which left the city full of poor African Americans and increasingly abandoned buildings.

Like many cities in the American Rust Belt, in the years following World War II, Detroit began to tap into federal funding in an attempt to bring about urban renewal. While some cities, such as Chicago, attempted to utilize public housing to maintain residential segregation, in the 1950s the Albert Cobo administration largely put an end to public housing in Detroit.<sup>399</sup> Prior to the Cobo administration, public housing developments were built near industrial areas where whites received priority access. At one of those developments, the Sojourner Truth homes (located near the city's northern boundary and designated for whites only), the inclusion of blacks in 1942 sparked a violent reaction by area whites which "proved to be only the first . . . of what would become more serious racial clashes, including the 1943 riot."<sup>400</sup> In 1943, the Detroit housing commission adopted the segregationist policy devised by director Josephine Gomon: "No housing project shall change the racial characteristics of a neighborhood."<sup>401</sup> When conservative Albert Cobo first took office in 1950 as mayor, he "vetoed eight of the twelve proposed public housing sites, all but one in the outlying, predominantly white sections of the city."<sup>402</sup> With the support of the private sector, Cobo all but squashed public housing in favor of a housing policy that favored the construction of single-family homes sold in the private market. Backed by a segregated public housing policy, segregated federal housing policies, and a white

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<sup>399</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 84-87.

<sup>400</sup> Thomas. *Redevelopment and Race*, 24.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>402</sup> Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 85.

middle-class political base, Detroit officials left the question of housing largely to the private sector and turned their attention towards larger urban renewal projects “including the proposed Civic Center, Medical Center, and a middle-income apartment project, all in the predominantly black inner city.”<sup>403</sup> Of course, that further exacerbated the scarcity of housing for African Americans who had no legitimate recourse to find new housing in a segregated private real estate market. As Sugrue has noted and others have echoed: “As late as the early 1960s, four public housing projects were virtually all-white, with token black residents, and two projects were all-black.”<sup>404</sup>

In many ways the story of Detroit’s postwar decline and subsequent efforts towards urban renewal aligns with the experiences of other postindustrial northern cities like Chicago. But Detroit’s experience was also unique from that of other cities in a few important ways. First, the strength of Detroit’s industrial economy was tied almost exclusively to the auto industry. Maintaining prosperity for the city’s (predominantly white) manufacturing middle-class homeowners was totally dependent on a thriving, locally built, auto industry. Second, members of Detroit’s middle class were only homeowners because of the high wages secured with their concessions in the “Treaty of Detroit.” Third, while many cities have failed to address the needs of African Americans trapped in poverty by economic and residential discrimination, the thousands of blacks displaced by the promise of urban renewal and slum clearance in Detroit had nowhere to go. In Chicago, when African Americans were displaced by urban renewal, they often ended up in public housing developments built to maintain segregation. Detroit’s displaced African Americans were left to find whatever they could in the already overcrowded black section in the city’s center. All three of these aspects were once regarded as a sign of Detroit’s

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 87; Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 98–102.

current and future success. Ultimately, these three signs of Detroit's greatness were at the heart of the city's collapse.

When technological advances made it possible, the automakers began leaving the city, relocating manufacturing operations to locations that provided cheaper land and labor. Thanks to the "Treaty of Detroit," the city's middle-class workers could do nothing as their jobs moved to the suburbs, the South, and the West. The employment rate and the city's economy took a dive as the automobile companies left the city. Antidiscrimination legislation in the early 1960s initiated the slow process to desegregate Detroit's residential patterns, and as whites left for the suburbs, African Americans began to fill in what were formerly all-white neighborhoods, which then instigated further white flight. If we refer to the 1967 riot as a "rebellion"—a conscious effort to affect change in Detroit's political balance of power—as some do, then it proved to be a hollow victory for African Americans.<sup>405</sup> In just twenty-two years, between 1949 and 1971, Detroit spent over \$290 million of combined federal and municipal funds on 27 renewal projects that displaced thousands of African Americans.<sup>406</sup> Seven short years after the riot, Detroit elected their first black mayor, Coleman Young, who fired up African Americans with charismatic appeals for racial equality and cooperation between city and suburbs. Coleman Young's legacy, however, would be highlighted by more of the same: big flashy development projects in the downtown area.

During the Coleman Young administration, the focus for urban renewal planning began to change. A clear example of this can be seen when Mayor Young's administration was asked, "What does the bicentennial have to do with the urban crisis?" The mayor's office responded: "Everything. If we can build Detroit as a labor history center and *promote it as a tourist*

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<sup>405</sup> Thompson, *Whose Detroit?*, 85.

<sup>406</sup> Julie Longo, "Remembering the Renaissance City: Detroit's Bicentennial Homecoming Festival and Urban Redevelopment," *Michigan Historical Review* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 94.

*attraction* we shall have more jobs. If our streets are filled with people enjoying fairs, exhibits, and performances, those streets will be safer, and ultimately, to the extent that we are able to involve all segments of our community, the bicentennial can help build bridges in a polarized City.”<sup>407</sup> Young was forced to get creative in his efforts to rebuild the city’s economy just as he was beginning his tenure as mayor. In his first two years in office, “at least twenty-three major employers had moved their manufacturing businesses south, taking 150,000 Michigan jobs with them.”<sup>408</sup> As such, Young had no choice but to turn to the private sector for help.

Driven by analysis and direction provided by Detroit Renaissance Incorporated, a pro-development non-profit organization created by members of Detroit’s business elite such as Henry Ford II and local financier Max Fisher, the city’s urban renewal efforts focused on “large, attractive corporate and entertainment complexes that would attract black and white suburbanites with money back to the city.”<sup>409</sup> But efforts to lure suburban (primarily white) residents back to the city proved elusive. Given the teeming animosity that characterized racial relations in Detroit for decades, it is not surprising that some cited Young’s “flamboyant rhetoric” and “reverse discrimination” policies (like the hiring of eight hundred minority policemen) as the true culprits behind white flight.<sup>410</sup> And so, as has long been the case, Detroit-area and suburban whites once again blamed the African Americans for the decline of the city. Ironically, it was under Young’s watch that the city began to plan for a new stadium for the beloved Tigers, a stadium that would ultimately cater to and serve his harshest critics—suburban whites.

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid. 89, emphasis mine.

<sup>408</sup> Marietta L. Baba, *Urban Redevelopment in Detroit: The “Renaissance Center” Model of Private Investment and the Problems of Unemployment* (Detroit: Center for Urban Studies, Wayne State University, 1978), 8.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., 90, 95.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 97.

## Keeping Up with the Joneses

Within the context of postwar urban stadium development deals, the Tigers' deal with Detroit and the state of Michigan was remarkably equitable; in fact, with public money covering just 38 percent of total project costs, it was a steal.<sup>411</sup> By comparison in 1995, city officials in Denver agreed to foot 78 percent of the total cost to build Coors Field for the Rockies. Ironically, stadium boosters sent Detroit mayor, Dennis Archer, articles and letters about Denver as *positive* evidence for building a new ballpark for the Tigers. But stadium deals are complex, constantly changing endeavors that involve many moving parts and would-be controlling agents. On a larger scale, the same can be said for the ongoing (re)development of the city of Detroit. Unlike Chicago and Los Angeles, Detroit's deal with the Tigers ultimately had little to do with the threat of relocation. The team seriously considered relocating to the suburbs during Tom Monaghan's tenure as owner, but those threats largely subsided after the team was sold to Mike Ilitch in 1992.<sup>412</sup> Mayor Archer was cognizant of that potential threat in stadium negotiations, but Detroit was a city long scrambling for a way to survive, for a lasting identity, for anything that might restore some civic pride. Moreover, in light of the high demands presented from the outset by the previous Tigers regime, the dissention (primarily from fan organizations such as the Tiger Stadium Fan Club) ultimately proved no match for the Archer administration and its county- and state-level allies who found Ilitch's plan a relative "bargain" by comparison.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> "Comerica Park," *Ballparks.com*, updated April 2005; Dave Wright, "Comerica Park/Detroit Tigers," *ballparkdigest.com*, November 29, 2008..

<sup>412</sup> Ilitch did mention the suburbs as a possibility early in the process, but that was largely political theater. He had been consolidating real estate in the theater district around his Fox Theatre and the city had already proposed that location as a potential site for a new stadium.

<sup>413</sup> The "Tiger Stadium Fan Club," like "Save Our Sox" in Chicago (another organization dedicated to saving their original old historic stadium), mounted sustained resistance to the new stadium, but it was only briefly considered a real threat to completing the new stadium. When the Save Our Sox effort ultimately ended with the passage of stadium legislation in the summer of 1988, they donated the remaining \$200 of their funds to the Tiger Stadium Fan Club, "and wished them luck in their efforts." See Paul Sullivan, "Sox Were Saved, But Not Comiskey," *Chicago Tribune*, October 1, 1990.

The quest to build a new Tiger Stadium began in the mid-1980s as then owner, Tom Monaghan (founder of Domino's Pizza), began to see the windfall profits other owners in the league were making due to new stadium deals. On the first anniversary of Monaghan's purchase of the Tigers, he claimed that "business had nothing to do with it," stating that owning the team was something he wanted to do for his whole life. He continued, saying, "I don't care what the return is. If I have to sell more pizzas to pay for it, I would."<sup>414</sup> Monaghan paid a record \$53 million dollars for the Tigers franchise in 1983 and represented a new brand of ultra-rich sports ownership. A *New York Times* article from November 1985 reported that in "three of the last four years, both the World Series and the Super Bowl have been won by teams connected to someone among the 400 richest people in America, as listed by *Forbes* magazine." The article's writer, Dave Anderson, presciently suggested that "in an era of spiraling salaries for the best athletes, perhaps it's a sign that an owner must be rich to get richer." Citing Monaghan specifically, Anderson wrote that "the 1984 World Series was won by the Detroit Tigers, owned by Tom Monaghan, a pizza potentate worth at least \$250 million; the 1982 Series was won and this year's Series was lost by the St. Louis Cardinals, owned by August Busch Jr., the Budweiser breumeister worth at least \$575 million."<sup>415</sup> Despite their seemingly flush pocketbooks, however, the wealthy owners of Major League Baseball were once again crying about decreasing revenues in the press.

There was some legitimacy, however, to the owners' stated fears about maintaining a profit in future years given the way player salaries continued to skyrocket in the free agency era. According to a report produced by the Major League Baseball Players Association, the average MLB salary in 1983 was \$289,194, but by the time Monaghan sold the Tigers to Mike Ilitch in

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<sup>414</sup> Murray Chass, "Baseball's Tales of Distress," *New York Times*, December 2, 1984.

<sup>415</sup> Dave Anderson, "Sports of the Times; In Sports, Rich Get Richer," *New York Times*, November 24, 1985.



1992 that number had already jumped to \$1,028,667.<sup>416</sup> Just two years after suggesting that baseball wasn't a business and that he would sell more pizza to keep the team afloat if necessary, Monaghan began to suggest that baseball was in trouble. In January 1986, Monaghan told an interviewer for the *Orlando Sentinel*:

I've seen some awfully wealthy people have to get out. There isn't anyone, no matter how wealthy, who is going to take a \$10 million-a-year beating. The Tigers, traditionally the second-most profitable team in baseball next to the Dodgers, are projecting big future losses. It just keeps getting worse as you look at the projections. We show ourselves losing \$7.7 million over the next five years. Now if the Tigers are losing \$7.7 million, there's nobody in baseball making money with the possible exception of the Dodgers. And if we're losing \$7.7 million, the rest of them are losing \$10 million or more. This was based on drawing 2 million fans a year at Tiger Stadium, and includes national radio and television money, too.<sup>417</sup>

When the interviewer followed up by asking what the causes of the financial strain were, Monaghan replied flatly, "Salary." It is important to note, however, that sharp rises in average salary were tied more to a growing trend in outrageous "superstar" contracts.

Clubs were signing a few high-priced free agent superstars, leaving little for other players on the team. An article on baseball's changing salary structure pointed out that "in 1994 for instance, 12 percent of the players accounted for 54 percent of the payrolls."<sup>418</sup> This is not a trend that was fueled exclusively by the Major League Baseball Players Association either. During his interview with the *Orlando Sentinel*, when asked if one individual player was worth the money to the franchise, Monaghan responded, "If he's a superstar, yes. But there are few superstars."<sup>419</sup> Regardless of whether they were to blame or not, baseball's owners were forced to find more lucrative sources of income to support the growing "superstar" salary structure.

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<sup>416</sup> Major League Baseball Players Association, "Average Salaries in Major League Baseball, 1967–2009," n. d. PDF.

<sup>417</sup> "Monaghan: Biggest Problem is the Owners," *Orlando Sentinel*, January 20, 1986.

<sup>418</sup> Paul D. Staudohar, "Baseball's Changing Salary Structure," *Compensation and Working Conditions* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 2–9.

<sup>419</sup> "Monaghan: Biggest Problem is the Owners."

According to an analysis by Andrew Zimbalist, it did not help that “team owners since 1976 have done a singularly unimpressive job of signing top-performing free agents or of paying a player according to his output.”<sup>420</sup> Not only have team owners spent much more on salaries since then, but according to Zimbalist, “average team salary has been related only tenuously to team performance.”<sup>421</sup> Television and radio deals often generate a large inflow of revenue for professional sports teams, but they are typically long-term deals that may not meet revenue needs of a team later in the deal. When media deals are not an option, the surest way to maximize an investment in a sports team is to build a new stadium with greater revenue-generating *modern amenities*.<sup>422</sup>

When Monaghan began publicly admitting that he was interested in a new stadium, he echoed the sentiments of many Major League Baseball owners in the market for new stadiums when he stated, “We really admire the stadium in Kansas City[;] . . . something like that, with natural grass, would be lovely.”<sup>423</sup> Later in the same article, the president of the real estate arm of Domino’s Pizza further echoed those owners when he claimed that there was “almost no chance the club would try to finance its own stadium.” At this stage in the process of constructing a new stadium for the Tigers, the organization was following the lead of the Chicago White Sox, an organization that also demanded public financing. The owners in Chicago were also heavily influenced by Kauffman Stadium (then Royals Stadium) in Kansas City. On the tail end of the wave of multi-purpose, “cookie-cutter” stadiums constructed in cities like Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia, baseball owners began looking to the open-air, natural grass, baseball-only

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<sup>420</sup> Zimbalist, *Baseball and Billions*, 96.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>422</sup> During the 1990s stadium boom, in which the Tigers’ new ballpark was ultimately constructed, modern amenities included a natural grass playing surface, unobstructed views, modernized clubhouse facilities for the players, expanded parking access, luxury suites, as well as updated restroom and concessions facilities.

<sup>423</sup> “New Stadium in Suburbs Unlikely: Tigers Likely to Stay in Detroit,” *Ludington Daily News*, January 19, 1988.

facility in Kansas City for inspiration. Unfortunately, owners also coveted the “sea of asphalt” that surrounded the stadium as well. While that design made sense for the sprawling Truman Sports Complex that housed stadiums for both the NFL’s Kansas City Chiefs and the Royals, as the results in Chicago demonstrate, such a design was a poor fit for downtown urban locations. Nonetheless, by 1991 team president Bo Schembechler argued that the Tigers wanted a stadium just like the one in Chicago, “with unobstructed sight lines, about 45,000 seats, natural grass, luxury boxes and expanded concession areas that pump up revenue and attract more-affluent customers.”<sup>424</sup> Furthermore, he “hinted that the club [would] stay . . . if the Tigers and county officials [could] agree on a plan to provide secure, lighted parking for 12,000 cars with the revenue going to the Tigers.”<sup>425</sup> Much like the process in Chicago, once Monaghan and Schembechler had their minds set on capturing the additional revenues provided by a new stadium, alternative plans, such as renovating the old stadium, did not even warrant a response from the team.

In Chicago, architect Philip Bess designed a more urban-friendly alternative to the new Comiskey Park called Armour Square Park (see chap. 2). Bess’s design was very much ahead of its time, and while cities like Cleveland, Denver, and Minnesota ultimately mimicked his “organically blended into the urban fabric” idea for their new stadiums, the ownership in Chicago refused to grant Bess an audience. Likewise in Detroit, John and Judy Davids (architects from Royal Oak contracted by the Tiger Stadium Fan Club) developed a detailed plan to renovate Tiger Stadium that provided for everything the Tigers were asking for in a new stadium. Despite the fact that the “Cochrane Plan” was well received both by local and nationally

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<sup>424</sup> Joseph B. White, “Detroit Facing Suicide Squeeze at Grand Old Tiger Stadium,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 1991.

<sup>425</sup> Rick Haglund, Peter Luke, and Press Bureau Grand Rapids, “New Stadium for Tigers Likely Will Stay in City: Politics, Funding Would Hinder Any Move to Suburbs,” *The Grand Rapids Press*, March 24, 1991.

recognized architects, Tigers officials not only refused to acknowledge the Davids' work, they did not even return the Davids' calls.<sup>426</sup> It didn't even matter that the Davids had redesigned Monaghan's private box at Tiger Stadium.<sup>427</sup> As was the case in Los Angeles, Chicago, and most other stadiums constructed over the second half of the twentieth century, the Tigers organization had little concern for how their new stadium would affect the community around it nor were they concerned about the many fans that were heartbroken over losing their historic old stadium. As the Tigers began to struggle on the field towards the end of the 1980s, Monaghan drained the club of the cash needed to rebuild in order to service the debt (at one point nearly \$500 million) of a pizza empire that was losing increasingly large amounts of money.<sup>428</sup>

Monaghan owned a team that won the World Series just a year after he bought it. The team won their division again in 1987 but was soundly defeated in the American League Championship by the Minnesota Twins (who went on to win the World Series that year). The Tigers had two other second-place finishes during Monaghan's tenure, but the pizza baron was clearly in over his head as a professional sports franchise owner. As the 1980s came to a close, Monaghan had alienated his fan base, hired University of Michigan football coaching legend Bo Schembechler as team president, and fired the team's long-time Hall of Fame broadcaster Ernie Harwell. Despite repeatedly denying rumors (since as early as 1986) that he was seeking to relocate to the suburbs, by the end of the decade Detroit fans feared the worst, thanks in no small part to the boisterous posturing of Schembechler in stadium negotiations.<sup>429</sup> As a result, the

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<sup>426</sup> Bess, *City Baseball Magic*. For a discussion about the Cochrane Plan, see Cagan and DeMause, *Field of Schemes*, 90–94.

<sup>427</sup> Patrick Joseph Harrigan, *The Detroit Tigers: Club and Community, 1945–1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 268.

<sup>428</sup> Gary Gillette, "Tom Monaghan," SABR Baseball Biography Project, Society for American Baseball Research, n.d., *sabr.org*. Web. Accessed Jan 19, 2014.

<sup>429</sup> "Monaghan Says Tigers Won't Move to Suburbs," *Ludington Daily News*, May 23, 1986; White, "Detroit Facing Suicide Squeeze." Schembechler told "a packed meeting of the Economic Club of Detroit" that "we can't compete with that stadium the way it is. . . . It's unfair for you to think that you can shackle us to a rusted girder in Tiger

major Detroit newspapers spent much of 1990 publishing articles that alternately confirmed and denied rumors of building a new stadium for the Tigers in suburbs such as Dearborn.<sup>430</sup> When Monaghan “trashed the city as crime-infested and a bad baseball town, . . . politicians, the media, and fans made him a pariah.”<sup>431</sup> According to Patrick Joseph Harrigan’s book *The Detroit Tigers: Club and Community, 1945–1995*, the “isolation between club and community was never greater than in Monaghan’s last years . . . nor was the separation of the suburbs from Detroit.”<sup>432</sup> That growing isolation ultimately soured negotiations both in Detroit and with suburban leaders at a time when Monaghan’s other business ventures began to flounder.<sup>433</sup>

### **A Different Kind of Legacy**

At the zenith of the Tom Monaghan era in Michigan, when his pizza empire and baseball team were at their competitive peaks, the eccentric mega-millionaire began purchasing and developing land on Drummond Island, located just off of the southeast tip of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. In 1985, Monaghan purchased 288 acres of hunting and fishing real estate on the island for \$350,000.<sup>434</sup> He continued buying up land the following year until he ultimately owned 2,000 of the island’s 87,000 total acres, where he built his extravagant \$30 million Domino’s Resort. By 1989 he had also completed the development of his \$5 million, 18-hole golf course on the island, named Pepperoni Links appropriately enough.<sup>435</sup> Many island residents initially

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Stadium. It’s not going to happen.” Of course the Tigers had won a World Series playing in that stadium and the team’s lack of competitiveness had more to do with poor ownership.

<sup>430</sup> Chauncey Bailey, Tarek Hamada, Don Tschirhart, Fred Girard, Vivian S. Toy, and Jerry Green, “Tigers Deny Rumor about Move to Dearborn,” *Detroit News*, July 19, 1990; Joe Falls, “People Leave Detroit; are Tigers Next?” *Detroit News*, August 31, 1990; “No Help for New Directions,” *Detroit News and Detroit Free Press*, December 23, 1990.

<sup>431</sup> Harrigan, *Detroit Tigers: Club and Community*, 6.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>433</sup> Rebecca Powers, “Suburbs Giving Stadium Cold Shoulder,” *Detroit News and Detroit Free Press*, February 10, 1991.

<sup>434</sup> Bob Campbell, “Marina Blue Print Creates Waves for Baseball Megamillionaire,” *Toronto Star*, June 12, 1988.

<sup>435</sup> Gerry Volgenau, “Drummond Drew Finns, Mormons, Monaghan,” *Detroit Free Press*, August 18, 2002.

welcomed Monaghan's developments if only, as the *Detroit News* reported, because "his money kept the local library open."<sup>436</sup> But not everyone was happy as one resident bitterly exclaimed: "He has radically changed the tenor of life on the island. . . . He has come into a small community and taken over."<sup>437</sup> What was previously a small hunting and fishing community rapidly changed into a hotbed for speculators looking to follow Monaghan's lead and get in early on a hot tourist development just across the northern tip of Lake Huron from Michigan's iconic Mackinac Island. But Drummond Island community leaders, such as township supervisor Frank Sasso, opposed the pending invasion by "the walk-and shop-tourist," arguing that "it's not what they came here to live for."<sup>438</sup>

Pro-development president of the Drummond Island Chamber of Commerce, Charles Krahnke, directly profited from the presence of the Domino's Resort thanks to increased traffic at his fishing resort located directly across the bay and from his sale of "neighboring James Island to one of Domino's land-holding companies."<sup>439</sup> It is not surprising that Krahnke would publicly defend the impact of the resort. Like many speculative investment booms, few would realize significant gains on early investment before the contextual reality of the market set it. In 1989, just five years after his initial investment on the island, Domino's Lodge, the private retreat that Monaghan had envisioned, had become a "full-scale business venture" that, according to Domino's community relations director, Dick Brunvand, was "losing money at a rapid pace." Signaling things to come, Brunvand stated, "You have to understand the Domino's organization. . . . [T]he point is, we will not continue to lose money here."<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> Campbell, "Marina Blue Print."

<sup>438</sup> "Monaghan's Big Plans for Island Aren't Going Over with Everyone," *Ludington Daily News*, September 14, 1989.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

Lost in the hubris of his resort building to the north, Monaghan began experiencing troubles with his burgeoning pizza empire as the process of selecting a site for a new stadium and finding the financing drew on. In 1991, Domino's was forced to close "about 125 unprofitable stores . . . and [write] off \$41 million in bad debt." In addition, sales were down by nearly \$1 billion from the previous year.<sup>441</sup> According to Monaghan, one night during that period he "laid awake thinking about what a 'bad' person he was" and decided that he had fallen to the sin of pride.<sup>442</sup> The lifelong Catholic rededicated himself to "God, family and Pizza" and began selling off assets and restructuring Domino's debt. By 1992, Monaghan had sold his interests on Drummond Island, including the Domino's Resort and the golf club, "to a group of islanders for 10 cents on the dollar."<sup>443</sup> Before the dramatic, spiritually-inspired realignment of Monaghan's life and empire were over, he would also be forced to cede his title as "Pizza Tiger."<sup>444</sup>

### **A Confluence of Timing and Vision**

The two central obstacles in stadium construction, from city to city, are variations of two primary issues: financing and struggles for territorial rights (between residential and commercial interests as well as competing interests in the same sport). Executives from other regional professional sports facilities such as the Palace of Auburn Hills CEO, Thomas Wilson, hinted that the new Tigers' suites might negatively impact other arenas in the city.<sup>445</sup> Then in March 1991, with the support and assistance of the Tiger Stadium Fan Club, bills were introduced to the Michigan Legislature that would "ban local governments from financing professional sports

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<sup>441</sup> "Monaghan Confirms Tigers for Sale," *Chicago Tribune*, March 1, 1992.

<sup>442</sup> Alex Prud'homme, "Taking the Gospel to the Rich," *New York Times*, February 14, 1999.

<sup>443</sup> Volgenau, "Drummond."

<sup>444</sup> *Pizza Tiger* is the title of Monaghan's autobiography, written with Robert Anderson, published in 1986 at the height of the team's popularity.

<sup>445</sup> Charles Child, "Tiger Suites: Not as Lucrative as at Palace?," *Crain's Detroit Business* 5, no.13 (March 27, 1989):1. The Palace of Auburn Hills is home of the Detroit Pistons NBA basketball team. Luxury suites are purchased by local businesses which are limited commodities, particularly in a persistently economically troubled city like Detroit.

stadiums of more than 25,000 seats and place a \$75 million cap on public financing for the renovation of an existing sports stadium.”<sup>446</sup> Promises from the Tiger Stadium Fan Club to “force a referendum on any proposal for issuing bonds for a new Tiger stadium” appeared to have some traction, given the results from a *Detroit News* poll that suggested the public was split evenly on the issue, even slightly favoring the opposition.<sup>447</sup> Wayne County deputy executive, Mike Duggan (elected as mayor of Detroit in 2013), was searching for a means to issue \$120 million of tax-exempt bonds for a new stadium. One obstacle that might be overcome required “congressional approval for issuing the bonds in light of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which essentially eliminated the use of tax-exempt bonds for sports facilities.”<sup>448</sup> This was hardly insurmountable: later analysis would demonstrate that a loophole in the Tax Reform Act actually encouraged the use of tax-exempt bonds for stadium construction which, some have argued, made matters worse for taxpayers.<sup>449</sup>

One of the most notable, albeit short-lived, victories for the grassroots Tiger Stadium Fan Club was their successful referendum campaign “that resulted, on March 17, 1992, in a resounding 2-1 vote barring any city money from being spent on a new ballpark.”<sup>450</sup> With little hope for municipal funding, the sizeable gap between anticipated luxury suite income and the debt service it would take to construct a new stadium, in combination with the more pressing financial troubles facing his Domino’s empire, proved too much of an obstacle for Monaghan to

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<sup>446</sup> Karen Pierog, “Michigan,” *Bond Buyer*, May 7, 1991, p. 28.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Ameet Sachdev, “Tax-exempt bonds for Wrigley Field Would Be a Federal Subsidy,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 23, 2010. The article cites Dennis Zimmerman, “a retired economist who studied the economics of stadiums at the Congressional Budget Office.” According to Zimmerman, “The Tax Reform Act placed limits on bonds issued for private activities by determining that no more than 10 percent of the debt service can be repaid by revenues from the project itself. . . . A loophole allows owners and host cities to push 90 percent of the construction costs onto taxpayers.” Other public commentary has even gone so far as to suggest that if the Tax Reform Act did not directly cause the stadium boom at the end of the twentieth century, it “at least quickened the pace.” See Phil Miller, “The Tax Reform Act of 1986 and Sports Construction Projects,” *Market Power: In Economics, X Marks the Spot*. *Marketpower.typepad.com*, November 24, 2010.

<sup>450</sup> Cagan and DeMause, *Field of Schemes*, 94.



overcome. Monaghan's Tigers gave Wayne County and Detroit officials a deadline of August 1 to submit a new stadium plan.

In the first days of August 1991, Monaghan rejected the city's proposal to build a new stadium downtown off of Woodward Avenue, a site directly across the street from Mike Ilitch's recently renovated Fox Theatre. Ilitch had made his fortune as the founder of Little Caesars Pizza and had owned the Detroit Red Wings hockey team since 1982. Though some fairly assumed that Monaghan rejected the site at least in part "because it could create a windfall" for one of his competitors in the discount pizza industry, he deflected those rumors simply stating that "I'm in delivery and he's in carry-out." When asked for a reaction, an Ilitch spokesman declined to comment.<sup>451</sup> Monaghan really did not have time to worry about whether a new stadium would add to the profits of Little Caesars' owner. He needed to focus his energies on saving or selling his own empire. Frustrated by an inability to get the right stadium deal and recognizing the need to improve cash flow, Monaghan announced that he was putting the Detroit Tigers and various other holdings up for sale in late February 1992. Just one year after rejecting a stadium package across the street from his rival, Monaghan announced that he had sold the Tigers to Mike Ilitch for \$82 million.<sup>452</sup> The quest for a new Tigers stadium now belonged to a man who had a bigger vision for Detroit's downtown development.

Despite multiple attempts by various players in the deal to set a deadline for a new stadium agreement, the process plodded along, carefully yet purposefully. But it remained to be seen just whose purposes this new stadium would ultimately serve. Both f Monaghan and former Detroit mayor Coleman Young had attempted to force the stadium through according to their own timelines, and ultimately, neither one would see the ballpark completed under their watch.

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<sup>451</sup> Associated Press, "Parking—Not Pizza—to Decide Location of New Tiger Stadium," *Jerusalem Post* (1950–1988), August 5, 1991, p. 11. *Pro Quest Historical Newspapers*.

<sup>452</sup> Associated Press, "Baseball/Daily Report," *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 1992.

New Tigers owner, Mike Ilitch, publicly and privately expressed his desire to field his team in the new stadium by 1997, but he also had larger development plans for the area surrounding the stadium that slowed the process. Ilitch owned the nearby Fox Theatre and was “eyeing a shopping, sports and entertainment complex for the area.”<sup>453</sup> The idea was influenced by similar sports/entertainment complexes that had been or were being developed in other cities around the nation, such as the Truman Sports Complex in Kansas City, the Gateway Complex in Cleveland, and the Camden Yards sports complex in Baltimore. Such plans are very complex due to the need to accommodate multiple public and private as well as residential and commercial interests. As was demonstrated by the mixed-use Chicago 21 Corporation development (see chap. 2), even when led by a coalition of the city’s heaviest financial hitters, such developments invite multiple hurdles and, as such, often take years to be fully realized. On the other hand, development initiatives carried out with deliberate caution and patience often lead to smarter, long-term developments that are sustainable and, more importantly, eligible for federal funding.

Larger projects that involve significant infrastructural, land acquisition, and preparation costs can sometimes qualify for economic-development loans offered by federal agencies like the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Moreover, any stadium-centered development project depended on approval and assistance from the state, and by July 1993, all Governor John Engler’s administration would commit to was exploring different options. Serving as the governor’s “point man on the Tiger Stadium redevelopment,” Art Ellis, director of the state Department of Commerce, stated, “They (other parties) are more anxious for resolution than I am. But that doesn’t mean we don’t end up at the same time and the same place.” Ellis readily admitted that the stadium was “a major and important project,” but added that “it cannot

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<sup>453</sup> Amy Bodwin, “Feds Eyed to Help Get Land for Stadium,” *Crain’s Detroit Business*, July 5, 1993.

push everything else aside.”<sup>454</sup> It seemed the deal was going to get done, and astute Detroiters who had followed Ilitch’s exploits in the local press had no reason to assume it would fall apart. This was the man, after all, that was almost single-handedly bringing excitement, and more importantly private investment, back to downtown Detroit.

### **Little Caesars Restores the Faith of the People**

In 1987, just five years after he bought the Detroit Red Wings, Ilitch halted construction of his new corporate headquarters for Little Caesars in suburban Farmington Hills. When he chose to move “to the 10 floors of renovated office space in the Fox Building, which houses the [newly renovated Fox] theater,”<sup>455</sup> Ilitch deliberately countered the devastating centrifugal forces of capital flight that had plagued the city for decades. This was no small gesture; even the Big Three automakers that symbolized the Motor City had moved out of town. It was nearly a decade before General Motors purchased the Renaissance Center in 1996 and began renovating the tower in order to relocate its own corporate headquarters downtown. Moreover, Ilitch had bigger designs that coincided with the interests of both city officials and other downtown developers. In addition, he bought “two blocks of real estate north and south of the Fox Theatre, on the same side of Woodward . . . as part of a much larger \$30 million package aimed at creating a top-flight theater district for Detroit. The district is bounded by Park Avenue, the Fisher Freeway, John R. Street and Grand Circus Park.”<sup>456</sup> The Detroit Downtown Development Authority, “a quasi-public agency for improvements to downtown Detroit,” had likewise demonstrated a commitment to the district by suggesting that it might contribute as much as “\$8 million for the demolition of eight structures and site preparation, \$5.5 million to acquire property, and \$4

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<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Jean Halliday, “Ilitch Has Major Plans for Downtown,” *Crain’s Detroit Business*, July 13, 1987.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

million for improvements in roads and parking.”<sup>457</sup> As is the case with most major development projects located near the central business district, this required help from the private sector to “contribute the following to the \$30 million project: \$6.2 million for demolition and rehabilitation of properties, \$3 million for construction of a parking garage, \$1.5 million for roads and improvements, and \$1.8 million for working capital.”<sup>458</sup> Well before Tom Monaghan declined this location for his new Tiger stadium, city officials, local business interests, and developers were already working with Ilitch on a major, unified, long-term development plan for the area.

Ilitch got farther in negotiations than his predecessor for three basic reasons. First, he wanted to build the stadium downtown in the theater district off Woodward Avenue, where city officials wanted it anyway. Second, his plans to develop a larger stadium and entertainment complex created the perception that he was interested in more than personal gain and had a real vested interest in rebuilding the city. Third, he had already demonstrated his commitment to the city in a number of ways. He was the owner of the Detroit Red Wings and the Detroit Tigers, two of the city’s most powerful cultural icons. He continued to invest in the maintenance of Tiger Stadium even though the park was ultimately going to be replaced. And the new stadium would be built in the middle of the emerging theater district that Ilitch had spearheaded in 1987.<sup>459</sup> Unlike Los Angeles and Chicago, where large communities of poor racial minorities were forced to relocate for new baseball stadiums, there was little protest in the clearing of empty office buildings to make way for a new Tigers stadium. Resistance in Detroit came primarily from a coalition of fans and local residents who were perfectly happy with the original

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid. The Detroit Downtown Development Authority will be explained in further detail later in the chapter.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Bill Shea, “Ilitch Rises to the Upper Crust through Pizza Dough, Dreaming,” *Crain’s Detroit Business*, October 28, 2012; “Michael Ilitch, Chairman,” Leadership Team, *Ilitch Holdings, Inc.*

Tiger Stadium located just a mile and a half west, down at “The Corner” in Corktown.<sup>460</sup> The Fans of Tiger Stadium did put up sustained resistance to losing the old stadium that had housed thrilling memories spanning multiple generations. But by the time Dennis Archer was elected mayor in November 1993, public officials at the city, county, and state levels had already been enticed by the promising upside of stadium-driven urban renewal. With significant plans and investment already underway, the new entertainment district made perfect sense to city officials as a location to build a new Tigers stadium.

### **A Symbolic Gate to the City**

*Dozens of discussions and arguments, hundreds of pages of documents and thousands of hours of research all condense to this: The intersection of the Chrysler and Fisher freeways is a dynamic site for baseball—the diamond in the heart of downtown Detroit.*<sup>461</sup>

When Dennis Archer succeeded Coleman Young as mayor of Detroit in 1993, he had every reason to be optimistic about his chances of closing the stadium deal with the Tigers. Within the documents provided to facilitate the new mayor’s transition into power was a draft of a detailed presentation titled “The New Tiger Stadium: Downtown Detroit.”<sup>462</sup> The opening paragraphs of the stadium plan both highlight the potential for a “diamond in the heart of downtown Detroit” and the depressed reality of the location prior to development: “To look at the stadium site today is to look at a shambled past. But to look at these illustrations is to see a first glimpse of the future—the first glimpse of a new stadium district alive with human and

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<sup>460</sup> The original Tiger Stadium was located at the corner of Michigan and Trumbull Avenues. The site has long been referred to by fans and journalists as “The Corner.”

<sup>461</sup> Edward H. McNamara, Wayne County Executive, and Coleman A. Young, Mayor of Detroit, “The New Tiger Stadium: Downtown Detroit,” no date, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid. There is no date on the document, but given the details of the stadium plan regarding location (the downtown theater district) and surrounding development plans, it is reasonable to assume that the document was drafted sometime between 1991 when former Tigers owner Tom Monaghan rejected a package targeting this site and 1993 before Young left office as mayor.

economic activity.”<sup>463</sup> The brief introduction to the plan ends with a mental exercise, asking readers to close their eyes and imagine the excitement of walking to their seats on Opening Day. An example of stadium boosting at its finest, the introduction closes with the confident assurance that “tickets will be on sale shortly.” Unlike Chicago’s Harold Washington, who had to wade through multiple proposals with varying site locations, by the time Dennis Archer took office on January 3, 1994, the site had already been agreed on between the city and the Tigers, and efforts to secure financing involving all levels of government were already underway.

Detroit’s city officials had bought into the excitement produced by Ilitch’s bold efforts to redevelop the theater district, and now that he owned the Tigers, there was no reason why those efforts could not be expanded into a more diverse and culturally attractive stadium and entertainment complex. The infrastructural needs of a professional sports stadium seating more than 40,000 are vastly greater than those of even a robust theater district. When Ilitch first began redeveloping the district around his Fox Theatre, a developer who still owned 26 properties in the area, Chuck Forbes, told reporters that Ilitch’s purchase “just makes all the difference in the world.” Forbes hoped to develop the State Theater in the Palms Building (which he owned) on Woodward Avenue, along with the Fox Theatre, so they could open together. With both theaters completed, Forbes estimated that “at least a million people a year *will be coming down there*.”<sup>464</sup> The operative words, “will be coming down there,” were typical of the ends sought by those involved in developing a tourist economy. Forbes’s words also carry an unsaid assumption—the development taking place in downtown Detroit was *not* intended to serve the local inhabitants of the city. This was an area built to suit the spending habits of suburbanites with disposable income. After the new Tiger stadium (Comerica Park) opened in 2000, the team averaged

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<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> Halliday, “Ilitch Has Major Plans for Downtown,” emphasis added.

between two and three million fans a year depending on their competitiveness, and Ford Field, the new stadium built adjacent to Comerica Park for the Detroit Lions football team, averages another 450,000 to 500,000 fans annually.<sup>465</sup> Before either stadium opened, the city also approved the construction of three downtown casinos. As had been done in other cities like Boston, Baltimore, and Cleveland, Detroit appeared to be reinventing itself as a tourist city.<sup>466</sup>

The “New Tiger Stadium: Downtown Detroit” plan created by Detroit city and Wayne County officials cited location as the “single most significant element in the building of the new Tiger Stadium,” which would “build and draw upon the success of Greektown, Joe Louis Arena, and the Fox Theater [sic]; sharing in the continued renaissance of Detroit downtown.”<sup>467</sup> Perhaps not coincidentally, Ilitch was directly involved with two of the three cited examples as the owner of the Red Wings who played at the Joe Louis Arena, and as the developer/owner of the Fox Theatre. Just as the Washington administration in Chicago initially sought to tie the construction of a new stadium to the South Loop where it might have built on the early success of redevelopment projects in Chinatown and Dearborn Park, officials in Detroit likewise wanted to place the stadium within a larger development. Again, with Ilitch’s plans for developing the theater district and subsequent purchase of the Tigers, the city now had an owner not only warm to the idea, but one that was already two steps ahead of them. City officials in Chicago found White Sox owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, wholly uninterested in a similar plan for his stadium in the South Loop. Without that owner commitment to a more complex, long-term development plan that would likewise benefit the area surrounding the stadium, what might have been a vibrant

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<sup>465</sup> “Detroit Tigers Attendance Data,” *Baseball-Almanac*, accessed November 3, 2013, <http://baseball-almanac.com/teams/detatte.shtml>; “NFL Attendance,” *ESPN.com*, accessed November 3, 2013, [http://espn.go.com/nfl/attendance/\\_/year/2013](http://espn.go.com/nfl/attendance/_/year/2013).

<sup>466</sup> For a detailed collection of work on how cities have attempted to retool their economies in an attempt to draw tourism dollars, see Judd and Fainstein, *Tourist City*.

<sup>467</sup> Edward H. McNamara, Wayne County Executive, and Coleman A. Young, Mayor of Detroit, “The New Tiger Stadium: Downtown Detroit,” no date, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

catalyst for urban redevelopment in Chicago became nothing more than an isolated ballpark surrounded by a sea of concrete. Traffic flow and parking access were just as important in Detroit as they were in Chicago, but they were handled differently based on different assumptions.

In Chicago, the White Sox were simply interested in funneling suburban money, transported in suburban automobiles, directly from the freeway to the parking lot and back again. Reinsdorf's deal with Chicago was designed to give him total control over (and the sole profits from) any money spent before, during, and after a White Sox game. Conversely, with vested interest already in the area and the foresight to multiply his profits through diverse yet interrelated investments, Ilitch thought of parking and pedestrian flow entirely differently. Ilitch consulted with "image-makers from Walt Disney" when developing his vision for a "Foxtown" neighborhood where "the stadium would be the linchpin of an 80-acre downtown entertainment, shopping, and sports mecca."<sup>468</sup> Regarding parking, the owner of the Tigers did not want to repeat the "sea of asphalt" mistake that Chicago had made by dropping the enormous footprint of a suburban stadium into the heart of downtown. Instead, he wanted "Tiger fans to use [parking] lots that would be scattered throughout downtown within a 10-minute walk of the stadium." Ilitch envisioned "nightclubs, sports bars and retail shops emerging where abandoned, dilapidated structures [once stood]."<sup>469</sup> Citing Cleveland's Jacobs Field as a model, he acknowledged to reporters that the success of the team, the stadium, and the surrounding area were all interrelated: "We get people to come downtown to watch baseball, and we keep them

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<sup>468</sup> Michael Goodin, "Stadium Can't Ensure Revival: But Ilitch Consults Disney to Make Foxtown," *Crain's Detroit Business*, March 28, 1994. Walter O'Malley's Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles (chap. 1) was also heavily influenced by Walt Disney. It makes perfect sense that developers interested in attracting and maintaining an essentially tourist clientele should consult with the creators of America's biggest tourist Mecca.

<sup>469</sup> Sharp, "Ilitch's Legacy."



downtown afterwards.”<sup>470</sup> Unlike the stadiums in Los Angeles and Chicago, the stadium players in Detroit drew on models in Cleveland, Baltimore, and ultimately Denver in their attempts to build a truly urban ballpark that emphasized foot traffic and an organic design that blended with the surrounding urban area. They were after the tourist *city*, not just a tourist stadium. But Detroit had long been plagued by disinvestment, racial strife, and rising crime, and its representation in popular culture—particularly in movies and television—gave the city a lasting image as the landscape of dystopian nightmares. And as had often been the case since Willie Horton’s efforts to quell the race riots of 1967 and the Tigers subsequent 1968 World Series win, city officials were hoping that the team (and particularly its new stadium) could once again serve to improve the image of the city in the national discourse.<sup>471</sup>

In her essay published in part 1 of *The Tourist City* titled “Marketing Cities for Tourism,” Briavel Holcomb identified the importance of visual landmarks with symbolic potential as one key strategy behind successful tourist cities:

Although selling cities is especially hard because they can rarely count on customer loyalty, several strategies have been used, with varying success. One is to construct, sometimes intentionally, a landmark that will put the city on the tourist’s mental map. . . . [M]any cities have succeeded in establishing, through a specific structure, a symbolic shorthand for their identities—Seattle’s Space Needle, St. Louis’s Gateway Arch, and the Eiffel Tower are obvious examples.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Examples of popular culture’s dystopian representation of Detroit in film include but are not limited to, *Detroit 9000* (1975), *Blue Collar* (1978), *Robocop* (1984), *The Crow* (1994), *8 Mile* (2002), and *Gran Torino* (2008). For an account of Horton’s effort to bring peace to the 1967 riots, see Grant Eldridge and Karen Elizabeth Bush, *Willie Horton: Detroit’s Own Willie the Wonder* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 12–14; Bruce Markusen, “Detroit’s Hero: Willie Horton Helped Heal the City in Wake of 1967 Riots,” *National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum*, February 15, 2013, <http://baseballhall.org/news/personality/detroit’s-hero>. Detroit Digital, the culminating project of the 2013 Cultural Heritage Informatics Fieldschool which is hosted by MATRIX at Michigan State University, is another “attempt to suggest a counterpoint to the popularly held and grossly simplistic picture of Detroit as a dead city whose only redeeming value is a place for cheap real estate and as a setting for urban decay photography.” There are sections in Detroit Digital that deal with both the Tigers’ “representation of the city itself,” and “Representing Detroit in Popular Media.” <http://detroitdigital.matrix.msu.edu>.

<sup>472</sup> Briavel Holcomb, “Marketing Cities for Tourism,” in *The Tourist City*, ed. Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Fainstein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 57–58.

As was the case in Los Angeles and to a lesser extent in Chicago, Detroit officials (and the Tigers organization) envisioned the new stadium as a “symbolic gate to the city” for new visitors arriving via freeway/expressway, the “principal vehicular entryways to the city.” The initial new stadium plan for the Tigers claimed, “Downtown Detroit is the point of origin for the outstate freeway network . . . the Fisher Freeway and Chrysler Freeway. . . . Together they will provide dramatic views of the future stadium.”<sup>473</sup> While the stadium was to be a part of a much larger, modal re-visioning of the downtown area, serving to “anchor the northern end of downtown, just as the Renaissance Center anchors the southern downtown,” city officials suggested that the “sheer mass of the stadium [would] provide a dominant image, while baseball as an event fits well into the active and interwoven activities in the downtown environment.” The stadium plan further identified what city officials hoped would become the key to or “framework” for a newly revitalized downtown Detroit: “The framework that can be established is one of great possibilities; where crowds gather and *the entire downtown comes alive as a total environment*. Greentown, The Fox Theater [sic], and Joe Louis Arena already generate such activity, and a new stadium will become a vital part of this environment.”<sup>474</sup>

Heavily influenced by the excitement generated by “nostalgic” stadium projects such as Baltimore’s Camden Yards, Detroit officials, too, hoped to create a historic urban theme for the stadium accentuated by “historic light fixtures” and “ornamental iron fencing and gateways.”<sup>475</sup> A game that has long celebrated its mythic past, the nostalgic trend in baseball stadium construction was influenced by the ballparks built during the first permanent stadium construction boom of the first two decades of the twentieth century. From the perspective of city

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<sup>473</sup> Edward H. McNamara, Wayne County Executive, and Coleman A. Young, Mayor of Detroit, “The New Tiger Stadium: Downtown Detroit,” no date, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

officials and urban planners, the lure of the nostalgic trend in stadium development also rested on the empirical evidence provided by previously successful, historically-themed urban renewal efforts like Boston's Faneuil Hall.<sup>476</sup> Detroit officials were interested in more than just keeping the Tigers downtown; a new Tiger Stadium was a vital piece in the effort to turn Detroit into a *tourist attraction*.

In addition to connecting the stadium with existing entertainment options downtown, the stadium plan suggested that "projected commercial program elements associated with . . . the new stadium might include an attraction such as a Tiger Hall of Fame or auto museum, retail shops, restaurants, a health club/training center or a media center."<sup>477</sup> Ultimately, the construction of a new Tigers stadium would directly lead to much more with the subsequent construction of the NFL Detroit Lions new downtown stadium, Ford Field, as well as the recently approved new arena for Ilitch's Detroit Red Wings hockey franchise. A city that had been at different times referred to as the Motor City, the birthplace of Motown, the Arsenal of Democracy, Hockey Town, and more notoriously as the "murder capital" of the United States, had begun to take on a new identity: "Sportstown USA."<sup>478</sup> But that would all come later. As exciting as all of this attraction-based development sounded, when Dennis Archer succeeded Coleman Young as mayor in 1994, it was no more than an exploratory plan making the rounds

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<sup>476</sup> Bruce Ehrlich and Peter Dreier, "The New Boston Discovers the Old: Tourism and the Struggle for a Livable City," in *The Tourist City*, ed. Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Fainstein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 170.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> Ford Field opened right next to Comerica Park (the Tigers' new stadium) in August 2002, and just recently the city announced its intention (despite filing for bankruptcy) to spend \$444 million on a new hockey arena downtown for the Red Wings. On the new hockey arena, see Chris Isidore, "New \$444 Million Hockey Arena Is Still a Go in Detroit," *CNNMoney*, July 26, 2013, <http://money.cnn.com/2013/07/26/news/economy/detroit-bankruptcy-arena/>. The term "Sportstown USA" was used in an article for ESPN by Sandy Baruah, president and CEO of the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce: Lynn Hoppes, "When Will People Stop Ripping Detroit?" *ESPN Playbook*, October 26, 2012, [http://espn.go.com/blog/playbook/trending/post/\\_/id/10025/when-will-people-stop-making-fun-of-detroit](http://espn.go.com/blog/playbook/trending/post/_/id/10025/when-will-people-stop-making-fun-of-detroit).

among city officials. It would be Archer's task to see that the project received the funding and public approval necessary to move forward.

### **An Enterprising Mayor**

The Archer administration in Detroit received primarily positive reviews (more so from whites than from African Americans) as the mayor deftly began the work of revitalizing the city's image. In a speech to city workers, board members, and commissioners highlighting the administration's progress during his first year in office, Archer cited "some important achievements" that contributed to "laying the foundation for rebuilding [the] city" including:

- The attendance of millions of visitors over the summer to events such as the "Grand Prix, Freedom Festival, Boat Races, Riverfront Festivals, & Jazz Festival—*Without Incident*." [Emphasis in original, no doubt highlighting increased safety measures.]
- New investment in the city totaling over \$170 million from sources including Detroit Renaissance and other area foundations and corporations.
- And what Archer labeled the city's "Big Christmas Present—The Empowerment Zone Award" which provided \$100 million in funding to improve 18.35 square miles over a ten-year period as well as an astounding \$1.9 *billion* in additional commitments from the private sector.<sup>479</sup>

Archer was quick to qualify those achievements, however, when suggesting that "all of this was just a beginning—we cannot count on big awards and special events to rebuild Detroit."<sup>480</sup> In

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<sup>479</sup> Dennis Archer, "Speech: City Speech," no date, folder 24, box 45, Speech: City Speech, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

reality, however, that is precisely what the Archer administration and its private sector allies did. In the section of his speech dedicated to “the area of business expansion and growth,” Archer explicitly cited the continued implementation of the Empowerment Zone, a Chrysler expansion at the corporation’s Jefferson North facility, additional investment from General Motors, and casino gambling, which had just passed an exploratory voter referendum in August 1994 in response to concerns over lost tourism dollars to Windsor, Canada, across the Detroit River where a new casino had opened for business.<sup>481</sup> The Archer administration’s blueprint for reviving the city of Detroit was ultimately tied to leveraging the Empowerment Zone resources to pursue “pro-business policies” and to “narrow the divide between the mostly black city and the mostly white suburbs.”<sup>482</sup>

Researchers have since found that the efficacy of the Empowerment Zone’s impact on Detroit has been hard to quantify. By all accounts, the “urban renewal program sought to improve businesses in the area, reduce unemployment, and lower the poverty rate” in selected zones.<sup>483</sup> Evidence from a 2006 report published by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) suggested that “the targeted areas [in Detroit] experienced all the benefits the program intended: improved economic performance as well as lowered unemployment and poverty rates.”<sup>484</sup> Despite evidence of achieving the program’s desired outcomes, however, “data limitations and survey results” prevented the GAO from being able to establish direct causation between the program’s initiatives and the outcomes. Furthermore, researchers began to ask whether or not they were asking the right questions to determine the efficacy of the

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.; Mayor Dennis W. Archer, “Will Detroit Be Dealt a Winning Hand? Criteria for Casino Gambling,” Casino Gambling Press Conference, August 18, 1994, folder 12, box 45, Speech: Casino Gambling, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>482</sup> Robyn Meredith, “A Revival in the Motor City: U.S. Program Helps Return Industry to Depressed Area,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1997.

<sup>483</sup> Tara Clark, “Detroit’s Empowerment Zone: Evaluation of Success,” *Virginia Policy Review* 11, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2012): 45.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 45.

Empowerment Zone programs. There is ample evidence suggesting that the program did improve economic performance while lowering poverty rates in the targeted zones, though the employment rates also dropped;<sup>485</sup> but as Tara Clark argues, the point of the program was to “promote the relevance and competitiveness of inner cities in comparison to suburban areas, which had been experiencing population and industry growth [within] the context of decentralizing populations and suburban industry growth.”<sup>486</sup> Moreover, Clark argues that if that was indeed the purpose of the program, “then analysts and policy makers will have to ask if it matters whether or not gentrification occurs despite attempts to avoid the effect. For example, a researcher may be able to determine that high-wage earners have relocated into the treatment area, as hypothesized based on qualitative surveys.”<sup>487</sup> In the case of Detroit, the Archer administration and its business allies were clearly more interested in the quantitative results for targeted downtown areas that could be measured economically. This was a renewal plan developed by and for Detroit’s business community.

One of Archer’s first orders of business when he became mayor was to build his transition team which provided Detroit residents an unmistakable clue as to who their new mayor was working for. As Karen R. Miller stated, “Since the beginning of his term in office, Archer had been criticized by city residents for pandering to suburbanites and for prioritizing business interests over neighborhood concerns.”<sup>488</sup> According to an article Miller cites from the *Detroit Free Press*, “In his first act as mayor, for example, Archer appointed a team of eight people,

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<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 59. Clark also cited (p. 49) a “primary observational problem” identified in the GAO study: “that individuals originally living in the Empowerment Zone moved out and were replaced by individuals with higher earnings.” While existing data limitations prevent a definitive analysis of the benefits provided to those living in the Empowerment Zones prior to initiating the program, there is ample qualitative evidence to argue that even if residents managed to avoid relocation, they received little if any tangible benefit from the program.

<sup>488</sup> Karen R. Miller, “Whose History, Whose Culture?: The Museum of African American History, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and Urban Politics at the End of the Twentieth Century,” *Michigan Quarterly Review* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2002). Web. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0041.117>.

seven of whom were business executives and five of whom lived in the suburbs.”<sup>489</sup> Beginning first with the strategic plan for Detroit’s Empowerment Zone application, Archer consistently invited and encouraged business leaders to reshape the downtown area according to their own interests. In addition to inviting them to the table regarding shaping urban development policy and planning, Archer tirelessly courted Detroit area businesses using incentives provided by the federal Empowerment Zone designation to secure commitments for downtown investment. By 1996, Archer had “created a new nonprofit called the Greater Downtown Partnership” which “invited developers and prominent regional business leaders to sit on its board of directors, and granted the organization full authority to plan the shape of downtown Detroit.”<sup>490</sup>

According to researchers Deirdre Oakley and Hui-Shien Tsao, who analyzed the impact of the Federal Empowerment Zone program, Detroit’s strategic plan focused on creating economic opportunity including: “(a) access to capital and credit resources; (b) strengthening the business and technological base; (c) linking zone residents to jobs and labor force expansion; (d) increasing international trade and tourism, and (e) connecting the broader regional economy.”<sup>491</sup> Oakley and Tsao highlighted a “commitment from General Motors to develop a new manufacturing facility within the zone and to provide financing for other zone ventures” as a “hallmark of Detroit’s economic opportunity initiatives.”<sup>492</sup> As early as February 1995, Archer began sending letters to business leaders touting the “story of [Detroit’s] economic comeback . . . based on a growing number of public/private enterprises, a strong domestic auto industry, a

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<sup>489</sup> Roger Chesley et al., “Archer Picks Suburbanites: Just 3 Detroiters on Transition Team,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 5, 1993.

<sup>490</sup> Miller, “Whose History.” Christopher Ilitch, son of Tigers owner Mike Ilitch and president and CEO of Ilitch Holding, Inc., is one of the current board members for the Greater Downtown Partnership (since renamed Downtown Detroit Partnership) as well as Renaissance Detroit, where an Ilitch family member has seemingly served uninterrupted for decades.

<sup>491</sup> Deirdre Oakley and Hui-Shien Tsao, “A New Way of Revitalizing Distressed Urban Communities? Assessing the Impact of the Federal Empowerment Zone Program,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 28, no. 5 (November 9, 2006): 452.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, 452.

\$1.974 billion dollar commitment for our successful Empowerment Zone application and \$200 million dollars in access to capital for businesses who either want to expand or move into Detroit.”<sup>493</sup> Archer also sent a letter to Robert J. Eaton, chairman and CEO of Chrysler Corporation, promising support for the company’s “plans to locate its newest engine line in [their] New Mack Plant on the east side of the City of Detroit.”<sup>494</sup> In return for going forward with the \$750 million project—“the single largest private sector investment in the City of Detroit since Chrysler opened its new Jefferson North Assembly Plant in 1992”—Archer offered the city’s support in the form of free real estate, grant tax abatements for twelve years at 50 percent, \$12 million to support employee training, and additional Empowerment Zone benefits, as well as providing utilities connections and further infrastructural assistance.<sup>495</sup> On the face of things, it appeared that Archer was indeed on his way to turning Detroit around. The automobile industry, which had long been Detroit’s biggest employer, seemed to be poised to reverse the decentralized approach to business development that had characterized the activities of the Big Three (Ford, GM, Chrysler) for the latter half of the twentieth century. But the Archer administration’s development plans extended beyond the city’s traditional reliance on the auto industry, for none of these proposed initiatives addressed another prominent part of the Empowerment Zone’s strategic plan—increasing international trade and *tourism*. For that part of the plan, Archer turned his attention towards casino gambling and building the Tigers a new baseball stadium.

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<sup>493</sup> Mayor Dennis W. Archer to Business Leaders, February 27, 1995, folder 21, box 5, Detroit Mayor’s Office: Correspondence – Outbound, January – June 1995, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>494</sup> Mayor Dennis W. Archer to Mr. Robert J. Eaton, April 5, 1995, folder 21, box 5, Detroit Mayor’s Office: Correspondence – Outbound, January – June 1995, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.



## Let the Games Begin: Diversifying Detroit's Tourism Economy

Despite the visible centrality of casinos in recent Detroit downtown development initiatives, in 1994 the prospect of building casinos was far from a sure bet. In 1972 Michigan voters had authorized only the state lottery, bingo, horse-race betting, and “Las Vegas”-style fundraisers held by charitable organizations. By the mid-1980s, however, members of various Indian tribes began opening casino operations on federally protected reservations in efforts to seek tribal revenue and jobs in the face of long-term economic troubles.<sup>496</sup> Two separate rulings by the US Supreme court in 1987, followed by Congress’s passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act the following year cleared the way for a state-regulated compact that allowed tribes to operate casinos on reservation land. After long negotiations that stalled over the implementation of video gambling, the Michigan tribes operating casinos finally agreed to a compact with Governor Engler which received legislative approval in the summer of 1993; language in the original compact stipulated that “tribal governments were given exclusive rights to operate casinos in the state, both on and off reservations and allowed the privilege of using video gambling devices. In return, the tribes agreed to pay 10% of all profits from those machines to government. Eight of the ten percent went to the state’s ‘Michigan Strategic Fund.’<sup>497</sup> The remaining two percent was reserved for the local communities where the casinos

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<sup>496</sup> “Beginning of Indian Casinos in Michigan,” Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, n.d., Web. Accessed March 5, 2014, [https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native\\_American\\_Material/Treaty\\_Rights/Contemporary\\_Issues/Casino\\_Gambling/Pages/Beginning-of-Indian-Casinos-in-Michigan.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native_American_Material/Treaty_Rights/Contemporary_Issues/Casino_Gambling/Pages/Beginning-of-Indian-Casinos-in-Michigan.aspx).

<sup>497</sup> This is significant to note, as a large amount of the funding for the Tigers’ new stadium was to come from the Michigan Strategic Fund. One important element to the Michigan State Gaming Compact was the stipulation that “should the state allow non-Indian owned casinos to operate, the tribes would no longer be obligated to make payments into the Strategic Fund.” With the approval of two privately-owned casinos in Detroit prior to the approval for the construction of a new Tigers stadium, it would seem that the state inadvertently undercut a significant source of revenue for the State of Michigan’s contribution to stadium financing.

operated.”<sup>498</sup> Once casino gambling had been legalized on the state level and with the conflux of timing that saw a profitable casino also open up in Windsor just across the Detroit River, momentum began to build for bringing casinos to Detroit.<sup>499</sup> But there were still many obstacles to overcome before city and state leaders would consider building casinos as a viable tool for downtown development.

There are illuminating parallels worth noting between the processes that led to the approval and eventual construction of both a new stadium for the Tigers and Detroit’s downtown casinos. Casinos and baseball stadiums are, at their core, tourist-driven businesses drawing the vast majority of their customers from suburbanites with higher levels of discretionary income, and yet, both stadium and casino construction have increasingly been promoted by urban political and business leaders as powerful tools for revitalizing postindustrial cities. But for the residents of cities like Detroit, tourist-economy development projects offer little in terms of both employment and personal use-value. Poorer inner-city residents typically cannot afford to go to ballgames, and while they might be able to afford low-cost gambling options like slot machines, even casino industry experts such as William Thompson, professor of public administration at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, acknowledge, “It’s no damned good if all the money comes from out of your local economy. . . . [I]t works in Las Vegas because 90 percent of the money comes from outside.”<sup>500</sup> Given the lack of clear economic benefits for local residents, both casinos and a new stadium for the Tigers had been repeatedly rejected in the past by local

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<sup>498</sup> “Michigan State Gaming Compact,” Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, n.d., Web. Accessed March 5, 2014, [https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native\\_American\\_Material/Treaty\\_Rights/Contemporary\\_Issues/Casino\\_Gambling/Pages/Beginning-of-Indian-Casinos-in-Michigan.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Native_American_Material/Treaty_Rights/Contemporary_Issues/Casino_Gambling/Pages/Beginning-of-Indian-Casinos-in-Michigan.aspx).

<sup>499</sup> Rae Corelli, “Betting on Casinos,” *Maclean’s*, May 30, 1994, 26, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/218431841?accountid=1599> (accessed March 2, 2014). Ironically, the tribes operating casinos on reservation lands proved that gambling could be used as a way to generate tremendous economic activity in segregated, disinvested areas composed almost exclusively of poor minorities. Sadly, it did not work out as well for the African Americans living in Detroit.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

residents based on largely accurate criticisms that the projects would succeed only in stuffing the pockets of business owners.<sup>501</sup> If these downtown developments were intended to serve a suburban clientele, Detroit residents reasoned, who were city officials and developers rebuilding the city for? But the situation in Detroit was desperate, and while the type of work available in casinos and stadiums was far from what most would consider stable, long-term employment, they offered many disheartened residents local jobs for the first time in years.<sup>502</sup> Moreover, the man offering the jobs had a track record of getting things done in Detroit, most notably the largely successful development of Greektown in the heart of downtown.

Ted Gatzaros and his business partner, Jim Papas, were Greek immigrants who made a name for themselves first as small-scale restaurateurs and then as pioneering urban developers in an eastern section of downtown Detroit that would ultimately come to be known as Greektown.<sup>503</sup> Gatzaros and Papas were quick to seize on the momentum being generated by reservation gambling and began working with the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians as early as 1988 to bring gambling to Greektown, providing the tribe with “seven-tenths of an acre in Greektown next to Trappers Alley, a former seed company converted into a festival marketplace.”<sup>504</sup> Gatzaros was the visionary, the driving force behind the gradual acceptance of casino gambling in downtown Detroit. But for various reasons, both Mayor Archer and Governor

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<sup>501</sup> Christine Snyder, “Greektown Gambler: Ted Gatzaros’ Wager on a Chippewa Casino May Be the Biggest Bet Greektown Will Ever See,” *Corporate Detroit* 12, no. 4 (April 1994): 45. Detroit voters rejected casino proposals four times prior to the successful August 1994 vote. Opponents to building a new stadium for the Tigers also initially succeeded with a ballot initiative to ban any municipal funding for stadium construction before it was nullified by the City Council and a subsequent vote that ultimately approved the stadium deal.

<sup>502</sup> James Bennett, “Mere Hint of Jobs Draws Crowd in Detroit,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1993,

<sup>503</sup> J. C. Reindl, “Greektown Developer Gatzaros Dies; Pioneered Casino Gambling in Detroit,” *Detroit Free Press*, January 10, 2013; Snyder, “Greektown Gambler.” The Gatzaros family owns “the London Chop House, the Wah-Hoo Chinese restaurant and all three Fishbone’s Rhythm Kitchen Café’s in metro Detroit.” Gatzaros, with Papas, also “developed what is now the International Center Building at 400 Monroe in Greektown and the Atheneum Suite Hotel. Their other projects included the Marquette, Bount and Murphy-Telegraph buildings.” Other significant real estate developments included the purchase of Trappers’ Alley (next to where the Greektown Casino was eventually built) and the development of the International Marketplace.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid.

Engler were opposed to casinos in the city and vowed to use their powers to shut down any attempt to build one.<sup>505</sup> One of the major concerns for Michigan politicians was ultimately about control. Prior to any construction, the US Department of the Interior had to take the land into trust for the tribe, thereby federally (and legally) sanctioning the development. Once that is done, however, zoning laws do not apply. According to Anne Bolton, superintendent of the Michigan office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, once the land is in trust the tribes “do not have to go by the zoning of any county, state, township or whatever. It is the same with all government land.”<sup>506</sup> This angered city officials, because once the land was taken into trust, the tribe would not need approval from city officials or voters to proceed with developing the area. Governor Engler opposed expanding gambling off the reservations and into Detroit if it did not “benefit all seven of Michigan’s tribes and if it [was] not part of a larger urban revitalization plan.”<sup>507</sup> But Gatzaros was an adept developer with years of experience playing the political game during Coleman Young’s years as mayor. If there was one thing he understood, it was political theater.

On a cold November day in 1993, nearly a full year prior to the first successful citywide casino vote in Detroit, Gatzaros began taking applications for more than 4,000 jobs in the “inevitable” Greektown Casino. By seven A.M., “three hours before applications were available,” there were already hundreds of people waiting in line. By the end of the day, “more than 10,000 people had filled out applications, and many more had picked them up.”<sup>508</sup> According to Gatzaros, “base wages of \$16,000 to \$18,000 would be paid for work cleaning bathrooms to dealing blackjack to spinning the roulette wheels.” He also claimed that another “11,000 jobs will open up around the casino for tour guides, jewelers, bakers, baby sitters, taxi drivers and

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<sup>505</sup> Bennett, “Mere Hint of Jobs.”

<sup>506</sup> Amy Bodwin, “Indian Casino Leaves City without Control,” *Crain’s Detroit Business* 10, no. 31 (August 1, 1994): 1.

<sup>507</sup> Bennett, “Mere Hint of Jobs.”

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

others.”<sup>509</sup> By way of contrast, the \$750 million New Mack Plant development that Archer tried to secure from Chrysler with promised Empowerment Zone benefits in 1995 was projected just to “*retain* some 950 jobs in the City of Detroit by relocating employees” from one plant to another.<sup>510</sup> Despite the relatively obvious truth of then Mayor-elect Archer’s claims that the “offer of 4,415 jobs like dealing cards or spinning roulette wheels [was] an effort to build political pressure,” the situation in Detroit had been so desperate for so long that unemployed residents were ready to gamble on those odds. After all, the auto industry had done very little to demonstrate that any of those corporations were seriously committed to providing significant levels of stable, long-term employment in downtown Detroit.

As obvious as Gatzaros’s political play may have been, it certainly created the intended effect. The momentum in the debate over whether or not Detroit should build casinos was turning. When Casino Windsor reeled in an estimated \$6.5 million at the end of its first week of business in May 1994 (an estimated “80 percent of [the customers] from Detroit”), Gatzaros’s efforts received a much needed boost from local and national press.<sup>511</sup> Gatzaros was as outspoken in the press about other notable Detroit-area businesses’ failures in the community as he was about his own dedicated commitment to downtown development: “There’s no reason for National Bank of Detroit to be relocating its service center along with thousands of people, out to Novi, while people like Mr. (Max) Fisher sit on the Detroit Renaissance Board and express their concern about the city of Detroit.”<sup>512</sup> Moreover, Gatzaros was receiving valuable public support from Detroit city officials who likened his commitment to the city to that of another of Detroit’s

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid. See also, “Say ‘Yes’ to Gaming Proposal,” *Michigan Chronicle*, July 6, 1994.

<sup>510</sup> Mayor Dennis W. Archer to Mr. Robert J. Eaton, April 5, 1995, folder 21, box 5, Detroit Mayor’s Office: Correspondence – Outbound, Jan – Jun 1995, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

<sup>511</sup> Corelli, “Betting on Casinos”; “Say ‘Yes’ to Gaming Proposal;” “As Vote Nears, Detroit Edges Closer to Gambling,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1994.

<sup>512</sup> Snyder, “Greektown Gambler.”

favorite (development) sons. John Slater, chairman of the Detroit Planning Commission, also took aim at other local business while offering his support for Gatzaros: “I look at two people, Ilitch (Mike, owner of Little Caesars) and Gatzaros who have done something in the city of Detroit. Both are immigrants. Then there are the bluebloods who are loaded up to their fannies, where are they? Where are those who made their money off the city of Detroit?”<sup>513</sup> While the “bluebloods” were criticized for relocating manufacturing operations outside of the city and destroying the local economy, these two immigrants were busy remaking it in their own image. And despite both men’s rags-to-riches immigrant stories and unlike the vast majority of Detroit residents, these men were white and rather wealthy.

When it became apparent that Casino Windsor was taking in millions of Detroit dollars just before the city was yet again poised to vote on bringing casinos to Detroit, members of the local press became willing boosters. An editorial for the *Michigan Chronicle* broke down the pending vote by tapping into the power of Bill Clinton’s 1992 successful campaign slogan, “It’s the economy, stupid”:

What has continued to concern many of Detroit’s business, civic and community leaders is that Windsor’s prosperity is vastly attributable to support from Detroit consumers. In fact, 80% of Casino Windsor’s customers are Detroiters. What does this mean? In numbers it translates into about \$192 million Detroit dollars being spent monthly to boost another country’s economy while Detroit continues to experience a \$63 million budget deficit. Clearly Detroiters have come to realize the economic benefits that a casino could bring are much too important to overlook.<sup>514</sup>

Two weeks after the casino referendum, Mayor Archer acknowledged (via press release) that on August 2, 1994, Detroit residents voted in favor of “Proposals B and C, riverboat gambling on the Detroit riverfront and Indian casino gambling in Greektown.” But lest casino boosters get

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<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> “Say ‘Yes’ to Gaming Proposal.” The iconic Clinton campaign slogan was coined in 1992 by Democratic campaign strategist James Carville.

ahead of themselves, Archer made it clear that “an advisory vote is but *one* factor in considering whether Detroit will have casino gambling—it is *not* the *only* factor.”<sup>515</sup> In addition to laying out a credibly supported argument against the risks of casino-based development—notably, “that when more than 50% of gambling is by locals, then gambling is a ‘sure loser’ for economic growth in the area”—Archer homed in on what was ultimately at stake with this kind of urban development: “Do we know who the casino audience in Detroit will be? I contend that this question is central to our ability to make a fair decision about gambling.”<sup>516</sup> If Detroit was committed to commercial development that was not intended to serve the city’s residents, the necessary follow-up question was, how could they ensure that the development would bring economic relief not only to city coffers but also to its unemployed? Over the next year, Archer would find that casino development and stadium construction could work hand-in-hand to reinvent the purpose and identity of downtown Detroit—as a tourist attraction for suburbanites.

Archer immediately went to work seeking answers to the central questions “concerning the impact of casino gambling on Detroit,” that required “full answers before we go down [that] road.”<sup>517</sup>

*What kind of casinos are best suited for Detroit? Land-based or riverboat? Large or small? Hotel and resort-based or free standing?*

*What are the economic development consequences of casinos? Will they enhance or hinder other forms of economic activity? Will they add to or simply displace other business activity? What are the opportunities for minority and women businesses? Will the riverfront become a “dead zone” for more traditional development?*

*What are the service and community costs of casinos? Will the revenue generated for the city exceed the costs absorbed by the city? Will police and fire services, street repairs, garbage pick-up, and traffic control have to be expanded to provide casino coverage?*

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<sup>515</sup> Mayor Dennis W. Archer, “Will Detroit Be Dealt a Winning Hand? Criteria for Casino Gambling,” Casino Gambling Press Conference, August 18, 1994, folder 12, box 45, Speech: Casino Gambling, Dennis Archer papers, 1976–2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library, 1. Emphasis Archer’s.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid., 3–4.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 4.

*What will be the impact on jobs? Will residents of Detroit get the jobs? Will the people hired reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the city? What wages will be provided? How much training will be needed? How will lay-offs be handled? Will Detroit residency be required? Will Detroit contractors and suppliers be used?*<sup>518</sup>

Many of Archer's questions were answered after a visit from East St. Louis mayor Gordon Bush, who was regarded at the time as "that city's most successful mayor."<sup>519</sup> During his visit Bush told Archer and members of Detroit's city council that his city's dramatic economic turnaround was "a direct result of casino gambling."<sup>520</sup> Bush claimed that revenues from the Casino Queen (close to \$1 million a month) had "not only stabilized the city's economy, but [had] allowed it to hire 50 percent more police officers, reduced the residents' tax bills by 25 percent and brought over 1,400 jobs to the region, that . . . pay an average of \$21,000 a year."<sup>521</sup> Bush also claimed that there had been a reduction in crime since opening the Casino Queen and that "to date, there have been no (that means zero) incidents of crime on the riverboat."<sup>522</sup> In marked contrast to Detroit's Mayor Archer, who had emphatically stated that "the long-term strategy for revitalizing our city is simply too important to place in the hands of a single group,"<sup>523</sup> Bush stated very plainly: "For East St. Louis, casino gaming was not one way, it was the only way."<sup>524</sup> Finally, addressing the issue most closely tied to Detroit's own experience, Bush cut to the chase: "Without it our city was headed for a dead end. If we would have had to claim bankruptcy it would have sent a bad message to the world that a city that is 99 percent African American cannot be run by one of its own."<sup>525</sup> There were still questions to be answered, such as the level of involvement/employment for women and African Americans, but Archer had heard enough to

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<sup>518</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>519</sup> "The Casino Question Is Still Waiting to Be Answered," *Michigan Chronicle*, November 9, 1994.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

<sup>523</sup> Archer, "Will Detroit Be Dealt a Winning Hand?"

<sup>524</sup> "The Casino Question."

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.



suggest that casino gaming was a viable strategy for downtown development.<sup>526</sup> Following Bush's presentation, Archer publicly acknowledged as much and began planning for an effort to lobby in favor of bringing casinos to Detroit before state legislators and the governor in Lansing.

The final obstacle to bringing casinos to Detroit involved meeting the needs and interests of the two most significant (and historically, most fiercely-opposed) forces in development in downtown Detroit: African Americans and the business community. Archer had implicitly stated that if there was to be casino development in Detroit, there must be investment and employment opportunities for locals and African Americans, which in Detroit at that time essentially amounted to the same thing. Toward those ends, the original two casino developments proposed that passed the 1994 referendum had already made significant commitments. The voter-approved Atwater Entertainment Associates plan for a casino by the Detroit River was comprised of roughly forty local investors, "many of them African Americans."<sup>527</sup> For their part, spokespeople for the Chippewa-backed casino proposed for Greektown stated that they had "pledged to create a \$10 million minority-business development fund for the city." They continued to maintain that the Greektown casino would create 4,000 jobs, but added that "60% of [them] would go to African Americans."<sup>528</sup> Many thought it important that city and state politicians approve the construction of non-tribal-backed casinos so that, as Larry Doss, an investor in the Mirage-Atwater plan, suggested, "African Americans can share in the casino bounty." But Doss was

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<sup>526</sup> Gail Wingard, "Strategies for Change: The Mackinac Conference is Where it all Happens ... for More than 1,000 Who Wouldn't Miss it for Anything," *The Detroit Free Press* 17, no. 7 (Jul 01, 1995): 36. An important note regarding the role of women in Detroit casino development is that Marion Ilitch, the wife of Detroit Tigers and Red Wings owner Mike Ilitch, bought a majority interest in the Motor City Casino just west of the stadium district in 2005 and has been the principle owner ever since. With the acquisition of Motor City Casino and the imminent construction of a new Red Wings stadium just north of I-75, the Ilitch family empire now spreads across the entire north end of the central business district.

<sup>527</sup> Hiawatha Bray, "How Will Detroit Spell Economic Relief?" *Black Enterprise*, 07, 1995. 17. One note of interest: one of the Atwater investors was Johnnie Cochran, the African American attorney made famous most notably in the O.J Simpson murder trial which would conclude just months after the publication of this article.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

optimistic, suggesting “the legislature understands that Detroit has severe economic problems. . . . I think the presence of Detroiters and minority investors definitely should help our chances of approval.”<sup>529</sup> The clearest, and arguably most important, evidence for the sea change in opinions about building casinos in Detroit, though, was taking place at the yearly gathering of the state’s most powerful policymakers on Mackinac Island in June 1995. And it was at this meeting where casinos and stadiums were first addressed as two sides of the same urban development coin.

The Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce’s fifteenth annual Mackinac Conference hosted a record crowd of 1,035 participants, “lured by the star-studded lineup of major speakers joining Michigan Gov. John M. Engler this year: First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Co-director of EmpowerAmerica Jack Kemp (former US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development) and Malcolm S. Forbes Jr., president and CEO of Forbes magazine.” The political and economic heavyweights were in attendance due primarily to Detroit’s recent federal Empowerment Zone award. Chamber president Richard E. Blouse Jr. called the conference a “model for the country in terms of the networking and public policy debate it provides among the leaders of government and industry. It’s a catalyst for strategies and solutions.”<sup>530</sup> One of the items on the conference agenda was a discussion about the role of stadium construction and casino gambling in urban development. There were concerns that those projects had “a stranglehold on Detroit’s economic development plans.”<sup>531</sup> James Tervo, Mayor Archer’s executive assistant, responded, saying, “While these are important . . . not all of Detroit’s development eggs are in these baskets. More and more businesses are breaking ground in Detroit.”<sup>532</sup> With so much focus on the Empowerment Zone initiatives, a new Detroit Revitalization Tool Kit being assembled by the

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

<sup>530</sup> Wingard, “Strategies for Change.”

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

Chamber as well as the governor's own proposed tax-free "Renaissance Zones," Tervo's claims had evidential merit. At the same time, Ilitch and casino boosters knew very well that this was the place to get political and even financial backing for their projects.

Announcements about the future of casino and stadium development caused significant waves at the conference. During a private press conference at the event, Detroit Tigers owner Mike Ilitch announced that a new stadium deal was imminent. In another announcement that drew audible "groans from the audience," Paul Twigg, chairman of the board of management of the City Venue Business Association in Windsor told crowds that "a new riverboat casino would be docking in Windsor in August." Moreover, Twigg continued, "As Michigan's gaming dollars leave the state of Michigan, they have helped to revitalize the Central Business District of Windsor, create jobs, promote tourism, promote new retailing, restaurants and industry around the casinos."<sup>533</sup> Archer noted a "sense of urgency" and "[credited] the Chamber for its recent decision to support casino gaming." Archer told reporters that his daily frustration was "the view from my 13<sup>th</sup> floor window in the City-County Building, watching the lines of Michigan license plates snaking their way to Casino Windsor and leaving \$1 million on the other side of the river."<sup>534</sup> The state's business community responded to these developments by overwhelmingly supporting casino gaming as a legitimate economic development tool for the city of Detroit.

According to an audience response system, attendees expressed the following opinions:

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<sup>533</sup> Ibid.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid. Notice the striking similarity between Archer's concerns about exporting local money to Windsor and Walter O'Malley's revelation regarding the impact of highways on downtown baseball: "O'Malley was leaving Ebbets Field after a night game. He was in his chauffeur-driven Buick. He gets stuck in a traffic jam... He's going east, and he sees a tremendous amount of cars going west. 'What's that?' he asks his chauffeur. 'That's all the people coming home from the trots, Mr. O'Malley.' Suddenly, O'Malley's ears perked. Harness racing had yet to reach its real peak... O'Malley was a shrewd man. He already saw the demographics. Hey, what were those 20,000 people doing there and not going to a ball game at Ebbets Field?" Cited from Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*, 38.

- 89 percent agreed gaming would be an effective catalyst for economic development.
- 80 percent said they now supported legalized casino gaming in Detroit.
- 76 percent felt it would greatly attract tourists to the city.
- 73 percent supported the family-style, multi-purpose entertainment rather than just casinos by themselves.
- 61 percent believed it would positively help Detroit's image.
- 52 percent supported limited gaming sites throughout Michigan.
- 51 percent felt that their views were impacted by Windsor's success.
- 48 percent thought casino gaming should only be in Detroit.<sup>535</sup>

Coming away from the Mackinac Conference, it was all but clear that both casino gaming and stadium construction were going to be used as essential “tools in the tool kit” to bring vitality back to downtown Detroit as key components in an entertainment-driven tourist economy development strategy. The Empowerment and Renaissance Zone initiatives would hopefully fill the streets of downtown during the day with growing numbers of people on their way to work for new businesses created in the central business district, while the casinos, stadiums, theaters, and restaurants would fill the streets at night with tourists spending their discretionary income in the city of Detroit.

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

## Back to the Business of Baseball

As Ilitch announced at the Chamber of Commerce conference, 1995 was the year that the stadium deal between the city, state, and the team finally came together. It was a frantic year with much to accomplish before the developers could even think about breaking ground for the new stadium. One of the most important obstacles was securing the approval of the Detroit City Council, which according to the Downtown Development Authority Act 197 of 1975, was the governing body with the authority to adopt an ordinance approving the development plan after certain other provisions have been met. Before that could happen, however, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) had to gather a long list of time- and cost-related information from developers and finish developing a Tax Increment Financing and Development Plan that ultimately amounted to roughly 500 pages “covering the stadium and other projects.”<sup>536</sup> The entire review process was scheduled to play out to completion between August 18 (when the DDA provided the completed information) and October 5 (when there was to be a meeting to facilitate public hearings and final adoption of the ordinance by City Council). In those six weeks, the plan would also need to be reviewed and approved by the DDA Board of Directors (September 12), the Planning and Development Department (September 12), City Council (September 13, for the TIF financing), and the City Planning Commission and Downtown Citizens District

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<sup>536</sup> William M. Wolfson and Michael G. Sarafa to Freman Hendrix and James Tervo, “Stadium Council Strategy, DDA Issues,” Interdepartmental Communication, August 23, 1995, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library. The DDA has been central to the development of all three new (or in the case of the new Red Wings hockey arena, proposed) stadiums over the past two decades in downtown Detroit. The DDA was created as a quasi-public entity to manage economic development for the city's Central Business District. In summary, it was established by an Act to: “*provide for the establishment of a downtown development authority; to prescribe its powers and duties; to correct and prevent deterioration in business districts; to encourage historic preservation; to authorize the acquisition and disposal of interests in real and personal property; to authorize the creation and implementation of development plans in the districts; to promote the economic growth of the districts; to create a board; to prescribe its powers and duties; to authorize the levy and collection of taxes; to authorize the issuance of bonds and other evidences of indebtedness; to authorize the use of tax increment financing; to reimburse downtown development authorities for certain losses of tax increment revenues; and to prescribe the powers and duties of certain state officials.*” A PDF version of the full Downtown Development Authority Act can be accessed from the Michigan Legislative Council's website at <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-Act-197-of-1975>.

Council (October 4).<sup>537</sup> As of August 17, however, the DDA was still waiting on developers to provide such key pieces of information as the details for land-use designation surrounding the project, proposed or potential parcels that needed to be acquired by the city (by enforcing its powers of eminent domain), an accurate total cost estimate including a statement of proposed financing (for the private contribution towards development), and whether or not there would be displaced citizens in need of assistance/relocation.<sup>538</sup> In the midst of all of that, the mayor had to deal with other sources of opposition to completing the stadium plan emanating from the neighborhood of the old Tiger Stadium.

The Corktown Citizens' District Council met on September 19, 1995, to "elicit the opinions of the community about the future of Tiger Stadium."<sup>539</sup> In a statement they sent to the Mayor, the citizens backed a study that supported renovating the old stadium rather than tearing it down and building a new one. They cited real concerns "about the impact of decisions made about the stadium issue on our economic and social environment."<sup>540</sup> Anyone even remotely familiar with Detroit Tigers baseball would concede that Tiger Stadium was "the anchor" of the Corktown neighborhood. The Planning and Development Committee for the Corktown Citizens' District Council even sent the mayor a proposed Community Plan that called for the formal annexation of Tiger Stadium and the surrounding blocks into the Corktown Neighborhood Statistical Area (NSA). Many of the parcels inside the existing NSA contained "significant rehabilitation homes," products of the Corktown Neighborhood Enterprise Zone which was

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<sup>537</sup> Wolfson and Sarafa to Hendrix and Tervo.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Corktown Citizens' District Council to Mayor Dennis Archer, "Corktown Opinion Statement on the future of Tiger Stadium," September 1995, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

approved by the Detroit City Council on October 24, 1994.<sup>541</sup> Corktown residents felt just as deserving to be beneficiaries of new downtown development and could not understand why the city would turn its back on an improving neighborhood in favor of projects that would seem to benefit primarily suburban tourists. By the end of the following month, the residents of Corktown would find out that the city, and their beloved Tigers, had officially agreed to move on without them.

As the timeline for adopting the DDA stadium financing and development ordinance approached, Mayor Archer relied on his carefully cultivated business allies to apply needed pressure to members of the City Council. On September 25, President Richard E. Blouse Jr. of the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce sent a letter to Maryann Mahaffey, his counterpart on the Detroit City Council, urging her on behalf of the Chamber to “take whatever actions are necessary to support and assist the Detroit Tigers in meeting their need for a new home for the ball club in the City of Detroit.”<sup>542</sup> Blouse argued that the “Tigers are an integral part of the quality of life and image of the City of Detroit, both in providing jobs and spin-off economic benefits for the city as well as in attracting thousands of residents and visitors to downtown Detroit each year.”<sup>543</sup> Blouse highlighted testimony presented to the Michigan Strategic Fund Board by “business, labor, community and religious organizations” that demonstrated “unprecedented collaboration among local and state leaders that continues the spirit of cooperation that has been the key ingredient to other successful cities.”<sup>544</sup> Even with all of that, however, the specter of fear regarding seemingly unbalanced development priorities expressed

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<sup>541</sup> Corktown Citizens’ District Council, “Exhibit #2 – Community Plan,” no date, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>542</sup> Letter from Richard E. Blouse, Jr. to The Honorable Maryann Mahaffey, September 25, 1995, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

by many at the annual Chamber conference in June was still haunting stadium project discourse. And while Blouse acknowledged that “a new Tiger Stadium alone will not be a panacea for Detroit’s ills,” he argued with rhetoric that suggested that Detroit policy makers and businesspeople still saw a new stadium as a “diamond in the heart of downtown,” as “the Gateway to the City.” Blouse closed, suggesting (as many had before) that “a new stadium could be a powerful tool to jump start further economic development activity in the city. In fact,” he continued, “many Chamber leaders consider this project the singular most important economic development tool for the center city.”<sup>545</sup> Blouse and his cohorts at the Chamber were ultimately correct, at least in terms of spurring future economic activity. It is fair to argue that the following projects would not have happened without the new Tigers stadium and Ilitch’s commitment to further downtown development: the construction of Ford Field for the NFL’s Detroit Lions, which fed an emerging stadium district filling up with new restaurants and bars; the revitalization of the theater district and a commitment to making Detroit an entertainment destination; and the continued commitment to invest in Detroit by entrepreneurs like Dan Gilbert, who is the Chairman of Rock Ventures LLC, the founder and chairman of Quicken Loans, Inc., owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers professional basketball team, and quickly becoming one of the most heavily invested men in all of Detroit.<sup>546</sup>

At the end of October, Archer sent a letter to Ilitch outlining the city’s next steps toward finalizing a stadium agreement. Governor Engler had imposed a December 31, 1995, deadline for all parties in the stadium project to reach an agreement.<sup>547</sup> Once the Tax Increment Financing Plan (which had needed revisions) was sent back to the City Council, Archer warned, it would

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> There is no question that Ilitch’s new stadium has led to additional economic activity for the city, but none of that activity was able to prevent the City of Detroit from filing for bankruptcy in 2013.

<sup>547</sup> Letter from Mayor Dennis W. Archer to Mr. Michael Ilitch, October 25, 1995, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.



“trigger certain procedural steps, which will include actions by the Planning Commission, the Citizens District Council and the City Council.” Archer anticipated that there would be at least two public hearings at which “representatives of the Tigers [would] be requested by Council to appear.”<sup>548</sup> After calmly stating that they were “optimistic” that their plan would be adopted and that they would be able to sell their bonds in December, Archer closed promising that Detroit stood “ready to do [its] part for this exciting project, which will play a major role in the revitalization of . . . downtown.”<sup>549</sup>

Ilitch responded the following day with a letter marked for “Hand Delivery.” Ilitch’s letter had a more urgent quality to it. He affirmed that the Tigers organization was “very aware of the deadlines which the State has set.”<sup>550</sup> Ilitch offered the Tigers’ full support “at any public hearing or other meetings” that Archer considered important. Ilitch acknowledged that both sides had worked “in these most difficult of negotiations . . . towards a mutually fair agreement,” which set up the “however” sentence that followed. While the agreement was deemed mutually fair, Ilitch still felt compelled to remind Archer that there were “a few major issues that Jim Tervo and your lawyers are aware of for which we are awaiting a response.” Ilitch closed his letter without the “exciting” rhetoric that concluded Archer’s note, saying simply, “I and my people are available to do whatever is reasonably necessary to finalize the Letter of Intent.” From Ilitch’s perspective, it seemed, the deal was done and the hangup was simply a matter of the city getting its financial house in order and agreeing to the “mutually fair” conditions of the agreement.

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.

<sup>550</sup> Letter from Michael Ilitch to The Honorable Dennis W. Archer, October 26, 1995, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

On October 30, 1995, the Memorandum of Understanding regarding the construction of the new stadium was executed “by and between the City of Detroit Downtown Development Authority (the “DDA”) and Detroit Tigers.”<sup>551</sup> The Memorandum opened with statements from the Tigers and the DDA about why building a new stadium was necessary and/or desirable. The Tigers organization “determined that it is in the best interest of the Tigers and their fans to play major league baseball in a new stadium complex in the City designed to provide the best facilities for playing and attending major league baseball.”<sup>552</sup> Reading between the lines, one can see in this language the beginnings of Ilitch’s plans for the development of a much broader entertainment complex. For its part, the DDA was required by law to provide a very specific explanation of how stadium construction fit within the Authority’s call to maintain economic development in the central business district. Towards that end, the Memorandum stated that the DDA “has determined that the construction of a new stadium and appurtenant facilities for the Tigers within the downtown district of the DDA will have a beneficial effect upon the property values of property within the City and the downtown district of the DDA, will stimulate economic development resulting in the creation of new businesses and employment opportunities.”<sup>553</sup> Ironically, the funding was to be provided, in part, through a “Grant Agreement” entered into between the Michigan Strategic Fund and the DDA.<sup>554</sup>

While the Tigers are often cited for the generosity of their contribution to the financing of their new stadium, particularly as opposed to what the White Sox did to Chicago, the City put up

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<sup>551</sup> Memorandum of Understanding, October 23, 1995, page 1, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Recall that original the casino agreement between the state and the Indian tribes called for casino taxes to be contributed to the Michigan Strategic Fund. With the subsequent legalization of casino gaming off of the reservations, that aspect of the agreement was rendered void.

more than the numbers suggest on their face.<sup>555</sup> The Memorandum stipulated that any real estate needed for the construction of the stadium, if not already owned by the city, would be acquired “in the Project Area through the exercise of eminent domain or otherwise, and convey such property and the right to recover costs for environmental remediation related to such property to the DDA.”<sup>556</sup> That was in addition to the \$35 million contribution provided by the DDA towards the total projected \$235 million stadium project costs and another \$5 million contributed to the project’s “Contingency Fund.”<sup>557</sup> The Memorandum further stipulated that the Tigers would have exclusive rights to “all concession revenues derived from all events and activities conducted at the Stadium Complex and all other revenues derived from Major League Baseball games and other events at the Stadium Complex promoted by the Tigers or any person under common control as the Tigers.”<sup>558</sup> Given that Ilitch also owns Olympia Entertainment and runs the vast majority of the entertainment promotion downtown, that clause virtually gave Ilitch exclusive rights to any and all revenue generated at the stadium, even though the stadium itself would be owned by the DDA. The DDA also transferred to the Tigers ownership rights to naming the stadium complex and the revenue that might be generated by selling those naming rights. In light of the Tigers’ contribution to the overall project cost and “in consideration of an annual payment of \$1.00 . . . and the agreement of the Tigers to play major league baseball at the Stadium Complex,” the DDA granted the Tigers exclusive use-rights at the stadium complex for a period of thirty-five years.<sup>559</sup> At the end of the thirty-five-year term, the Tigers were “granted an option to exercise a right to extend the term for a period of ten (10) years.” This was

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<sup>555</sup> Despite the City’s impending bankruptcy and despite already shelling out between \$90 and \$115 million for Mike Ilitch’s baseball stadium, Detroit officials recently agreed to build a new \$650 million entertainment venue that will also serve as the new home for Ilitch’s Detroit Red Wings hockey team.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., 5-6, Exhibit B.

renewable up to a total term length of 95 years, at the discretion of the Tigers' organization.

There is no denying that Mike Ilitch contributed roughly 62 percent (\$145–185 million) of the money *for the construction of the new baseball stadium*. But on the whole, this was a sweetheart deal for a “job creator” whose contribution to the job market included jobs making five-dollar pizzas and slinging hot dogs at the stadium eighty-one days a year.<sup>560</sup>

Despite what the Archer administration, the Tigers, and the Chamber of Commerce would suggest, there were still very vocal opponents to the deal. Detroit City Council member Mel Ravitz released a statement that cited the 1992 public referendum organized by the Tiger Stadium Fan Club that “clearly stipulated that public funds should not be used for a new stadium.”<sup>561</sup> Ravitz argued that “the only way to determine whether or not public sentiment has changed is to hold an election” and that anything short of an election constituted “a betrayal of the public trust.”<sup>562</sup> Ravitz emphatically stated that as a representative of the people of Detroit, he could not “agree to rescind an ordinance initiated by the citizens of this City.”<sup>563</sup> After explaining how the public money would be used and the unlikelihood of realizing a real return on the investment, Ravitz returned to emphasizing the “violation of the 1992 referendum” and how the city (and ultimately taxpayers) would be liable if the DDA were unable to repay its financing debts.<sup>564</sup> It was not about the Tigers so much, according to Ravitz, who called himself a “strong supporter of the home team,” but rather about the best way to use public resources for economic development and most importantly “about the meaningfulness of a public referendum.”<sup>565</sup> Citing an apropos analogy with the recent casino vote, Ravitz powerfully

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<sup>560</sup> The major league baseball season is 162 games long, half at home and half on the road.

<sup>561</sup> Mel Ravitz. “Tiger Stadium: 1995,” November 1, 1995, page 1, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid., 2.

argued: “Indeed, if City Council can blithely repudiate that referendum, it might also do the same with the recent public casino vote. City initiated referenda ought not be repudiated by any body other than the public itself.”<sup>566</sup> In the eyes of Ravitz and many like him in and around Detroit, the business of Detroit ought first to be looking out for the people already living and voting there, and city officials ought to be looking after the interests of their constituents.

There were other distractions in addition to the objections from Councilman Ravitz. There were some external voices beginning to find their way to the mayor’s desk, like that of Cleveland mayor Michael R. White, who was facing tremendous political stress and embarrassment at the increasingly likely prospect of losing Cleveland’s NFL team, the Browns, to Baltimore. With the ground yet to break on the Tigers Stadium project and the Detroit Lions beginning to make noise about a new stadium, White was looking for allies who might empathize with his plight. Archer noted White’s correspondence, but it did not seem to have an effect on his own negotiations. Due to a previous engagement, Archer couldn’t make it to White’s proposed “two day work session” on “how to prevent further damage due to the relocation of NFL franchises from hospitable communities,” held in Cleveland in mid-December.<sup>567</sup> Besides, Archer was gearing up for his bond-rating pitch and was focusing on making the final push to meet the December 31 deadline. With the Memorandum of Understanding agreed to and the subsequent support from the state, Archer went about securing higher bond ratings for the DDA.

At a luncheon for rating agencies at the end of November, Archer introduced the DDA and explained what its role was in city development before cutting straight to the chase. Archer told guests that the DDA was going to “play a very vital role in the rebirth of our downtown,”

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>567</sup> Letter from Mayor Michael R. White to The Honorable Dennis W. Archer, November 20, 1995, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

and more importantly for those in attendance, he said, “the upcoming bond issue will allow us to assemble land for future projects and to proceed with what is probably one of the most significant developments in the downtown area—the new Tiger Stadium.”<sup>568</sup> Here again was another public official pitching the new stadium project with the rhetoric of centrality, a crown jewel, if you will. Moreover, this was a stadium project that was being generously supported by Ilitch’s \$145 million contribution which, Archer made sure to point out, was “three to four times the normal contribution by an owner.” One obvious way to improve the DDA’s bond rating was to highlight the stability and future growth potential of the project the bonds were going to finance. Ilitch’s personal involvement in this context served both purposes. Archer argued that “Mr. Ilitch’s actions have also demonstrated a level of commitment to a city rarely seen in modern times. Mr. Ilitch is breaking new ground, demonstrating that sports club owners can build new complexes without placing any additional burden on the public.” Perhaps Ilitch was no dummy. He is, after all, a very shrewd and immensely successful businessman. Key to getting any significant financial contribution from the city for his new stadium was its ability to secure attractive financing terms. Given Detroit’s postwar development record and prolonged economic slump, contributing \$145 million toward the construction of the stadium might have been the only way Ilitch was going to get any public investment at all.<sup>569</sup>

By year’s end, Archer had secured improved ratings from two of the three national bond rating agencies. In his January 1996 State of the City address, Archer told Detroiters that the new stadium project would involve “no new taxes for Detroit Taxpayers” and that the bond ratings

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<sup>568</sup> Dennis Archer, Luncheon for Rating Agencies, November 29, 1995, folder 2, box 45, Speech: Bond Issues, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

<sup>569</sup> In October 2013, Wall Street ratings agency, Fitch Ratings, downgraded DDA bonds “over concerns about the DDA’s ability to make its debt payments on time” just as the DDA had been negotiating with Mike Ilitch’s Olympia Development about building a new arena for the Detroit Red Wings. When Ilitch threw in \$145 million in 1995 the DDAs ratings went up. In this instance, the city and state are financing the vast majority of the debt, for which the DDA will be partially responsible. See, John Gallagher, “Downtown Development Authority Debt is Downgraded,” *freep.com*, Detroit Free Press, October 31, 2013.

improvements “literally translate into millions of dollars in savings every year when we pay the interest on bonds used to finance city projects.” He did not mention that the two were related, that the issuing of the bonds was what made it possible to avoid levying new taxes. Nor did he mention that the interest on those bonds, however reduced, had to be paid with something that probably looked a lot like tax revenues. Archer also pleaded with voters to hit the polls for the primary elections on March 19 where two proposals on stadium financing would be on the ballot. The mayor urged voters to vote “No” on A and “Yes” on B. Proposal A would repeal an ordinance by City Council that had overwritten the previous 1992 voter-initiated ordinance that banned public funding for stadiums. Proposal B was merely an advisory question with no binding authority, but it asked voters: “May public tax funds be used to support stadium construction within the city of Detroit.”<sup>570</sup> Once those ballot initiatives passed, the only thing standing in the way of completing the stadium project was the impending legal battle waged by the Tiger Stadium Fan Club over the course of 1996.

The Tiger Stadium Fan Club had taken litigation against Governor Engler and the DDA all the way to the Michigan Supreme Court. Despite multiple correspondences between Mayor Archer and William R. Dow (a board member of the Tiger Stadium Fan Club) over details regarding settling the case outside of court, by the end of May 1996, Archer had had enough.<sup>571</sup> The mayor wrote in response to a May 21 letter in which Dow communicated that he considered the settlement discussions “as completed.”<sup>572</sup> Archer regretted that they could not mutually resolve their differences prior to proceeding before the Court of Appeals, but he accepted Dow’s

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<sup>570</sup> “Public Funding for Stadium Construction in Detroit,” CRC Memorandum, no. 1040, Citizens Research Council of Michigan, February 1996.

<sup>571</sup> Letter from William R. Dow to The Honorable Dennis W. Archer, May 7, 1996, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library; Letter from Mayor Dennis W. Archer to William R. Dow, May 13, 1996, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>572</sup> Letter from Mayor Dennis W. Archer to William R. Dow, May 24, 1996, folder 17, box 35, Tiger Stadium, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

decision to move forward with the appeal. All that remained was to wait out the legal process and hope for a quick resolution. Toward that end Archer filed multiple affidavits “in support of emergency motion for immediate consideration of application for [permission] to appeal,” reiterating the details of the stadium project; the large amount of public, private, and resident support; and arguing that any further legal delays would “have a material negative impact on the economic revitalization of Detroit” and “result in the loss of the time value of the economic benefits from construction . . . amounting to millions of dollars.”<sup>573</sup> Finally, on August 14, 1996, “the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan . . . denied the Tiger Stadium Fan Club’s application for [permission] to appeal.” In a letter from Michigan Jobs Commission CEO, Doug Rothwell, Mayor Archer was informed that “the time period to meet the conditions of disbursement and construction of the stadium will commence on September 5, 1996.”<sup>574</sup>

## Conclusions

By the end of 1997, Dennis Archer was a national star, a verifiable “Messiah Mayor” credited with doing the unthinkable: righting Detroit’s economic ship. In November, Archer received an invitation from the Economic Club of Washington to address the club at a luncheon in December. Club Vice President, Elliott Hall, wrote:

As you are aware, the Nation’s Capital has serious management and financial problems and for the past two years, the city, for all practical purposes, had been run by a presidentially-appointed financial control board. Detroit also suffers from some of the same urban woes that beset the District but under your leadership, we sense that Detroit has turned the corner and is on the way back. We would like to learn more about Detroit’s renaissance and the lessons you have learned that might be applicable to Washington.<sup>575</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Affidavit of Dennis W. Archer, Supreme Court Case No. 106882, July 31, 1996, folder 18, box 35, Tiger Stadium Fan Club Lawsuit, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>574</sup> Letter from Doug Rothwell to The Honorable Dennis W. Archer, September 4, 1996, folder 18, box 35, Tiger Stadium Fan Club Lawsuit, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

<sup>575</sup> Letter from Elliott Hall to The Honorable Dennis W. Archer, November 12, 1996, folder 10, box 35, Speeches/Testimony/Interviews 1987, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.



At the luncheon, Archer emphasized how “President Clinton’s Empowerment Zone initiative gave people a chance to respond.”<sup>576</sup> The possibility of Empowerment Zone designation “became a catalyst to greater cohesion within the region, greater investment in the city itself.” He further emphasized the unprecedented “cooperation we’ve seen between business, government AND the community.” Archer also spent time discussing the “Stadia Projects”; for in the midst of Tigers negotiations during the summer of 1996, William Clay Ford Jr. approached the mayor about relocating his Detroit Lions football team from Pontiac to downtown Detroit. Following the campaign for public approval to build a new Tigers stadium, Archer found himself looking to Wayne County and the levying of tourist-focused taxes to raise \$80 million for the county’s share of the investment. Somehow the city found another \$45 million to contribute, in addition to \$70 million from the Lions and another \$50 million from Ford and other local businesses. Archer told his audience that the “entire two-stadia complex, which will accommodate sports, entertainment and major meetings, will cost the City of Detroit a maximum of \$85 million—for a development we will jointly own with Wayne County but the City will run.” Archer closed saying: “We believe \$85 million to land a \$505 investment is a great deal, given what has been extracted by other sports team owners in other cities.”

But Detroit’s investment did not end at \$85 million. In the face of declaring municipal bankruptcy, the City of Detroit has agreed to spend another \$650 million total for a new entertainment complex to host Ilitch’s Detroit Red Wings. Ilitch’s corporation, Olympia Development “will pick up 42% of the arena’s construction cost[;] . . . the public’s share . . . will come from a complex financing arrangement that uses school and local property tax collected by Detroit’s Downtown Development Authority to pay off state-issued bonds.” When the new arena

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<sup>576</sup> Remarks of Mayor Dennis W. Archer, “The Lesson of Detroit: Never Underestimate a City,” Economic Club of Washington Winter Luncheon Meeting, December 16, 1997, folder 10, box 35, Speeches/Testimony/Interviews 1987, Dennis Archer papers, 1976-2001, Burton Historical Collection. Detroit Public Library.

complex is finished, the Ilitch family empire will effectively control the entire northern end of the central business district.<sup>577</sup> Today (August 2014), the city of Detroit is struggling to claw its way out of bankruptcy while the Ilitchs, Gatzaroses, and Gilberts, continue to see immense profits from their stadiums, arenas, and casinos. There is no question that Comerica Park served as a catalyst for new and successful developments in downtown Detroit; sadly, new and successful developments *in* Detroit never quite work out as successful developments *for* Detroit.

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<sup>577</sup> See Appendix A and B.

## CONCLUSION

### The Suburban Re-Conquest of the American City

We appear to be nearing the end of the third great baseball stadium boom.<sup>578</sup> There are but two survivors of the first wave (1909–1932), Boston’s Fenway Park and Chicago’s Wrigley Field. Of the second wave (1953–1982), Dodger Stadium, Angel Stadium, Oakland County Coliseum, and Kauffman Stadium have survived, though the A’s have been trying to move out of Oakland for years, and the Angels have grown frustrated over negotiations to stay in Anaheim long-term and are now making overtures of relocating just down the Santa Ana Freeway to Irvine and Tustin. The Atlanta Braves are building a suburban ballpark in neighboring Cobb County that will be part of a newly-created larger “downtown-themed urban lifestyle development” that will also include “500 residences, shops, restaurants, office development” and a boutique hotel.<sup>579</sup> And oddly enough, we have already seen our first casualty from the third wave (1989–2012), as the Florida Marlins have left Sun Life Stadium (1993) for Marlins Park which opened in Miami for the 2012 season.<sup>580</sup> When the mean age of stadiums from a particular wave gets closer to thirty years, another wave of construction is likely on the horizon.<sup>581</sup>

With the exception of a few cities that take the risk of building a stadium to attract a professional franchise, stadium booms are typically initiated by franchise owners. The impetus

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<sup>578</sup> Proposed new stadiums for the Oakland A’s and the once-abandoned city of Montreal are really holdovers from the third wave that have yet to work out. New suburban stadium proposals for the Atlanta Braves and Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim could be signaling a shift away from the retro, urban ballpark themes that dominated the third wave and thus, perhaps, the beginning of a new wave.

<sup>579</sup> “New Atlanta Braves ballpark renderings posted,” BallparkDigest.com, May 14, 2014, [http://ballparkdigest.com/201405147303/major-league-baseball/features/new-atlanta-braves-ballpark-renderings-posted?utm\\_source=BALLPARK+DIGEST+INSIDE+PITCH+for+May+14%2C+2014&utm\\_campaign=may+14+BPD+newsletter&utm\\_medium=email](http://ballparkdigest.com/201405147303/major-league-baseball/features/new-atlanta-braves-ballpark-renderings-posted?utm_source=BALLPARK+DIGEST+INSIDE+PITCH+for+May+14%2C+2014&utm_campaign=may+14+BPD+newsletter&utm_medium=email).

<sup>580</sup> Ballpark Comparisons Sorted by Year Opened, *Ballparks of Baseball*, accessed May 31, 2012. <http://www.ballparksofbaseball.com/yearopened.htm>; “Stadium Boom Amounts to Fountain of Youth for MLB Parks,” *Beyond the BoxScore*, January 4, 2011. <http://www.beyondtheboxscore.com/2011/1/4/1912546/stadium-boom-amounts-to-fountain-of-youth-for-mlb-parks>

<sup>581</sup> “Stadium Boom.”

for a new stadium has historically come from a few rather predictable circumstances.<sup>582</sup> A transfer of ownership has been a significant motivator as new owners look to cash in on the tremendous return on investment that state-of-the-art stadiums add to their franchise's value. It has also arisen in response to historical context and the changing demographics of professional sports fans.<sup>583</sup> Beginning in the 1960s, many sports owners responded to postwar residential migration patterns by building stadiums in suburban locations. Conversely some owners, like Chicago White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf, built suburban-style stadiums downtown in an effort to capitalize on a regional sports tourism economic and marketing plan that hoped to draw the fans back. As other owners watch their competitors profit from new stadiums with modern amenities, they put pressure on local politicians to help them build a new stadium so that they can continue to "field a competitive team" in the changing economic environment. New stadium construction is very rarely initiated by city officials as part of an intentional urban redevelopment plan; rather, those officials do their best to shape the team-driven stadium deal in ways that have the best hope of contributing positively to downtown development. With greater national acceptance and implementation of sports and entertainment district development projects, however, perhaps that is changing.

Baseball stadiums have been associated with the processes of urban development and renewal in American cities since the turn of the twentieth century. Architecturally, they have alternately exemplified influences from the City Beautiful movement, the great classical

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<sup>582</sup> At least one group of investors headed by Edward P. Roski, who has an ownership stake in both the Los Angeles Lakers of the NBA and the Los Angeles Kings of the NHL, has stated they are willing to pay for the construction of a new state-of-the-art football stadium if an NFL team provides assurances it will move to Los Angeles. Like the new baseball stadiums proposed for the Braves and the Angeles, the proposed Los Angeles Stadium would be a part of a broader entertainment district development project covering 600 acres in Industry California.

<sup>583</sup> On the one hand, the exodus of fans leaving for the suburbs has motivated owners to develop their stadiums in an effort to draw those fans into the park. On the other, the elevated levels of suburban discretionary income has likewise motivated professional sports owners to charge higher prices for their tickets and concessions, which reinforces the decline of fan bases located in urban areas with higher concentrations of poverty.

structures of the Columbian Exposition's "White City," the pastoral sensibilities of Ebenezer Howard's garden cities, and the nostalgic urban-industrial influences found in more recent warehouse district and urban village development programs. After World War II, baseball stadiums were often constructed in the decaying, older industrial cities of the Northeast in efforts to redevelop poor neighborhoods suffering from urban blight. City leaders formed public/private partnerships to build cultural monuments like museums, libraries, and baseball stadiums with the hopes of luring middle-class whites back to the urban core. As cities transitioned from industrial-manufacturing to service, entertainment, and tourism-based economies, pro-growth coalitions argued that baseball stadiums offered the hope of increased national and even international exposure as cities competed with each other to attain "Major League" status. As was the case with many of the private industries courted by urban leaders in efforts to stop postwar urban disinvestment, baseball owners were given generous subsidies as incentive to build their stadiums.

Stadium boosters regularly draw on the myth that a stadium brings benefits to the greater community. That used to be the case, but in a very different kind of ballpark. Memorial Stadium, Ebbets Field, and Wrigley Field—these were neighborhood parks where the community and the team were wed to each other in a way that simply cannot happen now. Exorbitant salaries and sterile, suburban-style parks, even "retro" parks, are first about profit; there is no time or space for true community to develop anymore. As walking cities gave way to public transit and ultimately the automobile, the community spread out into the suburbs.

The monopoly enjoyed by Major League Baseball has allowed owners to turn the professional game into, essentially, a tourist sport. High school and college sports, by comparison, draw spectators largely from the immediate surrounding community. While it is true

that major NCAA Division I programs often draw fans from all over, many of those fans are alumni of the institution. The student sections in college stadiums and arenas are a major part of the game day experience. But due to the continued failure to deal with the reality of the existing—primarily poor and black—residents of the city of Detroit, the games played in newly built professional stadiums are not for them. Greater profits come from building stadiums and arenas for a suburban clientele with relatively large amounts of disposable income. Beginning with Las Vegas and Disneyland, entertainment tourist destinations proved that savvy entrepreneurs could import deep-pocketed consumers, and over the second half of the twentieth century, that formula had been increasingly applied to reimagining the central business districts of postindustrial cities all over the United States.

With the postwar exodus of capital from cities to suburbs, savvy baseball owners simply changed the business model of the game to target and serve imported customers. But as with Disneyland and Las Vegas, the more owners diversified the consumer experience and focused consumer spending on their own goods and services, the higher the percentage of their share of total tourism dollars. The following is an excerpt describing the tremendous revenue generated by upscale “modern amenities,” in this instance at Baltimore’s Camden Yards, sought after by professional sports team owners:

On the eighth floor of the warehouse, in the Camden Club, are youngish men in office suits and a few well-dressed women who have paid a thousand dollars for the privilege to tread upon carpeting emblazoned with the pattern of the Baltimore Baseball Club, circa 1895. Their eyes linger over the purple satin couches, plush, decorated in High Privilege. Entering the formal dining room for luncheon, they pause to admire the grand piano before perusing a menu that features a twelve-dollar hamburger. . . . The monthly dues are forty-five dollars, the minimum monthly food expenditure is thirty-dollars—this last requirement met easily, what with a bottle of Heineken going for \$4.50. Down in the stadium, on the restricted club level outside the luxury suites, tuxedoed servants stand at the attention next to mobile dessert carts, ready to ferry

them from suite to suite. Each contains a variety of cakes and confections, and a bottle of Courvoisier.<sup>584</sup>

A draft of domestic beer for the regular “working class” stiff at Comerica Park in Detroit now costs at least eight dollars. Parking runs anywhere from ten to twenty dollars, on top of the price paid for seats in the stadium. And prepare to make a second trip to the ATM if you’re bringing children to the game. Increasingly a day at the ballpark is turning into a special family vacation that most can only afford to do once or twice a summer. But efforts to expand the marketing of teams regionally out into the suburbs have succeeded in providing a big enough base of fans to maintain profitable attendance figures for team owners.

In postwar efforts to reinvent the scope and purpose of urban development, policy makers and local business interests have increasingly turned to broad sports and entertainment districts that combine the elements of tourist economics with suburban, node-like shopping mall development to turn once thriving industrial cities into what are essentially large-scale outdoor malls. The pervasiveness of the entertainment/tourism model is such that “downtown-themed urban lifestyle development” has even been coopted and adopted in suburban development plans. Left unaddressed in all of this, of course, is whether or not politicians and developers are still neglecting to deal effectively with the legacy of poorly handled migration flows and the racial animosity stemming from unequal access to urban jobs, quality education, healthcare, and housing. In Detroit, for example, there is much talk of building a greener, leaner, more efficient city, but there is little said about what will become of the blighted structures and primarily African American underclass left in the wake of decades of ineffective and racially segregated urban renewal strategies. And as political sportswriter Dave Zirin has highlighted, while cities

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<sup>584</sup> Peter Richmond, *Ballpark: Camden Yards and the Building of an American Dream* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 18.

pour increasing amounts of resources into these entertainment-based tourist economies, often the very real and pressing needs of local residents get overlooked and go unaddressed:

In August 2005, when Hurricane Katrina flattened New Orleans and the world saw the levees rupture, the only safe harbor for poor residents was in the Louisiana Superdome. When the Mississippi River Bridge collapsed in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the new Twins stadium was to break ground that very week. In spring of 2009, when a Washington, D.C., Metro train went off the tracks, a publicly funded \$1 billion stadium had just opened its doors the previous year.<sup>585</sup>

### **Los Angeles: If You Build It . . .**

In Los Angeles today, there are multiple plans being developed for new stadium-driven development projects. Ever since the NFL Raiders moved back to Oakland, there have been investors and boosters clamoring to bring the NFL back to Los Angeles. One such plan led by AEG, a leading sports and entertainment corporation, would see a new stadium, Farmer's Field, built downtown adjacent to the Staples Center arena where the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers and Clippers share a space, in what would become a stadium district. According to an article from *Sports Illustrated*, the "privately funded \$1.5 billion retractable roof stadium would tap into the existing infrastructure of the entertainment district to support traffic and parking, something much needed on the minuscule 15 acres of land the stadium must squeeze onto."<sup>586</sup> This plan would most closely resemble what is currently happening in Detroit, where the major professional sports teams have built or are building stadiums clustered into one central area of the northern section of downtown to form a sports and entertainment district.

A second plan has been proposed by Ed Roski, co-owner of the Los Angeles Lakers and Kings, to build Los Angeles Stadium at Grand Crossing in the suburban city Industry,

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<sup>585</sup> Dave Zirin, *Bad Sports: How Owners Are Ruining the Games We Love* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 9.

<sup>586</sup> Tim Newcomb, "NFL now has three legitimate Los Angeles stadium sites in play," *Sports Illustrated*, February 4, 2014.



California.<sup>587</sup> Roski's plan is a regional pitch that seeks to demonstrate to the NFL the potential for a larger regional fan base with potentially lucrative media revenues. In a nice aesthetic nod (likely unintentional) to Dodger Stadium, the "proposed 75,000-seat venue designed by architecture firm Aedas would get built right into the area's hillside." The stadium would be "just one small piece in a plan to turn an entire 600-acre site near the interchange of the 60 and 57 freeways into an entirely new entertainment and retail destination."<sup>588</sup> This plan embodies the nodal, entertainment district approach to urban development being pursued in cities like Detroit, the suburban shopping center approach to easily accessible centralized shopping and tourist attraction elements of theme parks like Disneyland. Given the enormous scale of recent NFL stadium development as demonstrated by Jerry Jones's massive new football complex for the Dallas Cowboys, this proposal might be viewed most favorably by league officials.

Finally, with his current lease set to expire in 2014, St. Louis Rams team owner, Stan Kroenke, has upped the ante in his negotiations with city officials by turning to the threat of relocation after "purchasing a 60-acre parking lot in Inglewood, Calif., nestled between the Hollywood Park racetrack and newly renovated forum." Kroenke could have legitimately purchased that land with intentions to relocate, as White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf did in his bid build a stadium in suburban Addison, or he could simply be using it as leverage to secure a better deal in St. Louis. The Farmer's Field and Los Angeles Stadium sites are both further along than this parking lot and neither is attached to a specific team. In fact, both proposals being offered by the organizations building Farmer's Field and the Los Angeles Stadium are contingent on a firm commitment from an NFL team to relocate. If Kroenke does not get what he wants from St. Louis officials, he could always sell the Inglewood property and sign a deal to move to one of

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> Ibid.

the other sites. Ultimately, however, the decision rests with the league, and there are at least two other teams, the San Diego Chargers and the Oakland Raiders, who have also signaled a desire to relocate to Los Angeles.<sup>589</sup> In professional football, as in Major League Baseball, the stadium games are both predictable and inevitable.

### **Chicago: Restoring an Icon and the Power of Reinsdorf**

Throughout the summer of 2014, rumors and updates on stadium construction peppered Chicago news and social media outlets once again, but this time it was coming from the North Side where the Chicago Cubs' dispute with neighboring rooftop owners over renovation plans for Wrigley Field appeared to be coming to a head. When the Ricketts family bought the team in October 2009 (and oldest son, Thomas S. Ricketts, became board chairman) and brought former Boston Red Sox general manager, Theo Epstein, in as president of baseball operations, Cubs fans became excited at the possibility of renovating their classic ballpark just as had been done with Fenway Park in Boston. Rather than relocate or completely demolish and rebuild a new stadium, the Ricketts family recognized the historic and iconic architectural treasure they had in their hundred-year-old ballpark. On Thursday, November 11, 2010, Cubs executive chairman Tom Ricketts sent a letter to season ticket holders announcing the organization's plans to begin planning to renovate and modernize Wrigley Field.<sup>590</sup> It took another two years of negotiating with the city before Ricketts publicly announced his plans to invest an estimated \$300 million to renovate the ballpark over roughly five off-seasons.<sup>591</sup> After a number of setbacks that included a

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<sup>589</sup> Eric D. Williams, "Chargers pitch plan for new stadium," *ESPN*, last updated February 21, 2014; Jason La Canfora, "Battle for Los Angeles: Rams, Raiders jockey for return to SoCal," *CBS Sports*, March 21, 2014.

<sup>590</sup> Tom S. Ricketts, "Cubs owner Tom Ricketts' letter to season ticket holders," *The Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 Nov. 2011.

<sup>591</sup> "Wrigley Renovation: Cubs Unveil \$300 Million in Planned Improvements," *The Huffington Post*, 21 Jan. 2013; Maury Brown, "Proposed Wrigley Renovations," *The Biz of Baseball*. 21 Jan. 2013.

political scandal that soured Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel on the deal<sup>592</sup> as well as prolonged and seemingly fruitless negotiations with members of the Wrigleyville Rooftop Association over the placement of new advertising signage in the leftfield bleachers,<sup>593</sup> the team's final revised proposal was approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks on July 10, 2014. If the team can avoid litigation with the Rooftop Association, the team-financed \$575 million renovation, which includes expanded bleachers, relocated bullpens, updated clubhouses, increased advertising signage, a new hotel and a new office building that will overlook a "triangle property plaza adjacent to the park," is projected to be completed by Opening Day 2018.<sup>594</sup>

The Wrigley Field renovation has received much less criticism than the White Sox received when the new US Cellular Field opened in 1991 for a number of reasons. First, by choosing to renovate rather than replace Wrigley Field, the Cubs have committed to preserving the rich history of one of Major League Baseball's oldest ballparks. Granted, there will be Jumbotron and relentless advertising signage, but the Red Sox have already demonstrated with the Fenway Park renovation that fans are willing to compromise if it means saving the old park. Some of the stiffest opposition to the new stadiums for both the White Sox and the Detroit Tigers came from fan clubs organized specifically to save the old stadiums. Second, Cubs ownership has offered to foot the bill for the entire \$575 million renovation. Meanwhile, on the South Side of town, as if getting his new stadium built solely with public dollars, White Sox owner, Jerry Reinsdorf, has managed to tap into more public money for additional renovations to the new US

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<sup>592</sup> Don Babwin, "Wrigley Field Renovation Plans Stalled by Ricketts Family Political Flap," *The Huffington Post*, 2 Jul. 2012. Joe Ricketts, the patriarch of the Cubs-owning family, was accused of considering to contribute \$10 million towards a racially-charged campaign against President Obama. Mayor Emanuel formerly served as Obama's Chief of Staff.

<sup>593</sup> Ameet Sachdev, Jared Hopkins and Blair Kamin, "Rooftop Owners Agree Not to Sue Cubs if Only 2 Signs," *Chicago Tribune*, 4 Jul. 2014.

<sup>594</sup> Danny Ecker, "Cubs win Landmarks OK for Wrigley redo," *Crain's Chicago Business*. Crain Communications, Inc. 10 Jul. 2014. See also Josh Sanburn, "After Today, Wrigley Field Will Never Be the Same," *Time.com*. 10 Jul. 2014. The Chicago Cubs' official website for the renovation can be accessed at <http://www.wrigleyfield.com/plan>.

Cellular Field including a new restaurant and sports retail store. He has also looked into moving his Chicago Bulls practice facility from suburban Deerfield back downtown where he hopes to develop a \$95 million entertainment complex on the east side of the United Center along with Rocky Wirtz, owner of the Chicago Blackhawks and an investor in Wrapports, LCC which owns the *Chicago Sun-Times*.<sup>595</sup> Reinsdorf has mastered what Chicago-based stadium financing consultant, Marc Ganis, referred to as a “tradition that goes back 50 years.”<sup>596</sup>

“It’s not who you know,” according to Ganis, it’s “are you in good standing with the political leadership or not? Political favoritism using taxpayer resources is a tradition in Chicago and Illinois.”<sup>597</sup> Reinsdorf used his political connections, particularly to former Illinois governor James Thompson, to secure a publicly funded stadium and major tax breaks for the United Center where his Chicago Bulls play.<sup>598</sup> Even when the former director of the Illinois Sports Facilities Authority (the organization that funds and owns US Cellular Field) Perri Irmer brought a wrongful termination suit against both Reinsdorf and Thompson with what appeared to be clear evidence, the case was dismissed by US District Court Judge John W. Darrah for failing to prove a connection between Reinsdorf and her termination.<sup>599</sup> Irmer had began an investigation into the particulars of the state’s stadium deal with the White Sox and succeeded in getting the team to pay \$1.2 million a year in rent for use of the stadium; she was subsequently fired by Thompson

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<sup>595</sup> Fran Spielman, “Bulls to Move Training Facility from Deerfield to Downtown Chicago,” *Chicago Sun-Times*. Sun-Times Media, LLC. 13 Jun. 2012; Mark Brown, “Chicago Bulls Owner Jerry Reinsdorf’s Art of the Deal,” *Chicago Sun-Times*. Sun-Times Media, LLC. 14 Jun 2012.

<sup>596</sup> Spielman, “Bulls to Move.”

<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid. The tax breaks limits the rent on the \$180 United Center to \$1 million a year. The deal expires in 2016. Reinsdorf was trying to extend and expand the deal to include his newly proposed entertainment complex and practice facility.

<sup>599</sup> The lawsuit claims that Reinsdorf pressured Thompson to fire Irmer after she succeeded in revising the agreement so the White Sox had to pay \$1.2 million a year in rent for U.S. Cellular Field. The Memorandum Opinion and Order, signed by Judge Darrah on June 19, 2014 can be accessed online at: <http://docs.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/illinois/ilndce/1:2013cv02834/282345/42/0.pdf?1403262677>.

who was the acting chair of the ISFA board at the time.<sup>600</sup> More than twenty years after forcing city and state leaders to build his White Sox a new stadium under the threat of relocation, Reinsdorf is still using his political clout to profit from public money.

### **Detroit: Emergency Managers, Bankruptcy, and a \$650 Million Entertainment Complex**

Even as the city of Detroit prepared for the October 29, 1997, groundbreaking ceremony for the Tigers' new stadium while the Archer administration worked to expand the downtown stadium development project to also include a new football stadium for the Detroit Lions, Mike Ilitch had already purchased "about a dozen parcels on the west side of Woodward."<sup>601</sup>

According to city and county property records, by March 1999, "companies under the Ilitch umbrella own[ed] or [were] in a position to buy more than a third of the property in the area bounded by Woodward, the Fisher Freeway, West Grand River and Adams in Detroit."<sup>602</sup>

Despite efforts by company and city officials to refute such claims, real estate insiders began to speculate that Ilitch was "banking land to eventually build a new hockey and entertainment arena behind the Fox."<sup>603</sup> A spokesman for Olympia Development, Ilitch's downtown real estate and entertainment development company, stated there were no *current* plans for new hockey arena but cryptically added that "Olympia Development and the Ilitch family are master-planning for the area around the theater district and the downtown."<sup>604</sup> As was the case in other postindustrial American cities like Chicago, the public-private partnership that shaped downtown development

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<sup>600</sup> Peter S. Lubin and Vincent L. DiTommaso, "Former Illinois Governor Thompson Says That Recent Lawsuit Against the White Sox is Simply a Self-Serving Tirade," *ChicagoBusinessLitigationLawyerBlog.com*. 30 April 2013.

<sup>601</sup> "Ilitch Buying up Land near Theater: New Arena for Hockey may be Long-Term Goal." *Detroit Free Press*, Sep 17, 1999. *ProQuest*.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid. The parcels behind the Fox Theater are largely parking lots now, servicing both stadiums and the Theater District. Whether or not that land was intended to be used for the hockey arena is uncertain given Ilitch's agreement to provide 1,000 to 1,200 parking spaces when the Lions secured their stadium deal.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

in Detroit became increasingly, overtly, dominated by the interests of the private sector. The professional class of urban planners that had previously designed and implemented city development has been circumvented altogether as business moguls like Mike Ilitch devised their own downtown development master plans.<sup>605</sup> Not unlike the process that often leads the introduction of legislation and the passage of new laws in Congress, corporations draw up the plans and terms for downtown development to maximize their own profit. What makes stadium-driven development in Detroit so remarkable, however, is the scope of Ilitch's development and its dramatic influence on Detroit's latest attempt to redefine itself.

On March 31, 1999, Mike and Marian Ilitch "announced the formation of Ilitch Ventures Inc., a privately held Michigan corporation that [would] own and manage their primary business interests in the food and entertainment industries."<sup>606</sup> The companies that fall under the umbrella of the holding company "had consolidated revenues in 1998 of approximately \$800 million," demonstrating the scope and magnitude of Ilitch's designs for the reimagining of downtown Detroit.<sup>607</sup> The nature of the companies brought into the holding company further underscores Ilitch's single-minded focus on building an entertainment empire: Little Caesar Enterprises, Olympia Entertainment, Olympia Development, the Detroit Red Wings, the Detroit Tigers, the Detroit Rockers, and Olympia Specialty Foods. In conjunction with the legalization of casino gaming downtown (not to mention Marion Ilitch's subsequent purchase of the Motor City Casino), Mike Ilitch capitalized on "tourist city" development trends to build a local entertainment empire that has reshaped downtown development in Detroit. That trend continues in Detroit today as Ilitch Holdings, Inc. now partners with Quicken Loans CEO, Dan Gilbert's,

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<sup>605</sup> "Ilitchs Announce Growth Plan; Form New Holding Company/Make Key Personnel Appointments." *Business Wire*, Mar 31, 1999.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

real estate development company Rock Ventures, LCC and others in a new development strategy the coalition is calling Opportunity Detroit.<sup>608</sup>

### **A Placemaking Vision for Downtown Detroit**

In 2011, Dan Gilbert started buying up numerous properties in downtown Detroit in what Gilbert called the city's "skyscraper sale."<sup>609</sup> Following the example of Mike Ilitch, Gilbert moved his Quicken Loans headquarters downtown and began buying up properties in the central core of the city along the Woodward Avenue corridor and to the east, south of Gratiot Avenue. Like Ilitch, Gilbert owns a professional sports team, the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers, and he has been using his tremendous wealth to invest not only in downtown Detroit, but in Cleveland as well. Aside from his role as the head of Quicken Loans and as an urban real estate developer, Gilbert has also begun investing heavily in the casino industry, not only in Detroit where he now owns the Greektown Casino and hotel, but also in other cities such as Cleveland, Baltimore, and potentially Toronto.<sup>610</sup> With his holdings in Detroit, Gilbert is developing what the coalition behind Opportunity Detroit call "great places," which contain four key attributes: accessible (walkable, convenient), active (fun, engaging), comfortable (attractive, clean), and sociable (neighborly, welcoming).<sup>611</sup> The plan was heavily influenced by William H. Whyte's faith in the tremendous multiplier effect of small spaces. The planners behind Opportunity Detroit have turned that principle into what they call the "Power of 10," explained as follows:

A successful downtown should be conceived of as a series of destinations, and each destination should be made up of smaller places. Each place should offer

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<sup>608</sup> "A Placemaking Vision for Downtown Detroit," OpportunityDetroit.com, PDF, accessed May 4, 2014, [http://opportunitydetroit.com/wp-content/themes/OppDet\\_v2/assets/PlacemakingBook-PDFSm.pdf](http://opportunitydetroit.com/wp-content/themes/OppDet_v2/assets/PlacemakingBook-PDFSm.pdf). Other partners in the Opportunity Detroit plan include M1-Rail, Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC), Detroit Entertainment District Association (DEDA), the Downtown Detroit Partnership and the City of Detroit.

<sup>609</sup> David Segal, "A Missionary's Quest to Remake Motor City," *New York Times*, April 13, 2013.

<sup>610</sup> Eugene McCormick, "Two Years after Cleveland's Horseshoe Casino Opening Phase 2 still just a Promise," *The Cleveland Leader*, May 5, 2014.

<sup>611</sup> "A Placemaking Vision," 8.

many things to do and activities for people to engage in. An opportunity to sit, contemplate art, touch and play with water, purchase food, play a game, listen to music, etc. are the kinds of activities that attract people to a place and keep them coming back. These places create a district filled with multiple activities. A great downtown or city needs at least 10 such great destinations, each with 10 places and 10 things to do.<sup>612</sup>

The plan identified ten such already existing or potential places key to this placemaking development strategy: Grand Circus Park, Woodward Avenue Promenade, Capitol Park, Paradise Valley, Campus Martius/Cadillac Square, Monroe Entertainment/Greektown, Woodward Avenue Esplanade, Hart Plaza, River Walk, and the Entertainment District, which was developed by Mike Ilitch and the city for the sports stadiums and theater district. The heart of the plan calls for focused development in the Capitol Park, Campus Martius/Cadillac Square, and Grand Circus Park areas. Continuing with Detroit's recent redevelopment focus, these areas highlight the need for fun, food, entertainment, and a place to spend disposable income.

All of this development is going on as the city of Detroit continues to fight its way out of a state imposed bankruptcy, but that did not prevent Ilitch from reaching an agreement with city and state officials for a new \$650 million hockey arena and expanded entertainment district—which lies just to the north of the Fisher Freeway and Ilitch's other stadium-centered entertainment district. Ilitch argued that “stadiums can be the jewel . . . the centerpiece of a revival that stretches from the freeways that border this [stadium district], all the way back to Grand River and all the way down to Grand Circus Park.”<sup>613</sup> Jewels represent a number of things, such as a sign of commitment between two parties or a shiny sign of status that catches the attention of envious onlookers. The problem is that no matter their purpose, the only real value in a jewel belongs exclusively to the owner. While Ilitch's second stadium-driven development

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<sup>612</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>613</sup> Drew Sharp, “Ilitch's Legacy is on the Line with New Comerica Park,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 28, 1999.



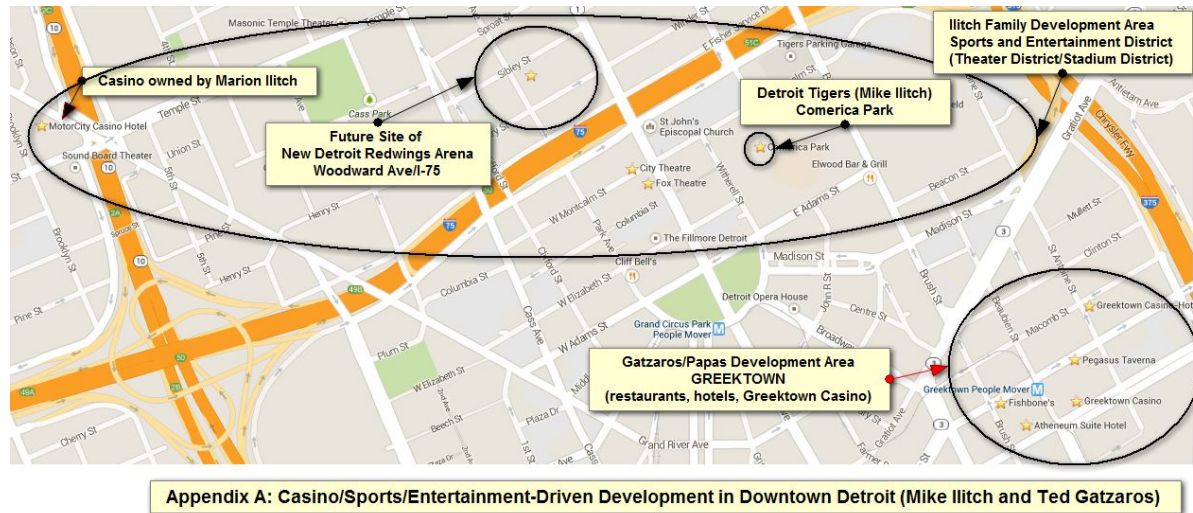
does appear to reaffirm his commitment to the city of Detroit, when the ink dries on the final deal, the Ilitch family will obtain exclusive rights to the revenues generated by his new hockey arena, from parking and concessions all the way up to the naming rights to the arena. On the other hand, it is hard to argue that Ilitch's investment in developing the stadium and entertainment district did not have a big influence on and encourage the new development spearheaded by Gilbert in the center of downtown. And yet, it's likewise hard to imagine that either of these tremendous development projects will serve the primarily poor and underemployed African American population that much of this investment is looking to displace.

Detroit appears to be on the way toward some form of urban renaissance led by unprecedented levels of private investment. But those investments are money-making ventures for some of the wealthier men in the United States and have little to do with improving the experiences and opportunities for the vast majority of the city's black residents. No, much like those evicted from Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles and along Wentworth Avenue in Chicago, the poor African American residents in Detroit will be forced out and replaced with entertainment-driven developments intended to lure back suburban whites. More than a decade into the twenty-first century, urban development in the United States still emphasizes large-scale commercial development projects while turning a blind eye to the problems of racial inequality and poverty. For Julian Chavez and the Mexican migrants living in his ravine; for the tired elderly African Americans who migrated to Chicago for jobs only to be evicted in their old age so that kids growing up in suburban Addison could safely and securely drive in and watch the White Sox play; for the remnants of the Great Migration left scrambling for low-skilled jobs and housing in a Detroit that no longer provides either; for these and many more, both natives and migrants of color, there is and never really has been, a place in the American city. Thanks in large part to

stadium-driven and other entertainment-centered urban development strategies, US cities are becoming spaces reimagined and constructed as tourist destinations and entertaining shopping centers for the suburban whites who once abandoned them.

## **APPENDICES**

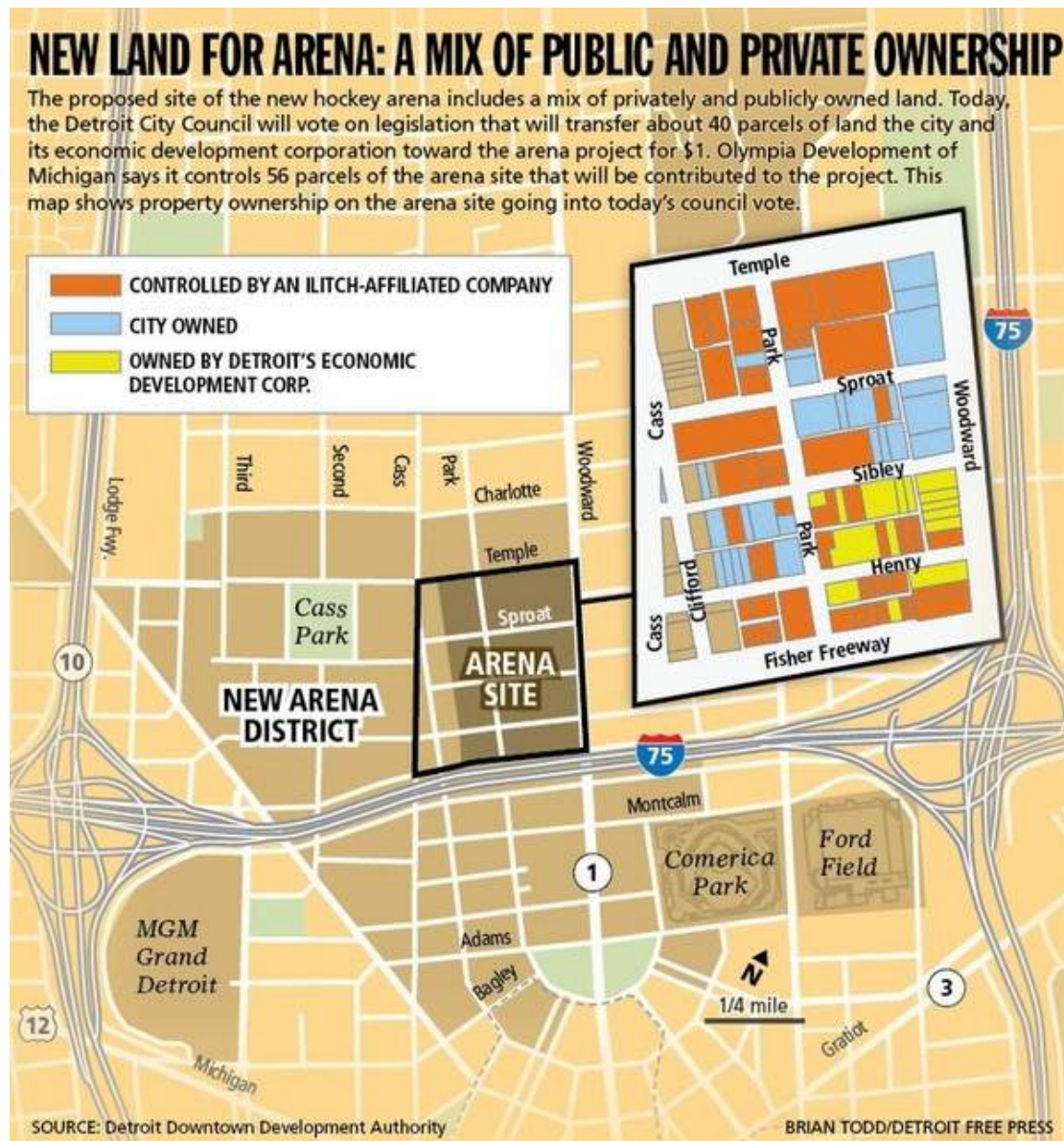
## Appendix A: Casino/Sports/Entertainment-Driven Development in Downtown Detroit



**Figure 1: Casino/Sports/Entertainment-Driven Development**

Created with Fireshot from: "Downtown Detroit," Google Maps, Google, 2014.

## Appendix B: Future Site for new Detroit Red Wings Arena



**Figure 2: Future Site for new Detroit Red Wings Arena**

Taken from: Jose Guillen, "Detroit Red Wings' New Stadium Land Transfer Approved by City," *Detroit Free Press*, Gannett, February 4, 2014. Web. March 6, 2014.

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